



**2023 ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)**  
**“Digital transformation for a sustainable and equitable digital future: Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in Africa”**  
**3-5 October 2023**  
**Addis Ababa Ethiopia**



*Organized by the International Telecommunication Union  
Hosted by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*

MEETING REPORT by **Horace Chipembere** (Generation Connect Youth Envoy – Africa)

## **1. Background & Introduction**

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2023, the international Telecommunication Union (ITU) convened an important gathering in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia sparking intense dialogue and fostering a collaborative environment. *The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)* stood as proof to the advancing digital landscape in Africa. Organized under the meticulous oversight of the International Telecommunication Union's Telecommunication Development Bureau and the welcoming hospitality of the Ethiopian Ministry of Innovation and Technology, this forum predicted a bright and promising future for Africa's digital ecosystem. The RDF-AFR was not just a meeting.

The meeting was a fusion of ideas, commitments, and progressive strategies. Providing platforms for members, partners, and the youth, it was a significant nexus for strategic planning, information sharing, and nurturing new partnerships. Its resonance could be felt far beyond the confines of the conference, projecting an optimistic vision for the continent's digital future.

## 2. Youth Engagement (My perspective)

The unquestionable presence and efforts of Africa's youth, of whom my narrative (Horace Chipembere) is recognizable, were crucial to the RDF-AFR's achievement. My participation took on a variety of positions, from being a rapporteur on the second day (4<sup>th</sup> October) to a presenter on (5<sup>th</sup> October) on the Youth driven digital development and each one demonstrated the vitality and inventiveness that young people can offer to these kinds of forums.

The “*Youth driven Digital Development*” in Africa session on 5<sup>th</sup> October remains particularly etched in my memory. It was a revolution in dialogue where young people from across the African continent cocreated a platform that exemplified what young minds when united in purpose can achieve. Together we aimed to empower fellow young Africans in the digital sphere exchange knowledge and advocate for youth centered digital policies and underline the value of effective networking. As a founder of Her for Tech (aimed at bridging Gender Digital Divide in Malawi) I had the privilege of presenting some *successful examples of youth-led digital projects in Africa and the lessons can be learned from them*. As Dr. Zavazava (Director Telecommunication Development Bureau ITU) rightly pointed out engaging Africa's youth in the digital transformation is not just an option, it's an imperative. The RDF-AFR was a unique platform that recognized this further amplifying our voices understanding our challenges and fostering an environment where youth led initiatives could flourish.

## 3. An In-Depth Look at the Youth-led Session

The forum's core was the youth-led session. It provided an overview of the problems and potential solutions from several African countries, moderated by Saba Beyene, a Generation Connect Youth Envoy from Ethiopia. Young panelists such as me, Bethlehem Wondimu and Krshtee Sukhbilas, discussed our goals and experiences along the way. Krshtee Sukhbilas highlighted the particular difficulties encountered by young women in the digital age. We also had Mr. John OMO, Secretary General, African Telecommunications Union (ATU) who championed the role of youth as equal partners in Africa's digital advancement. Other young people joined virtually for example Emmanuela Able who highlighted and presented a comprehensive overview of the outstanding contributions made by the Generation Connect Africa Youth Envoys.

## 4. Concluding Remarks and Acknowledgments

The RDF-AFR for me was more than an event, it was a turning point in a journey of dedication collaboration and vision. As a tech innovator, last years (June 2022) victory of the digital skills for jobs hackathon in Rwanda at the [Generation Connect Youth Summit](#) achieved alongside my dedicated team ([Sandra Phiri](#) and [Khristee Sukhubilas](#)) set the stage for this rewarding endeavor. I owe profound gratitude to several individuals and institutions. The Generation Connect team of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) have been the wind beneath my wings. [Emmanuel Niyikora](#), [Lena Ostlund](#), [Loly Aylu Gaitan-Guerero](#), [Dunola Oladapo](#) and [Daud Suleman](#) your support has been invaluable. The foundation you have laid and the mentorship you have provided will undoubtedly catalyse many more success stories like mine.

Finally, I personally believe that the RDF-AFR inspired optimism, pointing to the beginning of a more promising digital future for Africa. Our African continent is about to experience a digital renaissance, made possible by sustained collaboration, innovation, and a youth driven strategy.

## Horace Chipembere RDF 2023 picture highlights



*Horace Chipembere (left) standing next to Emmanuel Niyikora project officer at ITU (middle) together with fellow digitalskills4jobs hackathon winner Krshtee Sukhubilas (right)*



*Horace Chipembere (right) speaking on best practices and success stories alongside Bethlehem Wondimu (Middle) sharing stage with Mr John Omo, Secretary General of African Telecommunication Union (ATU)*



*Horace Chipembere (second to the left) standing together with high profile International Telecommunication Union leaders and fellow Generation Connect Youth Envoys from Africa.*