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TANZANIA COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY (TCRA)



**DIRECTOR GENERAL, DR. JABIRI K. BAKARI MESSAGE FOR THE 46TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFRICAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION (ATU) /ICT
DAY ON 7TH DECEMBER, 2023**

**THEME:
"TOWARDS A DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND INCLUSION OF THE
MARGINALIZED: ADDRESSING ACCESSIBILITY FACTORS"**

Today marks the 46th anniversary of the founding of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU), an occasion celebrated as Telecommunications/ICT Day. Commemorated annually on the 7th of December, the day serves as an opportunity to reflect on the status of telecommunications/ICTs in Africa, assess our progress, envision the future, and strengthen our collaborative efforts to advance the digital landscape across the continent.

The theme for this year's celebration "**Towards a Digital Revolution and Inclusion of the Marginalized: Addressing Accessibility Factors**" encapsulates the significance of achieving a comprehensive and transformative digital revolution while emphasizing on the importance to ensure that the benefits are accessible to all, particularly rural and marginalized and underserved communities. Therefore, the theme focuses on a key critical aspect of "**bridging digital divide**".

Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) plays a key role in guiding the nation's telecommunications and ICT landscape. The regulatory body holds a critical role in formulating and enforcing regulatory framework in order to regulate efficiently the communication sector with the view to foster fair competition, innovation, and inclusive access to digital opportunities. Its responsibilities span from facilitating the expansion of telecommunications infrastructure in marginalized regions to championing digital literacy programs. As a regulator, TCRA creates an enabling regulatory environment, drives inclusive programs, and collaborates with diverse stakeholders to ensure that the benefits of the digital revolution are equitably distributed, particularly reaching underserved communities in Tanzania.

To address the theme of this year's Telecommunications/ICT Day, we recognize the critical role of the regulator towards digital revolution and bridging the digital divide. TCRA has implemented targeted initiatives to ensure that connectivity reaches marginalized communities. We have spearheaded programs that encourage to subsidize infrastructure development in rural areas in order to enable affordable and reliable access to communication services.

TCRA has continued to manage and monitor the communication infrastructure including the cell towers, fiber optic infrastructure as well as information storage centers (Data centers). These infrastructure are critical in the realization of the accessibility of services in various areas of the country. The government had also taken initiatives to promote ICT infrastructure development and digital inclusion, aiming to bring the benefits of the digital revolution to all citizens. The Government has reduced the costs of obtaining permission to pass infrastructure on the road (Right of Way Charges), from a construction payment fee of 1000 US Dollars per one(1) kilometer and annual fee payment of 1000 US Dollars for one (1) kilometer to 200 US Dollars and the annual payment of 100 US Dollars, respectively from July, 2023.

Investment in the telecommunication infrastructure has increased the rollout of mobile broadband networks covering a vast land accessed by people. By September, 2023 the expansion of 3G and 4G coverage attained population coverages of 83% and 74% and geographical coverages of 67% and 55% respectively. On the otherhand, user devices play a pivotal role in driving the adoption of telecommunication/ICT services. As of September 2023, the penetration of feature phones has risen to 83.66%, while smartphones have seen an increase to 30.71%.

TCRA also facilitates the inclusion of marginalized groups through enhanced SIM card registration processes where citizens are assured of the registration to embrace the digital services including mobile financial services. As of September 2023, Tanzania had about 67.1 million active registered SIM Cards , thus comparing with a population of 61.7 million as per 2022 census, this makes the overall penetration of 109%, meaning that there are 109 subscriptions per 100 population (people) in Tanzania by September 2023.

Concurrently the industry has witnessed the growth of digital financial inclusion services. As of September 2023, the mobile money subscriptions had reached 51.4 million users constituting 76.6% of the total registered active SIM cards. The enhanced simcard registration processes has also added SIM Card Registration procedures for user of communication services with age above 65 years of age or with defective fingerprints that experience challenges when capturing the biometric information, procedures.

As we stand at the crossroads of technological advancement, we must envision a future where no one is left behind. Tanzania is committed to fostering a digitally inclusive society, where every citizen has equal access to the opportunities presented by ICT. Our vision is not only about connecting people but also empowering them through digital literacy, skills development, and the creation of an enabling environment for creativity and innovation. In this respect, TCRA on 2nd November, 2023, launched a Digital Clubs Handbook to facilitate establishment and coordination of digital clubs in schools, colleges, and universities in the country. The handbook includes content in both English and Swahili languages, as well as braille for people with visual impairments. Additionally, digital clubs will be established to enhance knowledge of ICTs and the digital economy. These clubs will provide opportunities to acquire ICT skills, understand the importance of responsible digital citizenship, and actively contribute to the growth of digital Tanzania. By empowering these communities from the young age with essential digital skills, TCRA is actively contributing to the broader goal

of fostering a digitally inclusive society, emphasizing the transformative potential of digital education and engagement.

Towards Digital Revolution, TCRA understands the necessity of adapting to the emergence of new technologies in the sector such as 5G , artificial intelligence, internet of things, big data analytics and edge computing and therefore, creates an environment that fosters innovation while ensuring compliance with regulatory standards. The release of the IMT multi-band frequency spectrum in the 700 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2600 MHz, and 3500 MHz bands on 11th October, 2022 through auctioning has enabled service providers to broaden the communication services in the country. The new spectrum blocks have enabled the roll out of 5G technology services to different parts of Tanzania. TCRA has endeavoured to ensure that it creates an enabling environment that allows service providers to provide services that meet the national and international standards of communication quality.

In another ground-breaking initiative aimed at propelling the growth of digital technology start-ups and fostering innovative solutions to community challenges, TCRA in collaboration with Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) provides communication resources namely numbering resources, frequency spectrum and dot tz domains for free to various innovators (start-ups) who need to test their services for a specific period. Up to September 2023, TCRA had provided a number of resources for innovation tests to nine (9) start-ups. TCRA continues to review and create an environment that can further help the life cycle of start-ups towards becoming successfully independent businesses.

However, as we celebrate these achievements, we must acknowledge the existing disparities. Rural and marginalized communities still face challenges in accessing basic telecommunication services, hindering their full participation in the digital revolution. It is imperative that we collectively address these accessibility factors to ensure that the benefits of the digital revolution reach every corner of our nation.

No single entity can address the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital revolution alone. It requires a concerted effort from governments, regulatory bodies, private sector partners, civil society, and international organizations. In achieving this as a regulator we work closely with the Universal Communications Service Access Fund (UCSAF), mobile network operators and other stakeholders to address the challenges in infrastructure deployment and ensure the availability of network communication infrastructure in underserved and unserved areas. Through infrastructure development as a key prerequisite to addressing connectivity and accessibility issues, it has helped the country towards bridging the observed gap for service accessibility to all groups particularly the marginalized.

TCRA encourages everyone to use this momentous occasion to reaffirm our commitment to the digital revolution and the inclusion of the marginalized. TCRA stands ready to play its part in shaping a future where every citizen, regardless of their geographical location, income levels or gender can harness the full potential of telecommunications and ICT. Together, let us build a continent where connectivity is not just a luxury but a fundamental right, paving the way for a truly digital Africa.

I extend my heartfelt wishes to all Tanzanians, ICT stakeholders, and African Member States as they celebrate the exciting and memorable ATU Telecommunications/ICT Day in 2023.

Happy 46th Anniversary Wishes to ATU and Thank You!

Dr. Jabiri K. Bakari
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