

## Muhammadou M.O. Kah

### Gambia

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 more than ever essential as a core enabler for development, as they drive economic growth, facilitate improved processes, increase democratization, and allow rapid access to information and knowledge assets. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital technologies, particularly applications related to the digitalization of health care, agriculture, education, government, and e-commerce, will accelerate transformation and change.

Harnessing technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, big data, blockchain, drones, and robotics is pivotal to strengthen ITU Member States' quest for digital transformation and reset socio-economic development in a rapidly changing world.

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

ITU must reset and prioritize by embracing "development" as its organizational ethos. ITU must adopt a game-changing mindset to enhance, retain, and strengthen its talent base with a diversity of competence, capacity, and geographical representation, in addition to fostering transparency, accountability, smart organizational structure, and processes that are digitally enabled.



*Digital technologies are more than ever essential as a core enabler for development.*

Muhammadou M.O. Kah

ITU must strengthen its position as the thought leader for sustainable digital transformation while ensuring adherence to the core fundamental values of neutrality, transparency, and equity to all. ITU's relevance will require further engagement with all Member States and stakeholders to facilitate knowledge-sharing, as well as access to the outcomes of deliberations and recommendations. ITU must provide expert guidance and evidence-based knowledge to reinvigorate collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships.

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

My leadership will tackle some of the most pressing and foundational challenges in digital transformation, specifically related to the following areas:

1. **The digital divide and inclusivity:** The need for inclusive access to technology has become imperative to social development for all people, particularly those who face barriers to access. I will provide leadership to establish substantive collaborations and partnerships to facilitate the adoption of innovations. I will apply an equity lens to all ITU programmes and activities, as well as support programmes to address global inequities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields of study to improve curricula and the approaches to credentials.
2. **Data and digital infrastructure:** ITU must play a key role in enabling the least-developed countries (LDCs) to keep up with growing demand for data and digital infrastructure as drivers for a world that is connected even during global crises. I will push forward innovative initiatives and programmes, including multi-sectoral collaborations and partnerships for Member States to build sustainable data and digital infrastructure.
3. **Smarter policy and regulatory regimes:** The governments of ITU Member States embrace digital transformation for effective delivery of government and social services to citizens. This means facilitating access to affordable and universally accessible broadband connectivity, a digitally enabled supply chain, and smarter policy and regulatory regimes. In leading this work, I will make use of my significant experience working on the ground across different continents, as well as my diplomatic credentials. I will facilitate negotiations, cooperation, and engagement with partners to scale up digital growth, aimed at ensuring value-creation across our Member States.

**Muhammadou M.O. Kah**

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



*ITU must reset and prioritize by embracing 'development' as its organizational ethos. ”*

Muhammadou M.O. Kah

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

The centrality of digitalization and digital transformation as an enabler for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is fundamental for our Member States. Ensuring increased engagement and support for the sustainable adoption of ICTs, process innovations, and digitalization by Member States enables advancement on all SDGs.

ITU must prioritize and support activities that will meaningfully connect the unconnected, with a commitment to prioritize closing the digital divide and support inclusive and equitable digital outcomes. Appropriate platforms and services aimed at achieving SDGs on health, education, agriculture, and social services delivery, especially beyond urban centres and for often-neglected rural communities, will support digital equity across outcomes.

### ***Tell us about your achievements in leadership and building consensus.***

Key amongst those numerous leadership achievements is my six years of service as the first Gambian Vice-Chancellor at The University of the Gambia. My leadership resulted in an unprecedented transformation that positioned the university, in public eyes, as the "hope of the nation". I led efforts to expand the university, to set it on a path to provide access to the good-quality higher education and research programmes required to meet the socio-economic needs of The Gambia and the region. This enabled first-generation graduates, women, and people from underrepresented communities to optimize their potential and take on roles in public, private, and civil society organizations across the country, region, and internationally.

Throughout my career, I have worked to build consensus by creating a safe and comfortable environment anchored in mutual respect, trust, transparency, and integrity. Further, I use a consultative approach to quickly enhance my understanding of each stakeholder's position, interests, and unique cultural context. Leveraging active listening, emotional intelligence, and an understanding of social geography allows me to ensure neutrality in my viewpoints, resulting in consensus with a positive outcome for all stakeholders.

**Muhammadou M.O. Kah**

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



*“ ITU must prioritize and support activities that will meaningfully connect the unconnected. ”*

Muhammadou M.O. Kah

**Muhammadou M.O. Kah**

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

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

Early in my life, I recognized the potential of ICTs, telecommunications, and digitalization to lift humanity up from poverty, create wealth, and enhance the quality of life, especially for young people, women, the elderly, and the most vulnerable. As a result, I became a pioneer in the field of ICTs for development, as evidenced by my extensive work in academia, government, the private sector, civil society, and start-ups, as well as through my service on international scientific panels.

Recently, I served as Chairman of the African Group of Ambassadors in Geneva. I am currently serving as Vice President (Africa) for the United Nations Human Rights Council and as Vice Chairman for two United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD) organs – the Commission for Science and Technology Development and the Trade and Development Board. Also, I served as one of two Ambassadors designated as Friends of the Chair of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) General Assembly.

These substantive and unique leadership experiences will be invaluable for me as incoming Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), ensuring alignment, coordination, and collaboration for impactful digital transformation among ITU Member States.

### ***Is there anything else you would like to add?***

I am proud to offer my candidature as a Gambian and an African who has deep knowledge and roots within the Global South, among Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) members, LDCs, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and beyond. Thus, I am your candidate that brings a deep conscience, diverse capabilities, and field experience, combined with substantive leadership competencies relevant to the needs of BDT and ITU.



*I am proud to offer my candidature as a Gambian and an African who has deep knowledge and roots within the Global South. ”*

Muhammadou M.O. Kah

