**SG Speech for Virtual Attendance at the 14th Annual General Meeting of CRASA**

 27th March 2024

**Hon Minister of Information, Communication Technology of Lesotho, Ms NTHATI MOOROSI,**

**Chairman of the CRASA, Mr Dlamini,**

**Representative ITU Regional Office for Africa, Anne Rita Ssemboga**

**UPU Deputy Secretary General** Mr. **Marjan Osvald**

**PAPU Secretary General** Mr. **Sifundo Chief Moyo**

**SADC Representative**

**CRASA Executive Secretary Ms. Bridget LINDZE**

**Director General, Lesotho Communications Authority, Mr. Nizam Goolam**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) here at the Union headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, I extend my greetings and best wishes to the Communications Regulators' Association of Southern Africa

It is my pleasure to join you once again for the opening of your 14th Annual General Meeting. I welcome the opportunity to reflect on the important role that our organizations—ATU and CRASA—continue to play in shaping the digital transformation of Southern Africa and, indeed, the entire African continent.

Our participation in this AGM is an important affirmation of ATU’s firm conviction in the power and potential of strategic alliances with regional regulatory authorities. These collaborations drive Africa’s digital agenda, fortify the telecommunications and ICT space, and pave the way for a digitally inclusive community.

It is therefore clear to us, that without reciprocal energies, synergies are not possible. In this regard, we commend CRASA for its tireless efforts in harmonizing regulatory frameworks within the region. We relate with these efforts and associate with your leadership’s sense of direction.

The theme of the workshop that preceded this AGM, *“Building Agile Regulation for the Digital Platform Ecosystem,”* resonates with our shared objectives, reminding us of the need for a robust, flexible, and forward-looking policy and regulatory environment in unlocking the full potential of Africa’s digital economies. ATU fully supports these initiatives and recognizes the critical role that joint efforts play in enabling the exchange of skills, expertise, and best practices.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) we signed during the closing ceremony of the 13th AGM last year is clear evidence of our mutual commitment to working together. We will, through this partnership, continue to enhance regulatory frameworks, address shared challenges, and advance the region’s digital aspirations.

Africa’s digital landscape is steadily evolving, thanks to our collaborative efforts. Today, Sub-Saharan Africa takes pride in an internet penetration rate of approximately 43%, with around 600 million users. Yet, the region also accounts for the largest coverage and usage gaps globally, with many still living beyond the reach of mobile broadband networks.

Our joint mission must remain clear: to ensure that all Africans—regardless of geography or socioeconomic status—enjoy universal, meaningful connectivity. This requires not only bridging coverage gaps but also addressing usage barriers. Forums like this AGM are critical as they encourage the sharing of knowledge, best practices, and experiences—strengthening ICT capacity building and policy harmonization across our continent.

We sincerely appreciate the CRASA member states—among the 36 ATU members—that continue to support the Union’s efforts and pursuits. We encourage others in the region to follow suit and tap into this partnership for excellence, as collective commitment is the cornerstone of robust ICT ecosystems across Africa.

Such synergy is vital given that the digital economy is projected to contribute an estimated $712 billion to Africa’s GDP by 2050. If achieved, this will elevate living standards and drive sustainable development. However, fragmented and outdated policies jeopardize the potential to make these gains. We must, therefore, develop comprehensive and harmonized regulatory frameworks that are unified and that ensure Africa’s digital transformation remains inclusive and resilient.

As I conclude, once again I wish to express my sincere gratitude to CRASA and the Lesotho Communications Authority (LCA) for hosting this 14th AGM and the pre-AGM workshop.

I encourage us to seize this moment to strengthen our collaboration, renew our shared commitment, and continue working together to advance SADC’s and Africa’s telecommunications and ICT regulatory space at the speed that is needed to match and exceed the progress of those ahead of us.

Thank you!