

POSITION PAPER

Committee: International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Council

Country : Federal Republic of Nigeria

**Agenda: Strengthening Global Standards for Secure Digital Infrastructure, Artificial Intelligence Governance
and Universal Connectivity in Emerging Economies**

BACKGROUND OF THE AGENDA

The world is undergoing a rapid digital transformation that is reshaping economies, governance systems, and societies at an unprecedented scale. Digital infrastructure today extends beyond traditional telecommunications systems and includes fibre-optic networks, data centres, cloud computing platforms, satellite systems, cybersecurity frameworks, and artificial intelligence applications. These systems now form the backbone of global economic activity.

As digital dependence increases, so does vulnerability. Cyberattacks targeting governments, financial institutions, hospitals, and critical infrastructure have become more frequent and sophisticated. Ransomware, phishing, identity theft, and data breaches now pose significant risks to both developed and developing nations. For emerging economies, the challenge is intensified by limited cybersecurity capacity, inadequate funding, and shortages of skilled professionals.

Artificial intelligence represents both a transformative opportunity and a governance challenge. AI systems are being deployed across healthcare, agriculture, finance, education, and public administration. While they improve efficiency and productivity, they also raise concerns regarding bias, privacy, misinformation, transparency, and accountability. Without coordinated governance, AI risks deepening global inequality by concentrating technological power in a small number of developed economies.

At the same time, the global digital divide remains a pressing issue. Despite significant progress, billions of people still lack meaningful internet access. This limits access to education, healthcare, financial services, and economic opportunities. Universal connectivity is therefore not only a technological issue but a development imperative.

The International Telecommunication Union plays a central role in addressing these challenges by promoting global standards, supporting infrastructure development, and encouraging international cooperation. The agenda under discussion reflects three interconnected priorities: secure digital infrastructure, responsible AI governance, and universal connectivity.

COUNTRY'S STAKE (NIGERIA)

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation with over 200 million citizens, has a significant stake in global digital governance. The country's ICT sector contributes approximately **17–18% of GDP**, making it one of Nigeria's most important non-oil sectors.

Nigeria has experienced rapid growth in digital services, particularly in fintech, telecommunications, and e-commerce. Companies such as Flutterwave, Paystack, Moniepoint, and Interswitch have positioned Nigeria as a leading digital innovation hub in Africa, attracting billions of dollars in investment.

However, challenges remain. Broadband penetration is still uneven, especially in rural areas. High infrastructure costs, electricity shortages, and limited network coverage continue to restrict access. These limitations contribute to digital inequality and reduce participation in the global digital economy.

Cybersecurity threats also present a major concern. Nigeria faces increasing incidents of online fraud, phishing attacks, and cybercrime targeting financial systems. As digital transactions grow, securing digital infrastructure becomes essential for economic stability.

Artificial intelligence presents major opportunities for Nigeria in agriculture, healthcare, education, and financial inclusion. However, without proper governance frameworks, AI could deepen inequality or expose sensitive data to misuse.

For Nigeria, digital transformation is not optional—it is central to economic diversification, job creation, and long-term development.

ACTIONS TAKEN SO FAR

Nigeria has implemented several key policies to strengthen its digital ecosystem.

The **National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020–2030)** provides a roadmap for digital transformation, focusing on infrastructure, skills development, innovation, and digital inclusion.

The **National Broadband Plan (2020–2025)** aims to expand broadband coverage and reduce internet costs nationwide.

The **Nigeria Startup Act 2022** supports innovation by improving access to funding, reducing regulatory barriers, and encouraging entrepreneurship.

The **Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023** strengthens privacy laws and improves trust in digital services.

The **Cybercrimes Act** provides a legal framework to combat cybercrime and strengthen cybersecurity enforcement.

Nigeria has also begun deploying **5G technology**, expanding telecommunications infrastructure through partnerships with private operators such as MTN, Airtel, Globacom, and 9mobile.

Additionally, Nigeria has developed a **National Artificial Intelligence Strategy** promoting responsible AI development and research investment.

Through the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the country continues to strengthen regulation, innovation, and digital expansion.

Despite these efforts, gaps remain in rural connectivity, cybersecurity capacity, and digital skills development.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Nigeria proposes a cooperative international approach under the ITU framework.

1. ITU Global Digital Infrastructure Fund

Nigeria supports the creation of a **US\$1 billion fund** to support broadband expansion, data centres, and cybersecurity infrastructure in developing countries.

2. Global Cybersecurity Standards

Establish flexible minimum global standards covering encryption, infrastructure resilience, and incident response.

3. AI Governance Framework

Develop risk-based AI principles focusing on transparency, accountability, fairness, and human oversight.

Nigeria also supports an **International AI Regulatory Sandbox** for testing AI systems in developing economies.

4. Capacity Building

Create global training programs in AI, cybersecurity, and software engineering, including scholarships and regional centres of excellence.

5. Public–Private Partnerships

Encourage collaboration between governments and private companies to expand infrastructure and innovation.

6. Universal Connectivity

Promote affordable internet through infrastructure sharing, satellite expansion, and Universal Service Funds.

7. Cybersecurity Cooperation

Strengthen international intelligence sharing and joint cybercrime investigations.

8. Digital Inclusion

Ensure women, rural communities, and low-income populations have equal access to digital services.

CONCLUSION

Digital transformation is redefining the global economy. Secure infrastructure, artificial intelligence governance, and universal connectivity are now essential pillars of development.

Nigeria recognizes both the opportunities and risks of this transformation. While the country has made significant progress in expanding its digital economy, major challenges remain in infrastructure, cybersecurity, and access inequality.

Nigeria believes that these challenges cannot be solved unilaterally. They require international cooperation, shared responsibility, and inclusive policymaking under the ITU framework.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria remains committed to working with all Member States to build a secure, inclusive, and globally connected digital future. Through collaboration, investment, and innovation, the international community can ensure that digital transformation benefits all nations equally.