

Alexander Ntoko

Cameroon

Candidate
for the post of
**Director of the
ITU Telecommunication
Development Bureau**

What is your view on the role of digital technologies in a rapidly changing world?

Digital technologies are the foundation for most of the fundamental changes we experience today. We have moved from digitization – which became well-known in the early 90s – to digitalization and now to digital transformation. It is the first time in the history of mankind that such powerful, digital technology-based tools have been within the reach of so many people worldwide.

The so-called “fourth industrial revolution” is possible today because of digital technologies. We cannot miss the opportunity to understand how these technologies work, and how to use them effectively, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out by the United Nations (UN).



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How should the work of ITU's Telecommunication Development Sector evolve to maintain relevance in today's world?

Over the years, I have worked closely with the UN and many of its agencies, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Labour Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Trade Organization (WTO) and others, on the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development.

Like other specialized agencies in the UN system, ITU must work in a manner that highlights it as the key leader in its domain – both within the system and, of course, collaboratively. But leading does not mean going it alone or knowing it all. It means that we know our destination and how to get there. And that is by guiding our Member States in their pursuit of UN global goals, namely the SDGs.

If elected, what are your top three priorities and how do you plan to achieve them?

My top three priorities are aimed at firmly establishing ITU's Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) as the premier platform of ICT4D, or ICTs for development.

I would put this vision into action in three essential ways:

1. Establish and direct a strategy to **increase accessibility, inclusion, and diversity**. The benefits of ICTs should reach everyone.
2. Put in place strategies and policies to **facilitate access to new tools and technologies** for digitalization and digital transformation. I would do so through existing and new initiatives, as well as based on my own experience in ICTs.
3. Use dedicated platforms to **empower entrepreneurial youths globally**. Such platforms include the ITU Smart Incubator, which I launched in 2018 (see recent [ITU News article](#)). To realize this three-part strategy, the emphasis should be on maximizing the relevance the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) through activities focused on meeting the SDGs. Having measurable indicators on these activities and the SDG-related benefits of ICTs will be paramount.

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How can the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector contribute to progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

To get anywhere, it's always important to know your current location in a simple manner, like you would with the GPS on your smartphone, and just as importantly, your distance to your destination. Are you stepping in the right direction?

In relation to this idea, I led the development of a platform based on artificial intelligence (AI) to automate the mapping of activities in the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) onto the 17 SDGs. This platform, first presented to the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG), is also now used for ITU-D activities. As this example shows, everyone today, in this era of the fourth industrial revolution, could potentially enjoy free access to very powerful technologies. It also underlines why BDT needs to take a closer look at how it undertakes its activities aimed at meeting the SDGs.

Tell us about your achievements in leadership and building consensus.

In 2007, I led the establishment of a global framework for international cooperation in cybersecurity – the Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA). I also played a lead role in bringing together top cybersecurity companies and experts to form a common understanding of the five pillars of the GCA initiative, as well as establishing partnerships for GCA operations. At its peak, this cybersecurity framework brought together 152 countries, making it the biggest platform for international cooperation in cybersecurity at that time.

Prior to that, a similar initiative brought together over 100 countries in EC-DC – E-Commerce for Developing Countries. In both cases, it was necessary to have a common understanding, a consensus on the challenges and strategies for putting solutions in place. This involved agreement on the most appropriate technologies as well as relevant policies and strategies. The leadership and consensus built in these two examples were recognized globally by the press, countries, and other UN agencies.

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What else would you bring to the table as the next Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau?

I would bring a collection of solutions and strategies for digital transformation within BDT and ITU-D. These would aim to facilitate our collective acquisition of knowledge on these technologies and as well as increase efficiency in Bureau operations.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Today, the world faces several global challenges: climate change, hunger, conflicts, pandemics, wars, and lack of connectivity, to name a few.

The key promise of the SDGs was to achieve them by 2030. We are now less than eight years away, and a lot of progress is still yet to be made.

No matter what challenges we face, technology continues to evolve at the fastest speed ever. We see new ICT trends such as AI, blockchain, Web3, the metaverse and non-fungible tokens (NFTs).

Let's not forget, ICTs continue to be essential in all aspects of life, but not everyone has access to them.

In this fourth industrial revolution, powerful technologies are often easier to acquire than during the three previous ones. We therefore have better chances to empower people, communities, and countries to actively participate – and thus make progress towards the SDGs.

More than ever, the need to better understand the capabilities of technologies is a critical reason to establish ITU-D as the world's premier ICT4D platform. As the next Director of BDT, I am prepared to spearhead the achievement of these goals.



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