

Welcome Remarks

H.E. Dr. Amr S. Talaat / Minister of ICT in Egypt

AU STC Bureau meeting

July 6th, 2021

**Honourable Ministers members of the Bureau of the AU Specialized
Technical Committee on Communication and ICT,**

Your Excellency Dr. Amany Abou Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and
Energy,

Representatives of the African Specialized Agencies and Regional Economic
Communities,

Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to meet you today in view of the importance of the
African collective work which we have embarked on during the Specialized
Technical Committee held in Sharm El Sheikh in October 2019, and during the extra-
ordinary session of the Bureau in May 2020 in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Since then, and in close cooperation with the AU Commission, we were able to pin down a number of major areas that need our un-divided attention to speed up the digital transformation in Africa.

The AU progress report is comprehensive in offering cogent recommendations that are geared towards intersectoral actions to strengthen the eco system for digital transformation and the establishment of harmonized regional and continental digital ID systems.

In this context, it is of paramount importance that we focus on leverage points to expand and diversify African resources by building upon the network of international cooperation availed by development partners such as UN Agencies, international organizations and banks.

We affirm that work and priority setting need to remain in African hands while mobilizing external resources. Interestingly, the language used among all has been unified, which gives us as African countries an unprecedented opportunity to work holistically in line with our 2063 goals. Here I would like to refer to the UN SG Roadmap for Digital Cooperation which stresses on digital inclusion, universal connectivity, capacity building, cooperation in artificial intelligence, in addition to promoting trust and security in the digital environment.

I note with satisfaction that the African Digital Transformation Strategy adopted during our last Specialized Technical Committee in October 2019 corresponds with the mentioned road-map.

In each of our action lines, we can identify selective partners from the international community and pin point to success stories where individual African countries have been engaged. Let's draw on this map of success and build on them in the suggested focus groups. For instance, I am happy that Egypt under the World Food Program is creating a digital platform for Africa targeting the goal of zero hunger. This triangular facilitation based on "south- south- development partners" is a model to emulate.

The plans we have for reformed and resilient Health, Education and Agricultural sectors, could be best served through the vehicle of the AI Working Group. I invite you to make use of the growing Egyptian portfolios of solutions in those subjects and our developing centre of excellence for the formation of qualified resources. African countries who participate on the international front should act as a bridge to communicate African stances and tailor international expertise to continental specifications. I urge the AI group to finalize the 19 points pan African stance in order to be raised to the attention of STC 4 that is due end of 2021.

On the innovation and entrepreneurship front, 7000 trainees and 78 small enterprises have benefitted from the African App Launchpad presidential initiative. The AAL works by availing a high-quality, technology-learning online platform through crowd-sourcing top online content delivered through leading MOOCs platforms.

In Capacity Building, Egypt believes in the potential of African human competencies in ICT. The initiative of the Egyptian African Telecom Regulatory Training Center (EG-ATRC) aims at building African human competencies capable of dealing with the emerging challenges in the sector. Our Egypt Post's training centre welcomes the availing of e-commerce operation readiness programs as well as Fintech.

Ladies and gentlemen, our plans for a prosperous digital Africa should rest on a clear plan for digital policies. I do hope that we will pay sufficient attention to promoting the innovative use of data, the protection of “critical data and information” and fostering appropriate digital policies across the sectors of the economy which are now a pre-requisite for a successful digital transformation.

I wish you all successful deliberations.

Thank you.