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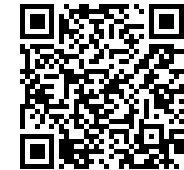
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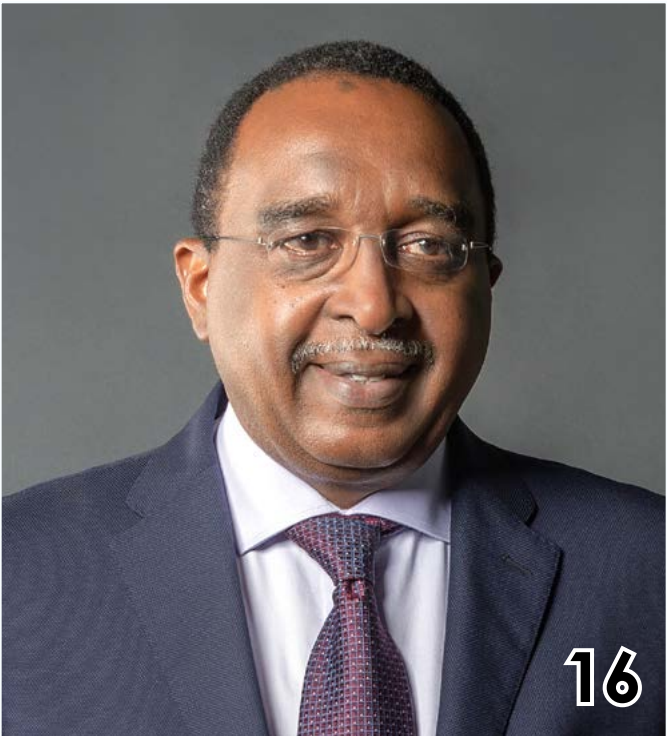
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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

It is with great pride that we welcome you to the inaugural edition of The Digital Meridian Africa.

Africa is entering a defining period in its digital journey. The conversation is no longer simply about connecting more people. It is increasingly about building the infrastructure, institutions, regulatory frameworks, skills and investment ecosystems that will allow the continent to create lasting value from connectivity — and to play a greater role in shaping the global digital economy.

That is the conversation The Digital Meridian Africa has been created to serve.

Our ambition is to provide a platform where Africa's digital future can be examined through the perspectives of the people shaping it: policymakers and regulators, telecom and technology leaders, investors, innovators and the institutions building the continent's digital foundations.

This inaugural edition reflects that breadth. Our lead feature examines Africa's digital infrastructure race, looking at how subsea cables, terrestrial fiber, mobile networks, satellites, cloud, data centers and AI compute are becoming interconnected layers of the continent's future digital architecture.

We are also privileged to feature Helena Fernandes, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Mozambique's communications regulator, INCM, who discusses meaningful connectivity, regulatory reform, spectrum, rural inclusion and the importance of creating trusted digital environments.

That idea is developed further in our conversation with Bocar Ba, CEO of the SAMENA Telecommunications Council, who presents a compelling vision of the "Digital Architecture of Nations".

Across these conversations and the wider stories in this edition, one message emerges clearly: Africa's next digital chapter will be about moving from access to capability, from individual technologies to integrated ecosystems, and from participating in the digital economy to helping shape it.

The Digital Meridian Africa intends to follow that transformation closely — highlighting the ideas, investments, technologies and, above all, the African voices driving it.

Khalid Athar
Chief Editor

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Africa's Digital Infrastructure Race

What Will Define the Next Decade?

From subsea cables and 5G to cloud, satellites and AI compute, the infrastructure decisions being made today could determine Africa's position in the global digital economy by 2035.

Gulraiz Khalid

Africa's digital transformation is entering a new phase.

For much of the past two decades, the central challenge was connectivity: getting more people online, expanding mobile coverage and bringing international bandwidth to a continent where communications infrastructure remained comparatively limited.

That challenge has not disappeared. But the infrastructure equation is becoming considerably more complex.

By 2035, digital competitiveness will increasingly depend not simply on whether a country is connected, but on the quality, resilience and intelligence of the infrastructure behind that connection.

Subsea cables must connect to national fiber networks. Mobile networks must evolve from 4G towards 5G and beyond. Data must increasingly be stored and processed closer to users. And the rapid development of artificial intelligence is creating another requirement altogether: access to large-scale computing power.

The result is an emerging digital infrastructure race that could reshape Africa's economic geography over the next decade.

