



CYNTHIA LEUNGO LESUFI

TECH DIPLOMAT

Telecommunications & Digital Governance Leader
Multilateral Negotiator | Africa-Focused Digital Policy Strategist

Currently based in Geneva, Switzerland South African

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Cynthia Lesufi is a distinguished technology diplomacy leader and senior ICT policy and regulatory executive with over two decades of senior management experience in the South African public service and multilateral institutions at African and global levels. She has a proven track record as a leader in governance, policy formulation, continental coordination, and high-level international negotiations, consistently representing South Africa, and at times, leading the Africa Group in global ICT decision-making forums.

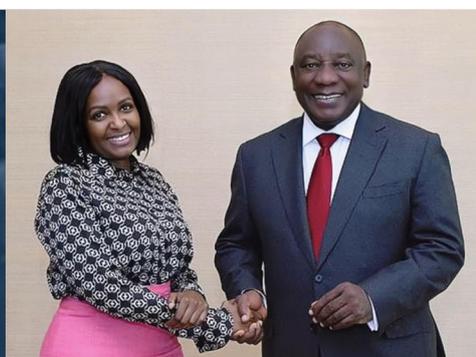
She brings extensive experience navigating complex policy environments, managing institutions, and advancing inclusive, Africa-centric digital development agendas. She has coordinated Africa Group common positions at ITU Plenipotentiary Conferences, World Telecommunication Development Conferences (WTDC), World Telecommunication Standardization Assemblies (WTSAs), World Radiocommunication Conferences (WRC) and ITU Regional Radiocommunications Conference 2006 (RRC-2006), strengthening Africa's strategic influence in global telecommunications governance.

Highly regarded for her strategic leadership, consensus-building capability, and sound institutional governance, she operates with confidence and effectiveness in politically complex, multi-stakeholder environments. Her leadership is grounded in strong administrative discipline, ethical decision-making, and a development-oriented approach,

Her leadership uniquely integrates high-level diplomacy, institutional oversight, regulatory reform, and development-driven digital transformation. She brings deep experience in building consensus among Member States, leading coalitions, and shaping Africa-centric digital policy frameworks, aligned with Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) digital agenda, ensuring that Africa's digital future is both inclusive and sustainable.

CORE TECH DIPLOMACY CAPABILITIES & LEADERSHIP EXPERTISE INCLUDE:

- > Telecommunications Policy & Legislative Development
- > Technology & Digital Diplomacy
- > Global Technology & Spectrum Governance
- > Multilateral Negotiation & Consensus-Building
- > African Regional Coordination & Coalition Leadership
- > Stakeholder & Public Participation Management
- > Universal Connectivity & Digital Inclusion
- > Executive & Institutional Leadership
- > Financial Oversight & Organisational Management
- > Strategic Planning & Programme Management





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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Minister Counsellor: Communications (Technology Diplomat) South African Permanent Mission to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) – Geneva, Switzerland:

- > Provides senior diplomatic representation in the ITU and other UN agencies dealing with digital and tech issues and digital governance negotiations.
- > Advances national and African priorities through negotiation and coalition-building at all ITU Platforms and the broader UN process.
- > Serves as South African representative in all ITU meetings and conferences.
- > Forms part of the South African delegation to the ITU, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development
- > Forms part of the South African delegation to the UN General Assembly

Chairperson of the ITU Council Working Group on WSIS & SDGs:

- > Chairs Council Working Group meetings.
- > Represents the Council Working Group in UNESCO, IGF and regional meetings.
- > Leads global alignment of ITU work and mandate with WSIS outcomes and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- > Serves as the WSIS & SDGs Council Working Group representative in IGF, UNESCO, and Global Regulators Forum.
- > Oversee monitoring, reporting, and implementation of the WSIS outcomes by the Working Group.
- > Reports on the outcomes of CWG to the ITU Council,

EDUCATION

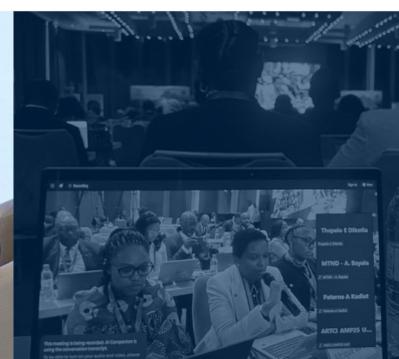
- > Master of Arts (MA), ICT Policy and Regulation – University of the Witwatersrand
- > Bachelor of Laws – North-West University
- > Postgraduate Diploma in Management Practices – Henley Business School
- > Certificate in Telecommunications Policy, Regulation & Management – Wits Business School

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

- > New Manager's Programme – UCT Graduate School of Business
- > Certificate in E-Commerce – NIIT, New Delhi
- > Certificate in Radio Spectrum Optimisation – University of Pretoria
- > Advanced Project and Programme Management – Regenesys Education, Sandton

LEADERSHIP VALUE

- > Proven executive leadership in complex, multi-constituency institutions
- > Strong governance, coordination, and administrative capability
- > High-level negotiation and consensus-building expertise
- > Ethical, accountable, and transformation-driven leadership
- > Ability to unify diverse stakeholders around shared objectives





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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ITU TSAG CO-Rapporteur

Acts as a strategic integrator and facilitator, in the implementation of:

- > WTS-24 Resolution 106 (Enhancing standardization activities on sustainable digital transformation).
- > WTS-24 Resolution 58 (Encouraging the creation and enhancement of national computer incident response teams, particularly for developing countries).
- > WTS-24 Resolution 69 (Non-discriminatory access and use of Internet resources and telecommunications/information and communication technologies).
- > WTS-24 Resolution 86 (Facilitating the implementation of the Smart Africa Manifesto) Coordinate the discussion and preparation of TSAG proposals for WTS-28 regarding sustainable digital transformation revolution.

