



MINISTRY
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**STATEMENT ON SOUTH AFRICA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL
TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION (ITU) COUNCIL, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND,
11 – 21 JULY 2023**

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The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN) responsible for overseeing Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Its Council of 48 member states, includes the Republic of South Africa that was elected during its highest policy-making Conference, the 2022 Plenipotentiary Conference. The Council governs the Union between Plenipotentiary Conferences to ensure that its activities, policies and strategies remain relevant in today's rapidly changing telecommunications landscape.

The 2023 Council session was held in Geneva, Switzerland on 11 - 21 July. Over 700 delegates, including Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Directors-General, CEOs and senior officials from the members states across the globe attended the session.

The Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, **Honourable Mondli Gungubele**, led the South African delegation. In the High-Level Segment discussing universal, meaningful connectivity for all under the theme "Creating a fit for the future ITU", the Minister highlighted the ITU's crucial role in promoting collaboration and positive change. He emphasised the importance of bridging the digital divide through universal connectivity, skills and innovations to increase the uptake and usage of ICTs.

The 2023 ITU Council took a crucial step to appoint Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons for the Council's various Working and Expert Groups. These individuals will lead the Union's strategic activities for the 2023-2026 period. One of these appointed leaders was **Ms Cynthia Lesufi**, the South African representative to the ITU. She was elected as the Chairperson of the Council Working Group on the World Summit on the Information Society and Sustainable Development Goals (CWG-WSIS&SDG).

The CWG-WSIS&SDG is one of seven Council Working Groups responsible for guiding ITU towards achieving the WSIS outcomes and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development while also facilitating the implementation of these outcomes and the achievement of the SDGs. By implementing WSIS outcomes, South Africa and the world can drive digital transformation and the development of the digital economy while also helping to achieve the SDGs.

As a Council member, South Africa will have a crucial role in shaping the ITU's agenda and ensuring that its global goals align with the country's domestic socio-economic objectives aimed at leaving no one behind in the digital economy.

The Council further approved the Union's budget for 2024-2025 and designated funds to support the Regional Initiatives approved by the World Telecommunications Development Conference in 2022. For Africa, the initiatives include promoting digital transformation, expanding broadband infrastructure and connectivity, ensuring trust and security in telecommunications, protecting personal data, and fostering emerging technologies and innovation.

Council also approved the Terms of Reference for the Expert Group on the International Telecommunication Regulations (EG-ITRs) to address issues related to the ITRs, including their review. The ITRs establish general principles for international telecommunication services.. The EG-ITRs will review the ITRs and consider new trends and emerging issues in telecommunications and the international environment that may affect the ITRs.

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