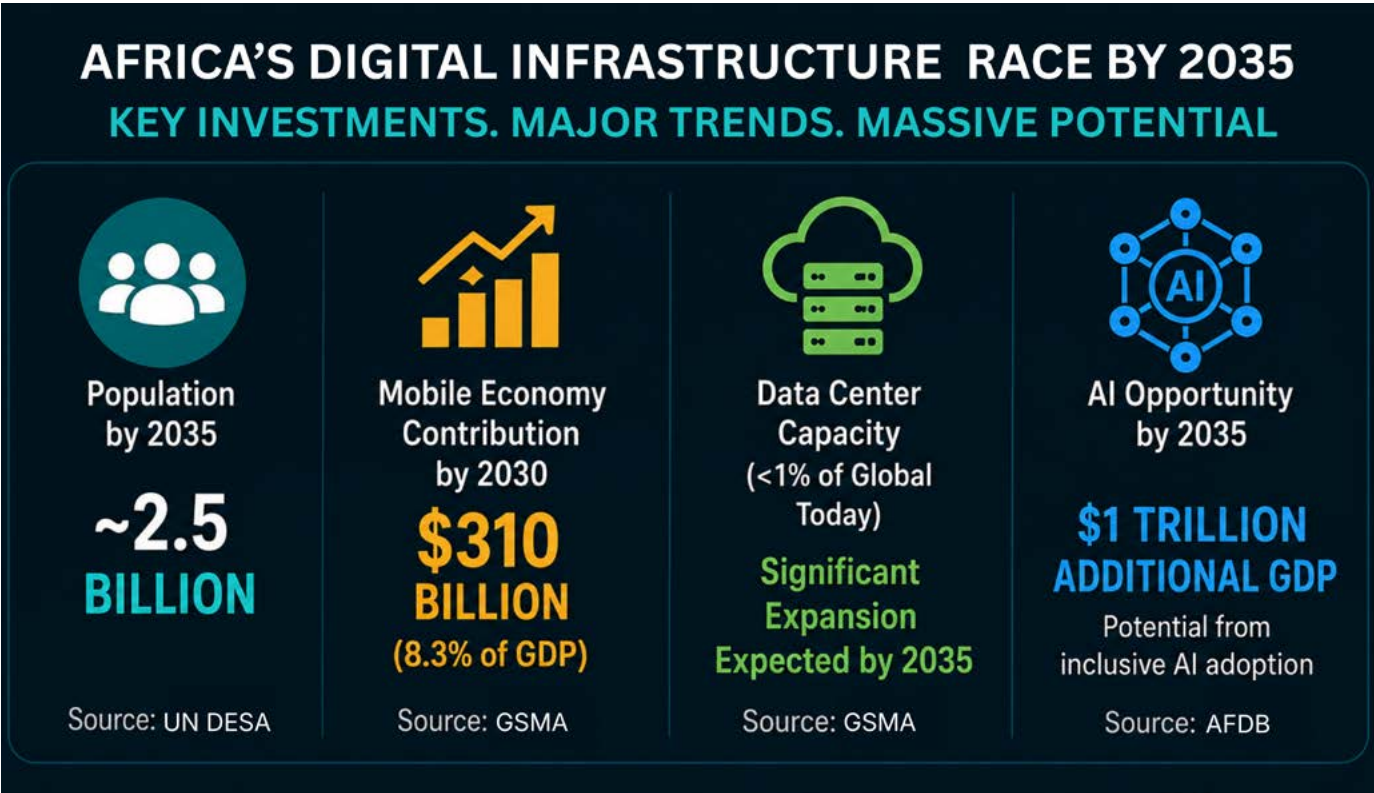
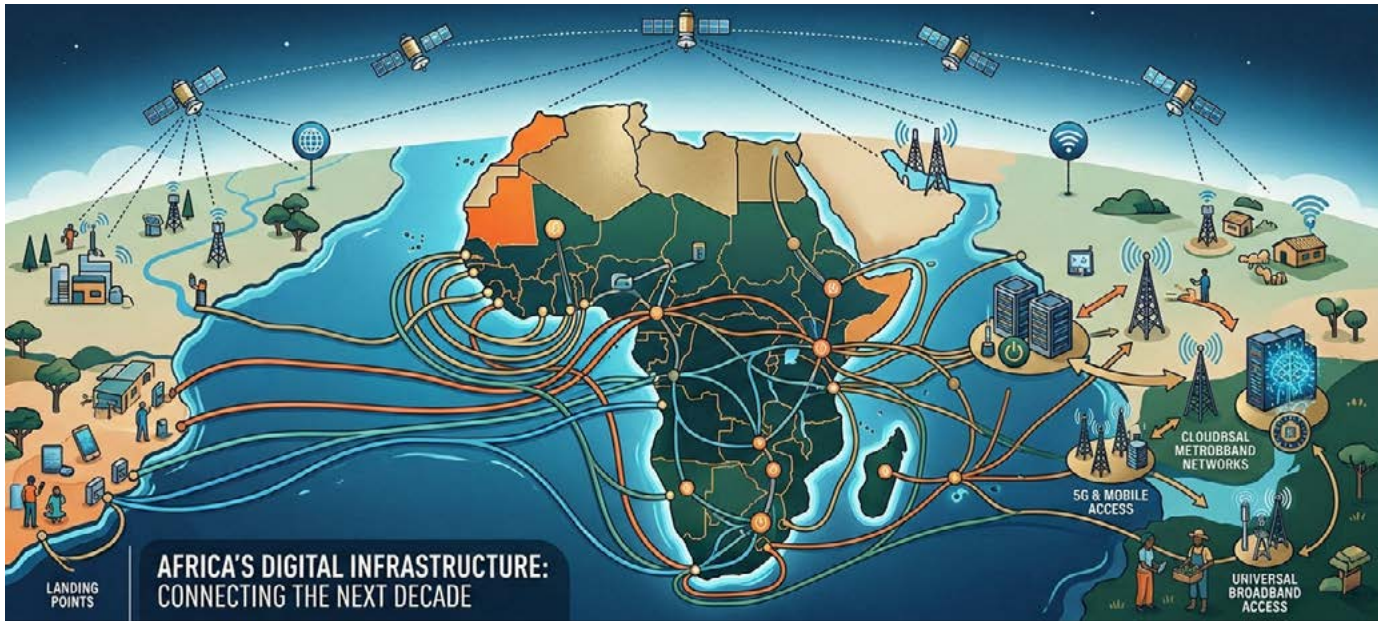
Subsea cables are changing Africa's international connectivity

At the international level, Africa has already experienced a remarkable expansion of subsea connectivity.

One of the most significant additions is 2Africa, a 45,000-kilometre subsea cable system designed to connect Africa, Europe and Asia. Its core systems were completed in 2025, and the project says the network will ultimately facilitate connectivity for more than three billion people across 33 countries.

Google's Equiano cable has meanwhile created another high-capacity route along Africa's western coastline, connecting Portugal with landing points including Togo, Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa and St Helena.

More routes are coming. Google has also announced Umoja, a new fiber-optic route beginning in Kenya and travelling terrestrially through Uganda, Rwanda, the



Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa before crossing the Indian Ocean to Australia.

These systems can dramatically increase international capacity and improve resilience. But landing cables on African shores solves only part of the problem.

The next priority is moving that capacity inland.