ITU Council Liaison for Study Group 17 Child Online Protection

- > Acts as the strategic bridge and trusted focal point, ensuring that technical standardization work on child online protection effectively informs Council and COP CWG -level decisions.
- > Ensures that Council priorities are accurately reflected in SG17's ongoing and future work.

Director: Telecommunications Policy

- > Provided executive leadership in the development of electronic communications policies, strategies, and legislation.
- > Oversaw the development of the National Data and Cloud Policy.

- > Led policy workstreams on OTTs, ZADNA, and digital economy matters.
- > Serves as a senior member of the Project Management Office implementing Electronic Communications, Postal and Broadcasting Directions.
- > Contributed to the development of Digital Economy Master Plan.
- > Managed directorate operations, personnel, and stakeholder relations.
- > Served as principal liaison with government, industry, academia, and international partners.

Deputy Director: ITU Radio Sector (Policy & Regulatory) Department of Communications – South Africa

- > Lead negotiator on radio frequency spectrum governance and planning.
- > Coordinated South Africa's participation in ITU, ATU, CTO, and SADC ICT forums.
- > Built alliances influencing regional and global technology policy outcomes.
- > Contributed to the development of the South African Spectrum Policy
- > Contributed to the development and update of the South African National Frequency Band Plan





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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Assistant Director: ITU Radio Sector
(Technology Policy Regulatory)
Department of Communications – South Africa**

- > Coordinated South Africa's participation in ITU conferences, including RRC-06 and WRC-07.
- > Managed national and regional policy inputs on spectrum and broadcasting digital migration.
- > Contributed to the development and update of the South African National Frequency Band Plan,
- > Coordinated SADC coordination meetings for implementation of RRC-06
- > Participated as part of the South African delegation at the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly, hosted in Johannesburg, contributing to Africa Group coordination on global ICT standardisation matters.
- > Supported the advancement of African common positions to ensure that Africa's development realities and priorities were reflected in ITU-T resolutions, work programmes, and study group mandates.
- > Engaged in technical and policy negotiations aimed at strengthening developing country participation in international standardisation processes.
- > Contributed to positioning Africa as a cohesive and influential bloc within global ICT standardisation decision-making
- > Departmental focal point for spectrum technology diplomacy.

AFRICA GROUP LEADERSHIP (ITU CONFERENCES)

ITU Plenipotentiary Conferences (2010, 2018, 2022) and PP-26:

- > Played a leading role in coordinating and advancing Africa Group common positions on ITU governance, development, finance, and institutional reform.
- > Contributed significantly to building consensus among African Member States, ensuring coherent, unified, and strategic African engagement in the Union's highest decision-making forum.
- > Led and supported high-level negotiations that successfully mainstreamed Africa's development priorities into ITU Plenipotentiary resolutions and decisions, including digital inclusion, capacity building, equitable access to ICTs, and sustainable digital development.
- > Strengthened Africa's collective influence in shaping the strategic direction, priorities, and governance framework of the ITU, contributing to a unified and credible African political voice in global ICT governance, including outcomes adopted for the 2023–2026 cycle.
- > Currently serve as the ITU PP-26- Vice Chairperson of the Plenary for Africa Group Preparations, overseeing the work of Working Groups 1, 2 and 3.

World Telecommunication Development Conferences (WTDC) 2022 & 2026:

- > Led the South African delegation, played a coordination role within the Africa Group at the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), advancing African common positions on digital inclusion, capacity building, and ICTs for development.
- > Played a key role in consensus-building and high-level negotiations to ensure that Africa's development agenda was meaningfully reflected in WTDC outcomes and resolutions.





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- > Contributed to the successful adoption and implementation of the Kigali and Baku Declarations and Action Plans, as well as the endorsement of Africa Regional Initiatives as core instruments for delivering the ITU Development Sector (ITU-D) programme. These outcomes ensured that ITU-D activities were aligned with Africa's priorities, supporting inclusive, sustainable, and development-oriented digital transformation across the continent.

World Telecommunication Standardisation Assemblies (WTSAs) 2022 & 2025 Coordinated African positions on global ICT standards

- > Led the South African delegation at the World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly in 2022 and 2024, contributing to Africa Group leadership that achieved significant outcomes, strengthening Africa's influence in global ICT standardisation.
- > Played a key role in ensuring that Africa's development realities and priorities were effectively reflected in ITU-T work programmes, resolutions, and study priorities, thereby advancing inclusive, development-oriented standardisation outcomes aligned with the continent's socio-economic needs.

