

Dar es Salaam Declaration on the African 20-Year Review of the World Summit on the Information Society

We, the representatives of 37 Member States, gathered in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, from 9 to 11 October 2024, for the African annual review workshop of the World Summit on the Information Society, convened by the Economic Commission for Africa in collaboration with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and other key stakeholders and attended by 150 participants, taking part both online and in person, comprising parliamentarians and representatives of international organizations, regional economic communities, civil society, academia, governments, the private sector, the technical community and continental organizations,

Acknowledgement of key issues

Committing ourselves, as we mark the twentieth anniversary of the World Summit on the Information Society, to a comprehensive review of the progress achieved, the challenges encountered and the opportunities arising since the adoption of the Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society,¹ in Geneva in 2003,

Acknowledging the contribution by the Economic Commission for Africa, which, in partnership with the secretariat of the Centre for Science and Technology for Development, hosted the African regional consultation for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, focusing on the 20-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society and the Global Digital Compact and aimed at facilitating in-depth dialogue among regional stakeholders on implementing the vision and outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2023/3, and fostering collaborative efforts to bridge the digital divide and drive sustainable development,

Acknowledging also the critical role of information and communications technology and digital transformation in driving growth in Africa and achieving the vision of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Acknowledging further the critical role of digital transformation in enabling the efficient delivery of government services, financial inclusion and job creation, and also in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of Agenda 2063,

Commending the various initiatives taken by the Economic Commission for Africa to empower Africa in its journey along the sustainable development pathway through the harnessing of inclusive, innovative and secure digital possibilities,

Commitment to action

Reaffirming our commitment to the vision of the World Summit on the Information Society of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society and dedicating ourselves to the Pact for the Future,² adopted at the Summit of the Future on 22 September 2024, encompassing the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations,

Recognizing, as we build on our commitment to the Pact for the Future, the critical role of the Action Lines of the World Summit on the Information Society,³ adopted at the Summit of the Future on 22 September 2024, in advancing efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063,

Acknowledging that our commitment entails addressing emerging digital governance trends and technologies, while enhancing coordination with the Global Digital Compact through such processes as

¹ See A/C.2/59/3, annex.

² General Assembly resolution 79/1.

³ *Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations* (United Nations publication, 2024).

the World Summit on the Information Society and the Internet Governance Forum, in pursuit of our goal to foster a continent that is prosperous, integrated and peaceful,

Collaboration and partnerships

Recognizing the vital role of inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships, encompassing all branches of government – namely, the executive, the judiciary and the legislature – civil society, the private sector and international organizations, in propelling the digital transformation agenda forward,

Calling for enhanced cooperation among Governments, civil society, the private sector, parliamentarians, policymakers and international organizations to achieve the objectives of the Global Digital Compact, including:

- (a) Closing digital divides and accelerating progress across the Sustainable Development Goals,
- (b) Expanding inclusion and benefits from the digital economy for all,
- (c) Fostering an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space,
- (d) Advancing responsible, equitable and interoperable data governance approaches,
- (e) Enhancing international governance of artificial intelligence,

Monitoring and evaluation

Emphasizing the importance of strengthening digital infrastructure, developing e-government solutions and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the Action Lines of the World Summit on the Information Society and the objectives of the Global Digital Compact,

Future steps

Recognizing the urgent need to bridge the digital divide across Africa, ensuring equal access to technology for all, and the requirement that, to achieve this, we must strengthen digital infrastructure, including broadband connectivity and affordable information and communications technology services, fostering resilient societies and digital economies,

Recognizing also that artificial intelligence and innovations in generative artificial intelligence have transformative potential to boost African economies through effective financial inclusion, employment creation and enhanced public service delivery,

Recognizing further that digital public infrastructure is vital for development in Africa, driving sustainable growth, innovation, improved governance and inclusive access to healthcare, education and finance, while promoting environmental sustainability,

Cognizant of the need to enhance data sharing and management in digital technologies across the continent,

Do hereby:

1. *Urge* African countries to prioritize capacity-building, education and digital skills development, unlocking the potential of artificial intelligence and digital public infrastructure for a prosperous Africa;
2. *Encourage* African countries to digitalize their government services to enhance citizen engagement, reduce corruption, improve the ease of business and promote domestic resource mobilization;
3. *Call for* policies and initiatives supporting entrepreneurship, in particular among underserved groups, including young people, persons with disabilities and women, to cultivate a vibrant digital economy;
4. *Request* the Economic Commission for Africa to map the existing goals of the World Summit on the Information Society and Agenda 2063 against the priorities outlined in the Global Digital Compact, with a view to fostering coherence and reinforcing joint commitments;

5. *Urge* Member States to foster collaboration with the private sector, civil society and international partners in leveraging digital public goods, open standards and innovative solutions for the development of digital public infrastructure, focusing on such areas as identity, payments, data exchange, financing, cybersecurity and others;

6. *Also urge* Member States to harmonize their legal and policy frameworks to support cross-border data sharing and e-commerce, and also to build a vibrant digital system;

7. *Further urge* Member States to put in place supportive policies, designed to regulate the use of artificial intelligence and also to avert its risks, and to establish robust infrastructure, with the aim of tapping into the limitless opportunities of such intelligence to spur its development;

8. *Call upon* all stakeholders, in particular Governments and the private sector, to conduct cybersecurity maturity assessments and ensure data protection compliance;

9. *Also call upon* all stakeholders to work together in line with the objectives, principles, actions and commitments of the Global Digital Compact in tackling the widening digital divides between and within countries, so as to ensure that no one is left behind in the development and application of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence;

10. *Call upon* Member States, with the support of the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union, the regional economic communities and other partners, to adopt multi-stakeholder processes to fast-track the implementation of key initiatives, including the following:

- (a) African Centre for Coordination and Research in Cybersecurity, Togo;
- (b) African Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence, Congo;
- (c) African Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics Centre of Excellence, Rwanda;
- (d) African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection;⁴
- (e) African Union Data Policy Framework;⁵
- (f) African Union Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy;⁶
- (g) Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;⁷
- (h) African single digital market;
- (i) Adaptation of the Action Lines of the World Summit on the Information Society to the Global Digital Compact and the Pact for the Future;

11. *Encourage* continued collaboration and contributions to the World Summit on the Information Society process at the national and regional levels, to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in building a prosperous, integrated and peaceful Africa;

12. *Urge* all stakeholders to commit themselves to the collaborative efforts outlined in the present Declaration, driving the agenda forward towards a more connected and equitable digital society that prioritizes inclusion, innovation and security for all.

Done at Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, on 11 October 2024

⁴ Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/29560-treaty-0048_-_african_union_convention_on_cyber_security_and_personal_data_protection_e.pdf.

⁵ African Union, *AU Data Policy Framework* (Addis Ababa, 2022).

⁶ African Union, *Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy: Harnessing AI for Africa's Development and Prosperity* (Addis Ababa, 2024).

⁷ Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty-consolidated_text_on_cfta_-_en.pdf.