Landlocked countries and secondary cities require extensive terrestrial fiber, cross-border connections, metropolitan networks and competitive wholesale infrastructure. The World Bank estimated in 2019 that achieving universal broadband access across Africa by 2030 would require approximately 250,000 kilometres of additional fiber alongside nearly 250,000 new 4G base stations.

The infrastructure race therefore increasingly moves from the coastline into the continent.

Mobile remains the foundation

For hundreds of millions of Africans, the mobile network will remain the primary gateway to the digital economy.

According to the GSMA, mobile technologies and services contributed approximately \$240 billion to Africa's

“Building infrastructure remains essential, but infrastructure alone cannot deliver digital transformation.”

economy in 2025, equivalent to 7.8% of GDP. Operators are expected to invest more than \$76 billion in network infrastructure between 2024 and 2030, while 5G adoption is forecast to reach 21% of mobile connections by 2030.

Yet Africa faces an unusual paradox.

The GSMA estimates that around 63%

of Africans live within mobile broadband coverage but do not use mobile internet, while only 9% remain outside mobile broadband coverage altogether.

That distinction matters.

Building infrastructure remains essential, but infrastructure alone cannot deliver digital transformation. Smartphone affordability, data prices, digital skills and locally relevant services increasingly determine whether available networks translate into meaningful economic participation.

At the same time, 5G — and eventually 5G-Advanced — will become increasingly important in major urban and industrial markets. Beyond faster smartphones, these networks can support fixed wireless access, enterprise connectivity, industrial applications and the low-latency services that emerging digital economies will require.

Satellites can fill the geography gap

Terrestrial networks, however, cannot

economically reach every community.

Africa's vast geography, dispersed rural populations and difficult terrain make satellite connectivity an increasingly important part of the infrastructure mix.

Low-Earth-orbit satellite systems are changing the economics of satellite broadband, creating new possibilities for remote communities, mines, farms, schools and businesses far from fiber networks.

The long-term opportunity is therefore unlikely to be a contest between satellite and terrestrial operators. It is more likely to be a hybrid architecture.

Fiber will carry enormous volumes between cities, countries and data centers. Mobile networks will provide mass-market access. Satellites can extend coverage into areas where terrestrial deployment remains uneconomic or provide redundancy when terrestrial infrastructure fails.

By 2035, the strongest digital markets may be those that successfully integrate all three.

The next bottleneck: data centers and cloud

Connectivity also creates another requirement: somewhere for Africa's rapidly growing volume of data to be processed and stored.

Here, the infrastructure gap remains substantial.

The GSMA noted in 2025 that Africa, despite being home to roughly 18% of the world's population, accounts for less than 1% of global data-center capacity.

Progress is nevertheless accelerating.

Microsoft opened Azure cloud regions in Johannesburg and Cape Town in 2019. AWS opened its Africa region in Cape Town in 2020, while Google Cloud opened its first African cloud region in Johannesburg in

2024.

The next decade should see the data-center map broaden beyond its heavy concentration in South Africa as markets such as Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt and Morocco develop larger digital ecosystems.

That matters for more than latency. Local infrastructure can support data residency, cybersecurity, financial services, government platforms and increasingly sophisticated enterprise workloads.

But data centers require something telecommunications infrastructure alone cannot provide: enormous quantities of reliable electricity.

“Africa does not need to choose between subsea cables, fiber, mobile, satellites, cloud or AI infrastructure. These technologies form layers of the same digital ecosystem.”

As cloud and AI infrastructure expands, power availability may become one of the decisive factors determining where Africa's digital hubs emerge.

AI changes the infrastructure equation

Artificial intelligence raises the stakes further.

The previous digital divide was principally about access to communications networks. The emerging divide could increasingly be about access to compute.

Training and operating advanced AI systems requires GPUs, high-performance data centers, cloud infrastructure, reliable power and large datasets. Africa currently has limited capacity in several of these areas.

The African Development Bank estimates that inclusive adoption of AI could generate as much as \$1 trillion in additional African GDP by 2035. But its roadmap identifies data, compute infrastructure, skills, governance and

investment as essential foundations for capturing that opportunity.

Without local computing infrastructure, African companies, researchers and governments risk remaining dependent on computing resources located elsewhere.

That makes investment in AI-ready data centers, regional GPU capacity, cloud platforms and energy infrastructure strategically significant.

What will matter most by 2035?

Africa does not need to choose between subsea cables, fiber, mobile, satellites, cloud or AI infrastructure. These technologies form layers of the same digital ecosystem.

The real competitive advantage will come from connecting them.

A subsea cable delivers limited economic benefit if inland fiber cannot distribute its capacity. Fiber has limited value without affordable last-mile access. 5G cannot reach its potential without fiber backhaul, spectrum and cloud infrastructure. Cloud platforms require data centers. AI requires compute. And almost everything ultimately depends on reliable and increasingly sustainable electricity.

The countries that understand these interdependencies will have an advantage.

By 2035, Africa's most important digital infrastructure may therefore not be a single cable, satellite constellation, data center or mobile network.

It will be the architecture that connects them all.

And the race to build that architecture has already begun. ■

Regulating Africa's Digital Future Mozambique's Blueprint for Inclusive Connectivity

Partnerships only deliver real impact when they are supported by clear regulation, measurable obligations and shared accountability

Helena Fernandes, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Instituto Nacional das Comunicações de Moçambique (INCM), discusses how smart regulation, trusted digital governance and strategic partnerships can accelerate inclusive digital transformation across Africa

Q. How would you assess Mozambique's current digital transformation journey?

Helena Fernandes: Mozambique is at a decisive stage in its digital transformation journey. We have made important progress in expanding telecommunications infrastructure, increasing mobile broadband coverage, digitalising public services and encouraging wider adoption of digital solutions by citizens, businesses and public institutions.

At the same time, we are clear-eyed about the remaining challenges. The next phase is not only about connecting more places; it is about ensuring meaningful connectivity. That means affordability, resilient infrastructure, digital skills, relevant local content, cybersecurity, and stronger inclusion of rural communities, women, young people and persons with disabilities.

