

POSITION PAPER

The Republic of South Africa acknowledges that the lack of advanced technology would become a hurdle for sustainable development and economic growth and reduce or limit the capacity for the delivery of public service and global cooperation and collaboration. The profits from digital transformation are not evenly distributed, particularly in developing economies. South Africa sees itself as a leading economy in Africa, a strong believer in multilateral cooperation, and an advocate for the concerns of developing economies. It considers the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is called upon to provide the means for safe and inclusive digital governance, and to provide flexible, internationally-agreed-upon standards.

Digital transformation is a priority for South Africa's government and is evident in several of the country's current initiatives. **SA Connect** was established to implement South Africa's national broadband policy to increase affordable broadband rural and underserved populations. **The National Digital and Future Skills Strategy (2020–2030)** was implemented to enhance the digital competency of the workforce for, especially for participation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. **The Artificial Intelligence Institute of South Africa (AIISA)** was created to enable responsible AI research and innovation and build national capacity. Finally, **South Africa's National Data and Cloud Policy (2024)** aims to secure data sovereignty and modernize public infrastructure.

The digital divide between urban and rural areas, sophisticated cyber threats to critical infrastructure and the uneven provision of affordable and geographically accessible digital services pose a threat to the socio-economic stability of South Africa and the development initiatives of the government. South Africa is committed to developing internationally accepted standards for more resilient cyber security for telecommunications and recognizes the importance of national sovereignty. South Africa stresses the importance of having strong, secure digital networks in order to protect vital sectors such as healthcare, finance, education, transport, and government from ransom ware and many forms of cyber espionage and attacks. The delegation feels the ITU needs to improve cyber technical assistance, promote cross-border service threat information, and improve the capability of developing countries through the establishment of regional cyber security centres and technical level training.

The Republic of South Africa maintains that the primary concern of artificial intelligence should be of a human focus, with transparency, responsibility, accountability, and inclusiveness. AI governance frameworks should aim at promoting innovative mechanisms that protect the right to privacy, prevent discriminatory outcomes from AI, provide transparency and explanations for AI-driven decisions, and ensure that decisions remain under the control of humans. South Africa is in favour of the application of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021) and supports the fostering of international collaborations on the development of governance frameworks for artificial intelligence which are adaptable to the differentiated capacities of the developed and developing countries.

POSITION PAPER

South Africa continues to prioritize the unimpeded right to access the Internet. The delegation supports the view that the ability to use the Internet facilitates education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, access to financial services, effective responses to disasters, and the ability to participate in democracy. South Africa encourages investment in Internet connectivity, including broadband, satellite, fibre optic networks, and last mile Internet connectivity, in partnerships with national governments, international financial institutions, development banks, and the private sector. Such collaboration would primarily focus on rural areas with little to no connectivity to the Internet.

To advance global collaboration, South Africa suggests creating an ITU Global Digital Infrastructure Partnership to gather financial, technological, and infrastructural resources for developing countries. Moreover, the delegation suggests creating an ITU AI Governance and Regulatory Support Program to help member countries build ethical AI legislation and regulatory and workforce capacities. South Africa stands for an International Cyber Resilience Network to enable real-time data sharing, coordinated responses to cyber incidents, and the optional adoption of international best cyber security practices.

The Republic of South Africa remains true to multilateralism, global unity and equitable technological development. Now it's time for the nations to come together and focus on building a safer digital infrastructure, better AI governance and universal connectivity for the global citizens to live a peaceful and fraud-free life. South Africa is ready to work with other Member States to build an inclusive, and long-lasting solutions with the International Telecommunication Union's guidance.