African ICT Leaders Convene in South Africa for Final Preparations Ahead of Global Telecom Summit

Sandton City, South Africa – 12th August 2024 – This week, telecommunications and ICT regulators, policymakers, and industry leaders from across Africa are meeting in Sandton City, South Africa, for the third and final African Preparatory Meeting for the 2024 World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly (WTSA-24).

The WTSA is a key event organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) every four years, bringing together global industry leaders to develop and adopt international standards for telecommunications and ICTs. The assembly scheduled to take place from 15 to 24 October 2024 in New Delhi, India, and will focus on addressing the challenges and opportunities of the digital age to ensure global connectivity and enhance innovation.

Convened by the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) — a specialized agency of the African Union representing 52 African countries and 49 ICT operators on the continent — the South Africa-hosted Preparatory Meeting will work to finalize the continent's strategy and priorities for WTSA-24, to strengthen Africa's voice in this pursuit.

The meeting will feature in-depth discussions on a wide range of resolutions that aim to shape the future of telecommunications in Africa and beyond. During the opening forum of the preparatory meeting, ATU Secretary General, Mr. John OMO called on delegates to, "Devise approaches that are tailored for Africa in ways that enhance cross-border interactions and ensure the interoperability of devices and systems."

Mr. Omo emphasized that through the collective effort of the entire African region, Africa has the opportunity to develop robust regulatory and policy frameworks that support sustainable growth and foster innovation. "With unified cooperation, we can create frameworks that not only promote sustainable growth but also encourage the innovation necessary to drive our continent forward," he stated.

Echoing these sentiments, South Africa's Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Hon. Solly Malatsi, highlighted the importance of the preparatory process in meeting global telecom demands. "Telecom standards drive innovation and tackle pressing issues on our continent. To achieve this, we must work as partners, not competitors, to advance Africa's best interests," said Hon. Malatsi.

Central to the agenda of the meeting is Africa's commitment to driving sustainable digital transformation across the continent. Delegates will discuss the development of guidelines and standards that support the digitalization of key sectors, particularly in developing countries, to ensure that these transformations are both sustainable and inclusive. The need for international cooperation to prevent redundancy and support global digital transformation efforts will also be a key focus.

Another key focus is the potential of emerging satellite technologies to address global connectivity challenges. A proposed resolution advocates for international standards to tackle the technical, operational, and regulatory issues these networks face. If adopted, this resolution will be crucial in

bridging the digital divide and ensuring even the most remote areas of Africa gain reliable, high-speed internet access.

The meeting will also tackle the pressing issue of e-waste management within the telecommunications sector. With the rapid proliferation of digital devices, managing electronic waste has become an urgent challenge. The resolution on e-waste management calls for the development of comprehensive legislation and international standards to ensure the sustainable disposal of electronic waste, particularly in developing countries where the impact of e-waste is most severe.

Discussions will further include ongoing efforts to establish a common emergency number across Africa, an initiative aimed at enhancing public safety and ensuring swift emergency response across the continent. The resolution under consideration reaffirms the need to implement 112 and 911 as standardized emergency numbers and calls for further technical assistance and collaboration among African countries to overcome adoption challenges.

Discussions will also focus on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and its crucial role in supporting digital transformation in developing countries. The resolution calls for strengthening standardization efforts to create interoperable, rights-based digital solutions that advance sustainable development and improve public services. It underscores the need for technical standards in areas like digital identity and payments.

ITU Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, Mr. Seizo ONOE, who also spoke at the meeting, encouraged participants to embrace collaborative efforts, stating, "Now more than ever, we need to see international cooperation in action." He emphasized the importance of unified global standards to address the challenges of the digital age.

The success of this final preparatory meeting is set to pave the way for Africa's active participation and leadership at WTSA-24, where the continent will advocate for policies and standards reflecting many of its unique needs and aspirations.

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About ATU

The African Telecommunications Union (ATU) – **headquartered in Nairobi Kenya** - was founded in 1977 as a specialised agency of the Organization of African Unity, now African Union, in the field of telecommunications. ATU provides a forum for stakeholders involved in ICT to formulate effective policies and strategies aimed at improving access to information infrastructure and services. In addition, the Union represents the interests of its 51 Member States (African Countries) and 49 Associate Members (comprising fixed and mobile telecom operators), at global decision-making conferences and promotes initiatives aimed at integrating regional markets, attracting investment into ICT infrastructure, and building institutional and human capacity.

For more information, log into http://atuuat.africa/ . Follow **The African Telecommunications Union:**
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