The Government's vision is to ensure that digital transformation becomes a practical engine of economic growth, social inclusion and sustainable development, without



leaving any citizen or community behind.

Q. What are the regulator's key priorities for expanding connectivity and digital inclusion?

HF: Our foremost priority is universal, affordable, resilient and high-quality connectivity, but we increasingly measure success by meaningful use, rather than by coverage statistics alone.

To achieve this objective, the regulator is focused on:

- accelerating the nationwide rollout of broadband networks, especially in rural and underserved areas;
- using the Universal Access Service Fund (Fundo do Serviço de Acesso Universal - FSAU) more strategically to unlock investment where the market alone is not commercially viable;

“Connectivity should be treated as essential enabling infrastructure, supporting education, healthcare, public services, entrepreneurship and full participation in modern economic life”

- promoting passive and active infrastructure sharing, as well as national roaming where appropriate, to reduce duplication and expand service reach;
- strengthening competition and consumer protection so that citizens benefit from better prices, quality and transparency;
- supporting digital literacy and skills so that connectivity translates into real participation in the digital economy;
- prioritising inclusion for women, young

people, persons with disabilities, schools, health facilities and rural communities.

Connectivity should be treated as essential enabling infrastructure, supporting education, healthcare, public services, entrepreneurship and full participation in modern economic life.

Q. How can regulatory frameworks encourage greater investment in telecommunications infrastructure?

HF: A modern regulatory framework must

“The challenge is to strike the right balance between innovation and protection. Connectivity brings people online; trust keeps them online”

give investors predictability, transparency and legal certainty, while also ensuring that investment delivers measurable public value.

In Mozambique, we are working to create an environment that reduces deployment risk and supports long-term infrastructure investment through:

- clear and forward-looking spectrum management policies;
- transparent licensing and authorisation processes;
- stronger rules and incentives for passive and active infrastructure sharing;
- simplified administrative procedures, including better coordination on rights of way, site access and local approvals;
- targeted incentives, coverage obligations and subsidy mechanisms for economically less attractive areas.

The purpose of regulation is not to replace the market, but to organise it so that competition, investment and public-interest obligations work together for the benefit of citizens.

Q. What role does spectrum policy play in supporting broadband expansion and future technologies?

HF: Radio-frequency spectrum is a strategic national resource and one of the most important foundations of the digital economy.

Effective spectrum policy expands coverage, increases network capacity, improves quality of service and prepares the country for 5G, the Internet of Things,

artificial intelligence-enabled applications and future digital services.

Mozambique's approach is to allocate spectrum in a transparent, efficient and technology-neutral manner, while ensuring that this scarce resource is used to promote innovation, competition, coverage and quality.

INCM has begun implementing the regulatory framework required to support the deployment of fifth-generation mobile technology, recognising 5G as a platform for digital transformation, industrial modernisation and the development of a knowledge-based economy.

The rollout of 5G is being supported through the administrative assignment of radio-frequency spectrum in the following bands:

- 700 MHz, which is particularly important for wider coverage and rural reach;
- 2.6 GHz, which supports additional broadband capacity; and
- 3.5 GHz, which is a key capacity band for 5G services.

These assignments are linked to investment, coverage and quality-of-service obligations designed to support both 4G expansion and 5G deployment, with priority given to:

- provincial capitals;
- rural and underserved areas;
- development corridors;
- special economic zones;
- tourism areas;

- educational institutions;
- healthcare facilities;
- public institutions; and
- other strategic areas of national importance.

The objective is not only faster networks. It is to create the conditions for smart cities, precision agriculture, telemedicine, distance learning, Industry 4.0, IoT applications and new forms of digital public service delivery.

Q. How is the regulator addressing the connectivity needs of rural and underserved communities?

HF: Ensuring that rural communities have the same digital opportunities as urban populations is one of the central tests of inclusive digital transformation.

Our approach combines public funding, private-sector implementation, regulatory obligations and international partnerships. This is important because, in many rural areas, the economics of network deployment remain challenging and private investment alone is often not sufficient.

First, we are supporting network expansion through the Universal Access Fund and rural connectivity programmes that encourage appropriate, cost-effective technologies for sparsely populated localities.

In parallel, we are promoting infrastructure-sharing models, public-private partnerships and cooperation with development partners to mobilise resources and reduce the cost of deployment.

The Digital Television for Local Communities Project is another practical inclusion initiative. It has established ten community digital centres, each with capacity for up to 60 people and equipped with photovoltaic power systems, Smart TVs and satellite television reception equipment.

The purpose of these centres is to give communities access to information and to

“Africa's digital economy cannot be built country by country. It requires coordinated and collaborative regulatory responses across borders”

educational and audiovisual content, while also supporting local development and community cohesion.

A further structural measure is the National Telecommunications Roaming Regulation, which is designed to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and accelerate universal access to electronic communications services.

Under this framework, subscribers can access another operator’s network when their own provider has no coverage in the area where they are located.

This measure is expected to:

- *reduce coverage gaps;*
- *improve service continuity and quality for citizens;*
- *optimise operators’ infrastructure investments;*
- *promote more efficient use of national telecommunications infrastructure; and*
- *strengthen digital inclusion across the country.*

Connectivity expansion must also be accompanied by resilience. Networks must remain available during natural disasters, extreme weather events, power outages and other emergencies.



In this regard, our priorities include:

- *strengthening redundancy across national networks;*
- *promoting secure and resilient telecommunications infrastructure;*
- *enhancing emergency communications systems; and*
- *reinforcing preparedness, response and recovery capabilities during times of crisis.*

Ultimately, rural connectivity will only be meaningful when communities can use digital services reliably, affordably and safely.

Q. What are the most important regulatory considerations surrounding AI, cybersecurity, and data governance?

HF: Artificial intelligence offers a significant opportunity to improve public services, strengthen productivity and accelerate innovation, but it must be developed within a trusted and responsible digital environment.

