

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE SAMUEL NARTEY GEORGE, MINISTER OF
COMMUNICATION, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATIONS
AT THE OPENING OF THE 1ST AFRICAN PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE WORLD
TELECOMMUNICATION STANDARDIZATION ASSEMBLY (WTSA-28) HELD AT THE
PALMS AIRPORT CITY HOTEL ON 13TH APRIL 2026 AT 10:00AM**

Secretary General for the African Telecommunication Union (ATU), John Omo
Director of the ITU Telecommunication Standardisation Bureau (TSB), Seizo Onoe
Director General of NCA, Rev. Ing. Edmund Yirenkyi Fianko
Chairpersons for Study Groups 2 and 3
Representatives from Government and Industry,
Distinguished Delegates and Participants
Friends from the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning

On behalf of H.E. the President, John Dramani Mahama, I warmly welcome you to Ghana. I encourage you to enjoy the Ghanaian hospitality. As a Member State of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), we are honoured to host the 1st African Preparatory meeting for the World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly 2028 (WTSA-28). We are also hosting the Joint ITU/ATU Workshop on the Economic Impact of OTTs and the Implementation of a Common Emergency Number in Africa. In addition, we are holding this week's meetings of Regional Study Group 2 and Study Group 3.

Mohee, Obaake, Akwaaba, Maraba, Woezor, Welcome!

Let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation to ATU and ITU for advancing Africa's cooperation in telecommunications and ICT standards. The theme, **"Strengthening Africa's common position for WTSA-28,"** highlights our goal. We want to develop unified African proposals that reflect our continent's needs while aligning with

global standards. Our aim is to increase Africa's visibility and influence in international forums and ensure we are active contributors shaping digital policies and standards. We must become rule-makers, not just rule-takers!

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, digital technologies are transforming economies, reshaping societies, and redefining how we communicate, work, and innovate. From artificial intelligence to 5G and beyond, the pace of technological advancement presents both immense opportunities and complex challenges. Standards are the invisible architecture of the digital world. They ensure interoperability, foster innovation, enhance security, and enable inclusive access to digital services. Without robust and globally harmonised standards, the promise of the digital economy cannot be fully realised.

Africa's participation in global standardisation is essential. We must increase the quality and quantity of our submissions to the ITU. We can do this by implementing targeted strategies, including specialised capacity-building, inter-institutional collaboration, and mentorship initiatives. By focusing on priority areas and facilitating structured knowledge sharing and active participation, Africa ensures talented professionals are fully engaged. This approach allows Africa to shape standards that reflect its unique developmental priorities, rather than just adopt them.

As we prepare for WTSA-28, it is important to remember how unity during WTSA-24 brought the continent some good fortune. In 2024, we submitted about 37 African Common Proposals. The meeting adopted 34 of the Contributions with some modifications. The 34 Contributions included new resolutions, namely:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Metaverse and
- ITU Strategic Planning

It is encouraging to note that at the WTSA-24, Africa secured twenty-nine (29) experts from 13 African countries holding positions of ITU Chairs, Vice Chairs and TSAG vice chairs.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, this week's meeting is our chance to align positions, strengthen regional cooperation, and build consensus. Our main technical priorities are bridging the digital divide through rural broadband, enhancing cybersecurity via robust frameworks, promoting affordable connectivity with infrastructure sharing, and fostering safe, inclusive advancement of AI and IoT. We must ensure standardisation supports innovation and remains flexible. It should be guided by technology neutrality, inclusivity, and sustainability. Together, we will create an environment where both established players and new innovators can succeed.

To make this two-day high-level regional preparatory meeting, and those of SG2RG-AFR and SG3RG-AFR, truly advance Africa's interests, I urge each of you to actively transform today's discussions into specific, actionable commitments. Please engage, share your insights, and collaborate with fellow participants to formulate unified positions that effectively balance our regional priorities with global objectives. Let us agree on concrete strategies that will guide our continent's actions following this meeting and enable us to shape Africa's digital future together.

Fellow invited guests, I want to seize this opportunity to acknowledge Mr John Omo's leadership in coordinating the African Telecommunication Union. Under his leadership, ATU has become more coordinated, influential, and forward-looking, driving Africa's participation in the global digital economy. Membership rose from 37 to 52 Member States. This resulted in financial stability. ATU is now very attractive, as shown by the number of candidates eager to take up his mantle.

It has been a little over 7 years of your leadership, and it has been very impactful. You have paid your dues! Well done, my brother! I wish you well in your next endeavours.

Ghana's Campaign

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Ghana is seeking your support for re-election to the ITU Council and Radio Regulations Board (RRB) for the Africa Region for 2027-2030,

during the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference scheduled for Doha, Qatar, from 9th to 27th November 2026. Ghana has kept faith with the ITU and has regularly contributed to the ITU Council.

Ghana reaffirms its record of principled leadership and regional representation. Ghana is committed to inclusive digital transformation and has supported initiatives to expand connectivity and enhance cybersecurity. Ghana supports equitable access to digital resources for all Member States. For example, Ghana played a key role in the West Africa Regional Communication Infrastructure Program. This has improved regional Internet connectivity and fostered cross-border ICT collaboration. Continued participation will help keep African perspectives central to global ICT governance. With your support, Ghana will strengthen collaboration and promote a fair, innovative, and resilient digital future.

We kindly and specifically request your vote during the Plenipotentiary Conference to help Ghana retain its seat at the Council and to support the re-appointment of Rev. Ing. Edmund Yirenyi Fianko, the Director General of the National Communications Authority (NCA), to the ITU's Radio Regulations Board (RRB). Your support will be vital to our continued participation and leadership.

Ghana also encourages members to consider re-electing Mr Seizo Onoe, the TSB Director. He has so far performed creditably, contributing generously to the technical foundations of the global digital ecosystem. He has also steered the standardisation, security, and universal acceptance of next-generation technologies.

Invitation to Cocktail Reception

Ladies and gentlemen, please join us for a special cocktail reception at 6:00pm, right here. Enjoy Ghanaian hospitality, music, and cuisine with us. See you this evening.

Conclusion

I wish to thank ATU and ITU for considering Ghana worthy of hosting this meeting, and the Local Planning Team from the Ministry and the National Communication Authority for making this meeting a success.

Ghana commits to a future that is inclusive, secure, and sustainable. This meeting will lay a strong foundation for Africa's impactful role at WTSA-28 and ensure our collective voice is heard globally.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a successful meeting. Let us work together to turn our shared ambitions into transformative outcomes for the continent. May your discussions lead to meaningful progress, and I encourage you to explore the vibrant city of Accra if you have the time.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment. Together, let us drive progress and innovation for Africa's digital transformation—today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.