



## **Message by the ATU Secretary General John OMO for the ITU International Girls in ICT Day celebrations 2023**

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As we celebrate the International Girls in ICT Day 2023, the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and RIFEN would like to extend our appreciation to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for the invitation to participate in and contribute to this important event.

The theme for this year's event, "Digital Skills for Life," resonates deeply with our mandate as an organization focused on promoting the use and adoption of ICTs in Africa. We recognize that women and girls are underrepresented in the ICT sector, and we must work together to bridge the gender gap in ICT and access usage.

Over the years, girls have been underprivileged than boys in as far as ICT access and usage is concerned. For instance, in Africa, the ITU gender-disaggregated data shows that only 22.4% of women use the Internet, compared to 33.7% of men. This divide has significant implications for economic growth, social inclusion, and gender equality.

By bridging the divide between men and women in Africa, we can ensure that girls and young women have equal access to opportunities that will drive economic growth and gender equality. Accordingly, our partnership for this event is anchored on our shared vision to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We are committed to organizing programs, trainings, and activities that will provide girls and young women with the necessary skills to succeed in the ICT industry.

To further strengthen our partnership, we reaffirm our commitment to the initiatives we are already undertaking. We will continue to leverage our networks, resources, and expertise to reach more girls and young women across Africa. In addition, we will deepen our engagement with industry players and relevant stakeholders to provide more scholarships, internships, and job opportunities to girls and young women interested in pursuing careers in ICT.

By implementing these initiatives and building on others, we can empower more girls and young women to gain practical experience, expand their networks, and contribute to the growth of the ICT sector.

We recognize the importance of nurturing the next generation of women leaders in ICT and remain committed in our resolve to support the cause of gender equality in the ICT sector in Africa and globally.

I wish every of our Member States and Associate Members, and the RIFEN community all the best as we support the International Girls in ICT Day celebrations in our respective countries.