For INCM, within its mandate and in coordination with the relevant national institutions, the central issue is trust. Citizens must know that digital services are

secure, that their data is protected, and that new technologies are used transparently and responsibly.

Our key priorities are to:

- *strengthen national cybersecurity capabilities and incident-response mechanisms;*
- *promote responsible data governance and secure data flows;*
- *safeguard users’ privacy and consumer rights;*
- *encourage ethical, transparent and accountable development and deployment of artificial intelligence; and*
- *reinforce regional and international cooperation in addressing cyber threats.*

The challenge is to strike the right balance between innovation and protection. Connectivity brings people online; trust keeps them online.

Q. How can regional regulatory cooperation accelerate Africa's digital economy objectives?

HF: Africa’s digital economy cannot be built country by country. It requires coordinated



and collaborative regulatory responses across borders.

Regulatory harmonisation facilitates cross-border investment, lowers implementation costs, creates economies of scale and improves interoperability of digital services.

Regional and international cooperation is particularly important for regional roaming, spectrum coordination, cybersecurity, data protection, digital trade, cross-border payments and resilient digital infrastructure.

Mozambique remains committed to this agenda, recognising that digital integration is essential for the African Continental Free Trade Area, the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the emergence of a more connected and competitive African digital market.

Q. Looking ahead, what are the regulator's priorities for supporting

Mozambique's digital future over the next five years?

HF: Over the next five years, our priorities will focus on consolidating an inclusive, innovative, competitive and resilient digital ecosystem.

Our key strategic objectives include:

- *expanding broadband coverage and improving quality of service, especially in underserved areas;*
- *preparing the country for the phased adoption of next-generation technologies, including 5G, IoT and responsible AI;*
- *strengthening digital trust through cybersecurity, data protection and consumer protection;*
- *deepening digital inclusion for women, young people, persons with disabilities and*

- rural communities;*
- *supporting innovation, technological entrepreneurship, local content and digital skills development; and*
- *mobilising partnerships and investment through regional and international cooperation.*

Our ambition is simple but demanding: digital transformation must deliver visible benefits for Mozambicans, including better services, new economic opportunities, stronger inclusion and a more competitive and sustainable economy.

The next phase of digital governance should be judged not only by the policies we approve or the networks we deploy, but by whether citizens can access and use digital services safely, affordably and meaningfully, regardless their location or socio-economic conditions. ■

ITU's Partner2Connect surpasses USD 100 billion in commitments to connect the world

ITU, the UN agency for digital technologies, has announced at the WSIS Forum 2026 that its Partner2Connect (P2C) Digital Coalition has surpassed USD 100 billion in commitments, exceeding a milestone in the global effort to expand global Internet connectivity and bridge the digital divide.

With one-quarter of the world's population offline, commitments to Partner2Connect directly support the goal of achieving universal, meaningful connectivity – ensuring everyone has access to affordable and reliable Internet and the skills to use it safely and effectively.

"Partner2Connect having surpassed its USD 100 billion goal is a landmark achievement in global efforts towards universal meaningful connectivity," said ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin. "Today is a powerful reminder that every pledge makes a difference to bring everyone on board our shared digital future."

Connectivity creates opportunity

Since its launch in 2021, Partner2Connect has united governments, industry players, international organizations, development banks, and civil society to support digital inclusion across the globe. Commitments focus on expanding digital infrastructure, strengthening digital skills, fostering innovation, and creating opportunities for hundreds of millions of people.

Pledges announced during the Geneva Digital Week include:

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) pledges to implement the Asia-Pacific Digital Highway, aiming to mobilize USD 20 billion in public and private investments by 2035 to improve digital connectivity for up to 650 million people across the region through expanded cross-border digital infrastructure, regional digital hubs, and improved broadband access.



- Microsoft pledges to advance inclusive digital transformation by connecting more than 450 rural and underserved community hubs in Kenya through satellite-enabled infrastructure integrated with Azure Space, and by investing approximately USD 18 billion in Australia through 2029 to expand AI and cloud infrastructure, strengthen cyber resilience, and equip more than 3 million Australians with AI and digital skills.
- Boston Consulting Group (BCG) pledges USD 500 million to deploying AI for social impact, partnering with leading philanthropies and non-profits to unlock and scale development outcomes across education, workforce development, healthcare, and poverty reduction.
- ZTE Corporation pledges to invest a total of USD 450 million over three years (2026-2028) in ecosystem partnership programs, working across the entire industry chain to build an open, collaborative AI value community, lower barriers to intelligent

transformation, and enable co-creation of smart solutions worldwide.

- Telkom pledges USD 6.1 million to establish the Telkom AI Institute, a platform designed to equip South Africans with AI and digital skills, foster innovation, and accelerate inclusive participation in the digital economy.
- SoftBank Corp. pledges to advance AI-ready connectivity infrastructure through AI-RAN technologies, open innovation, and industry collaboration, aiming to build the foundation for more intelligent, accessible, and sustainable connectivity, while supporting AI adoption and digital transformation across markets and communities worldwide.
- GSMA pledges to advance inclusive AI in Africa through the African AI Language Models project, bringing together stakeholders to develop AI systems that reflect African languages, cultures, and

knowledge, while accelerating AI adoption and digital inclusion across underserved communities.

Pledgers are responsible for delivering their commitments through impactful projects, with ITU providing a platform to track progress and share best practices.

"Reaching USD 100 billion in Partner2Connect pledges is a defining milestone in our journey toward universal digital development," said Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau. "Now is the time to turn these pledges into impactful projects, aligning countries' and regional priorities with partner commitments, and ensure results across all regions."