World Radiocommunications Conferences (WRCs) 2007, 2012, 2015 & 2023:

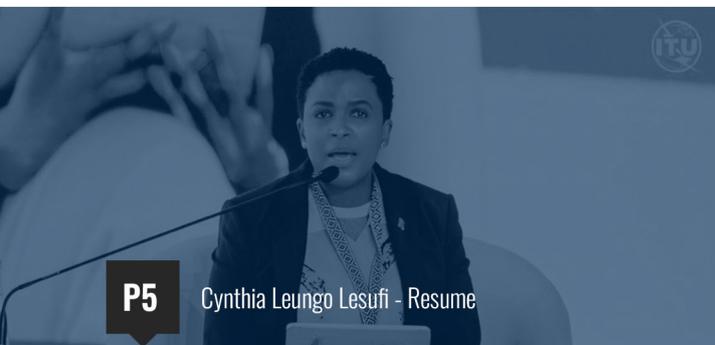
- > Participated in Africa Group coordination on radio frequency spectrum policy and allocation at the World Radiocommunication Conference.
- > Played a key leadership role in negotiations on the First and Second Digital Dividends, advancing African priorities on broadband expansion, affordability, and digital inclusion.
- > Contributed to shaping African common positions that balanced development needs with global spectrum demands, ensuring outcomes responsive to the realities of developing countries.
- > Strengthened Africa's collective influence in global spectrum governance, reinforcing the continent's role as a cohesive and strategic negotiating bloc within international radiocommunication decision-making processes.

ITU Regional Radiocommunication Conference 2006 (RRC-06)

- > Participated as part of the South African delegation at the ITU Regional Radiocommunication Conference 2006, which established the international frequency plan for the transition from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting.
- > Played a coordination role in managing South Africa's participation, including consolidating inputs from national industry experts and stakeholders.
- > Contributed to the analysis and negotiation of frequency planning arrangements to support South Africa's and the region's broadcasting digital migration objectives.
- > Supported the development and submission of South African and SADC positions, ensuring alignment with national policy priorities and regional interests.
- > Strengthened South Africa's and Africa's engagement in global spectrum planning processes critical to digital broadcasting, spectrum efficiency, and long-term digital development.

African Telecommunications Union (ATU) – Governance & Policy Processes

- > Actively participated in African Telecommunications Union (ATU) policy and governance processes, including engagement with the ATU Administrative Council, contributing to strategic decision-making, policy oversight, and institutional governance at continental level.
- > Supported the coordination and advancement of African common positions on ICT policy, regulation, and development matters within ATU structures, strengthening Africa's collective voice in regional and global ICT forums.
- > Contributed to alignment between ATU positions, ITU processes, and Africa's development priorities, ensuring coherence across continental and international ICT governance frameworks.
- > Played a role in reinforcing transparent, accountable, and effective governance within ATU processes, consistent with principles of institutional strengthening and collective leadership.





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Critical Professional Achievements

- > Head of the South Africa Delegation to all ATU preparatory meetings.
- > Chaired the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commission's first RightsX Summit 2025.
- > Successfully led the Africa Group under the AU in Geneva for the period 2021- 2022, driving the development and implementation of the EU-AU Plan of Action on Digital across Geneva-based organizations (ITU, ILO, Human Rights Council and WSIS Forum).
- > Led the Geneva and Africa coordination process in preparation to the WSIS+20 Review Process.
- > Negotiated the WSIS ECOSOC Resolution.
- > Delivered a presentation to the Postgraduate Students for Wits University on the World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 and Priorities for Africa Group.
- > Delivered a keynote address at the Africa GSMA on Elevating Africa's Voice in the Global Digital Dialogue.
- > Represented South Africa in all ATU Council Committee Meetings.
- > Led strategic coordination for the implementation of South Africa's COVID-19 Communications and Digital Technologies Policy Directions, ensuring the continuity, resilience, and rapid responsiveness of essential communications services during the national disaster period.
- > Contributed to the development of South Africa's Integrated ICT White Paper, shaping the long-term policy framework for the communications and digital technologies sector.
- > Supported the implementation of the Electronic Communications Act, strengthening regulatory certainty and enabling effective policy execution.
- > Pioneered and advanced global policy debates on Over-The-Top (OTT) services and data protection, positioning South Africa and Africa as influential voices in emerging digital policy discussions.
- > Represented South Africa at high-level international ICT conferences, contributing to regional and global policy outcomes through negotiation, coordination, and strategic engagement.
- > Led the development of the National By-Law on Rapid Deployment of ICT infrastructure.
- > Participated in UNECA High-Level Webinar on Advancing Cybersecurity and Cyber Diplomacy in Africa.
- > Successfully elevated and advanced issues relating to the International Telecommunications Satellite Organisation (ITSO) within the Africa Group in Geneva, in collaboration with the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and through the African Union (AU) coordination framework. This collaboration strengthened African consensus, policy coherence, and collective positioning on satellite governance matters, ensuring that Africa's interests were effectively articulated and reflected in international deliberations