From mobilizing commitments to accelerating impact

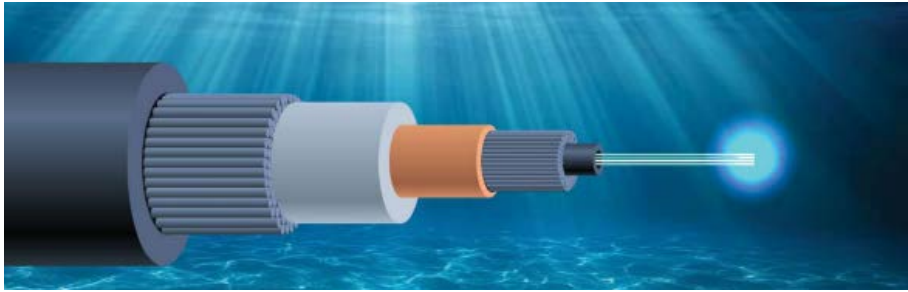
Since its opening, the P2C Coalition has received over 1,000 pledges from 149 countries, driving tangible impact:

- Projects are underway in more than 190 countries, with Africa and Asia and the Pacific leading regions for implementation.
- Women are the most frequently targeted beneficiaries, followed by children and persons with disabilities.
- Digital infrastructure accounts for the largest share of commitments, reflecting the need for stronger networks in underserved areas.

While pledges to Partner2Connect represent significant progress, ITU estimates that achieving universal, meaningful connectivity by 2030 could require USD 2.6 trillion to USD 2.8 trillion.

As Partner2Connect enters its next chapter, ITU will continue mobilizing new commitments while placing emphasis on accelerating implementation, fostering partnerships, monitoring progress, and showcasing the real-world impact of pledges. 

International Advisory Body approves landmark report to strengthen submarine cable resilience



The International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience has approved its final report, including explanations of recommendations to strengthen the resilience of submarine telecommunication cables — the critical infrastructure that carries more than 99 per cent of data traffic worldwide.

Submarine telecommunication cables are the lifeline of the global digital economy, supporting international communication and finance among other key services. Disruptions to the cables from human activity and natural hazards can affect essential government and industry operations as well as individual access to education, healthcare and banking.

Key challenges to submarine cable resilience highlighted in the report include high exposure to physical risks, increased time needed for repair, geographical concentration of infrastructure, and high dependence of many countries on a small number of cable systems—particularly small island developing states (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other underserved regions.

The report further develops Advisory Body recommendations agreed earlier this year across three key areas: timely deployment and repair; risk identification, monitoring and mitigation; and fostering connectivity and geographical diversity.

"The world relies on connectivity, and thanks to the International Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience, we now

have a practical roadmap to keep undersea networks reliable," said ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin. "These reports reflect a shared commitment across governments, industry, international organizations, academia and other stakeholders to safeguard this critical infrastructure that serves us all."

By bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives from across the submarine cable ecosystem, the report provides a common reference to support international cooperation, inform policy development, and strengthen the resilience of one of the world's most critical digital infrastructure systems.

Jointly developed by governments, international organizations, industry and academia, the report reinforces several priorities for action including: strengthening coordination between governments and industry; streamlining regulatory and permitting processes; improving risk identification and monitoring; increasing route diversity and infrastructure redundancy; enhancing preparedness and response capabilities; addressing the needs of vulnerable regions; and integrating climate and environmental considerations.

The adoption of the reports marks the completion of the Advisory Body's two-year work programme and leaves a legacy of combining international efforts to strengthen submarine cable resilience, including through summits in Abuja, Nigeria in 2025 and Porto, Portugal earlier this year. 

Building Africa's digital architecture Why the next decade demands more than connectivity

In this exclusive interview, Bocar Ba, CEO of SAMENA Telecommunications Council discusses the Digital Architecture of Nations, institutional intelligence, and the policies needed to position Africa as a global digital leader

Q1. Looking at the rapid pace of technological change, how do you see Africa positioning itself in the global digital economy?

Bocar Ba: Africa stands at a defining moment in its development. The continent has one of the world's youngest populations, an entrepreneurial spirit that is second to none, and a recognition that digital technologies are becoming fundamental to economic growth and social progress.

For many years, our attention has understandably focused on expanding connectivity and improving access. That work remains essential. However, the conversation is now evolving. The real opportunity is now to build national capabilities that allow countries to innovate, compete and create lasting value.

Africa should not limit itself to just participate in the digital economy. It should help shape it through its talent, its innovation, its growing digital markets and its ability to develop solutions that respond to local realities while contributing to global progress.

Q2. You often speak about digital transformation. Do you believe the concept is changing?

Ba: Digital transformation has achieved a great deal. It has enabled governments to modernize services, businesses to improve efficiency and citizens to access new opportunities.

Today, however, the challenge is becoming more complex.



“Why digital transformation must evolve into a unified national digital architecture.”

Artificial Intelligence, cloud, connectivity, data centers, cybersecurity, energy, digital finance and digital public infrastructure are no longer evolving independently. They influence one another.

This is why I believe our thinking must evolve. Success will depend less on individual digital projects and more on our ability to understand how these different capabilities interact and reinforce each other.

Digital transformation remains essential, but the next stage is about creating coherence across the entire digital ecosystem.

Q3. You recently introduced the idea of the "Digital Architecture of Nations." What does it mean?

Ba: The Digital Architecture of Nations is a simple way of looking at a complex reality.

Every country is investing in digital infrastructure, Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud, data, talent and innovation. Too often, however, these efforts are developed independently, even though they depend on one another.

The Digital Architecture of Nations encourages leaders to view these capabilities as parts of one national system. Connectivity supports cloud. Cloud enables AI. AI depends on compute, data and energy. Cybersecurity protects confidence. Skills sustain innovation. Investment accelerates progress. Institutions provide coordination.

When these elements evolve together, countries build stronger digital economies. When they evolve separately, progress often becomes fragmented.

Ultimately, digital success is not determined by the number of technologies a country

adopts, but by how well those capabilities work together.

Q4. How does this relate to leadership?

Ba: Technology alone has never transformed a nation.

Leadership determines priorities. Institutions translate vision into action. Partnerships create scale. Investment accelerates implementation.

As we progress, leaders are expected to make decisions in environments where technology, economics, regulation, security and geopolitics intersect. This requires a broader way of thinking.

I often describe this as the evolution from digital transformation towards Institutional Intelligence.

Institutional Intelligence is the ability of governments and institutions to understand relationships, recognize interdependencies,

“How AI, cloud, cybersecurity, connectivity and investment must work together to unlock Africa's digital economy.”

coordinate across sectors and make decisions that strengthen the whole rather than optimize individual parts.

In many respects, this will become one of the defining leadership capabilities of the coming decade.

Q5. International cooperation remains central to your work. How do you see its future?

Ba: No country can build its digital future

alone.

The next generation of digital development will depend on trusted partnerships that connect governments, industry, research institutions, investors and international organizations.

What matters is not simply transferring technology. It is building local capability, strengthening institutions, developing talent and creating ecosystems that continue to grow long after individual projects have ended.

This is the spirit in which I approach international cooperation. It should create confidence, mutual benefit and opportunities for all participants.

Q6. Financing remains one of Africa's biggest challenges. What needs to change?

Ba: Connectivity and digital infrastructure require long-term investment. Traditional financing alone will not be sufficient to meet future demand.

We need to explore more innovative approaches that bring together governments, development institutions,

private investors and industry around shared objectives.

During my work as Chair of the Broadband Commission Working Group on 21st Century Financing Models, one lesson became very clear: financing is no longer only about mobilizing capital. It is about creating the conditions that allow investment to deliver sustainable impact.

The future belongs to countries that are able to connect vision, policy, institutions



I encourage young Africans not only to become users of technology, but also to become its creators, its entrepreneurs, its researchers and its leaders.

The future of Africa's digital economy will ultimately be written by African talent.

Q8. Looking ahead, what gives you the greatest sense of optimism?

Ba: What encourages me most is that the conversation is changing.

Countries are beginning to realize that digital development is less about

“Why leadership, institutions and trusted partnerships will determine which nations thrive in the AI era.”

technology and more about institutions, it is about people, it is about investment, it is about resilience, it is about partnerships. Above all, it is about understanding the relationships that connect them.

If Africa succeeds in building coherent digital ecosystems, strengthening its institutions and investing confidently in its people, it will participate in the global digital economy and It will help shape its future.

That is an opportunity our generation has both the privilege and the responsibility to pursue.

History rarely remembers the countries that simply adopted technology. It remembers those that understood how to use it to expand opportunity, strengthen institutions and improve the lives of their people. That is the journey I hope Africa will continue to pursue. **1**

and investment into one coherent development pathway.

Q7. Young Africans often look to leaders such as yourself for inspiration. What message would you like to share with them?

Ba: Africa's greatest resource is not beneath

the ground. It is its people, it is its human capital.

The opportunities ahead will belong to those who continue learning, remain curious and develop the ability to adapt. Technology will continue to evolve, but qualities such as integrity, resilience, collaboration and creativity will remain timeless.

Vodacom Group and ITU partner to accelerate digital inclusion across Africa



Vodacom Group has announced a strategic partnership with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to accelerate digital inclusion across the African continent by expanding network access, strengthening digital literacy, and ensuring underserved communities can actively participate in the global digital economy.

Despite rapid advancements in mobile connectivity across Africa, millions of individuals still face barriers to reliable internet access, affordable devices, and the skills needed to navigate digital platforms safely and effectively. This landmark partnership brings together Vodacom's extensive regional infrastructure and operational reach with the ITU's global policy leadership to directly target these challenges, prioritizing women, youth, and rural populations.

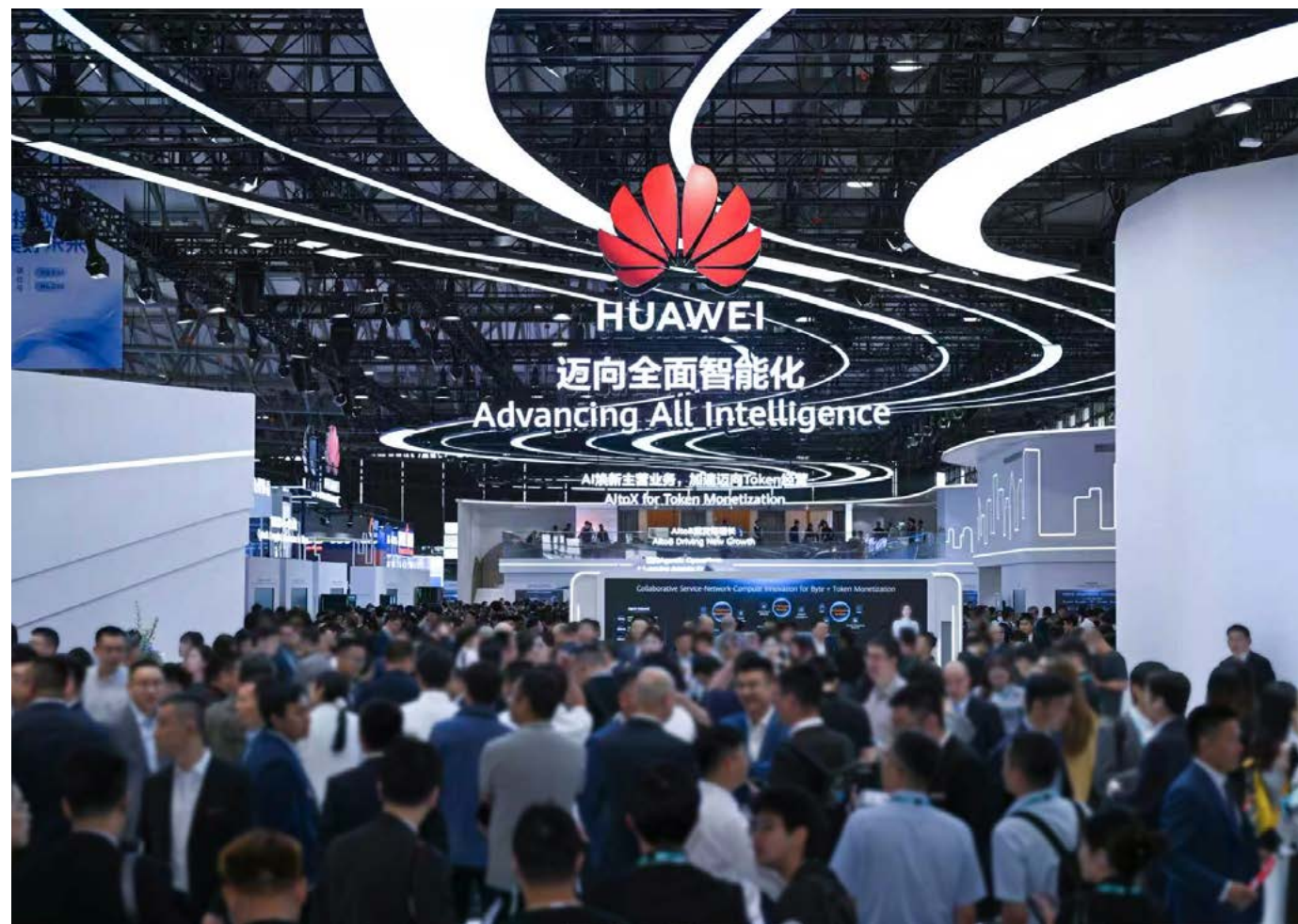
Expanding digital inclusion requires a holistic strategy that goes beyond basic network coverage. The Vodacom-ITU initiative will focus on a multi-pillar approach:

- **Universal & Meaningful Connectivity:** Expanding access to affordable broadband, leveraging fiber, 4G, and 5G network developments.
- **Digital Literacy & Education:** Driving digital skills programs to equip individuals and small businesses with the tools needed for e-commerce, online education, and remote work.
- **Socio-Economic Empowerment:** Expanding access to mobile financial services and cloud platforms to spur entrepreneurship and job creation.

• **Policy & Best Practice Alignment:** Aligning regional infrastructure investments with global international development targets, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become a cornerstone of Africa's overarching digital strategy. By blending commercial deployment capability with policy development and global development goals, the partnership between Vodacom and the ITU serves as a model for scalable, sustainable growth.

As digital adoption accelerates, the focus will remain on driving measurable outcomes—ensuring businesses can leverage technologies like artificial intelligence and cloud computing, while helping individuals secure sustainable livelihoods through the digital economy. **1**



Token Economy

Huawei's Vision for the Next Era of Telecom Monetization

From Connectivity to Intelligent Value Creation: Wang Tao, Huawei Director of the Board and Chairman of the ICT Business Management Committee shares long term vision at MWC Shanghai 2026.

The telecom industry has reached an inflection point. While 5G has delivered unprecedented network performance, operators worldwide continue to face pressure to generate sustainable returns on their infrastructure investments. At

MWC Shanghai 2026, Huawei presented what it believes is the next commercial evolution of mobile communications: The Token Economy. Rather than focusing solely on selling connectivity, Huawei envisions operators becoming providers of intelligent

digital services, where network capabilities themselves become valuable assets that can be packaged, guaranteed and monetized. Wang Tao summarized this transition succinctly: "Operators' business models have evolved from user management, traffic



"Operators' business models have evolved from user management, traffic management, to experience management, and further to token management."
Wang Tao

management, to experience management, and further to token management."

What is the 'Token Economy'

Unlike cryptocurrency ecosystems, Huawei's Token Economy is a commercial framework for telecom networks. A token represents a trusted digital entitlement to a network capability or guaranteed experience. Operators could package premium latency, bandwidth, network slicing, AI services, satellite connectivity, computing resources, or security as individually priced services. The emphasis shifts from selling gigabytes to selling assured digital outcomes.

Why the Industry Needs a New Business Model

Traffic continues to grow exponentially while average revenue per user has remained relatively flat in many markets. Huawei argues that AI, autonomous systems,

robotics, immersive communications, and industrial digitalization require deterministic communications that customers are willing to pay for. The company, therefore, sees the Token Economy as the commercial layer that unlocks the full value of AI-native networks.

The AI-Native Foundation

Huawei's three-layer intelligence model consists of Network Element Intelligence, Network Intelligence and Service Intelligence. AI embedded inside radio,

while enabling operators to launch entirely new intelligent services through an AI-native core network. Wang Tao noted that the next-generation core network will adopt an AI-native architecture with intent-based collaboration and a dedicated data and AI plane.

Benefits for Operators

Token Economy opens multiple monetization dimensions beyond traditional subscriptions. Huawei describes future revenues coming from 'connectivity + traffic

"Connectivity + traffic + slicing + satellite + computing power" represents Huawei's multi-dimensional monetization vision."

transport and core networks improves spectral efficiency, energy consumption, and resilience. AI also automates operations

+ slicing + satellite + computing power.' Operators can increase enterprise revenues, offer premium consumer experiences,

monetize AI services, improve operational efficiency and expand into satellite-enabled coverage and edge computing.

Benefits for End Users

Consumers gain greater control over the experience they purchase. Rather than generic data plans, users could buy guaranteed gaming latency, immersive XR sessions, premium livestream quality, secure AI services or seamless satellite coverage. Network intelligence allocates resources dynamically according to application requirements.

Benefits for Enterprises

Industrial users require predictable performance rather than best-effort connectivity. Huawei believes future enterprise customers will be able to request guaranteed communications for factories, logistics, autonomous transport, healthcare, ports, airports and energy infrastructure. Network capabilities become promise-able, price-able and callable on demand.

Benefits for Governments

At a national level, AI-native telecom infrastructure supports digital transformation, AI strategies and universal connectivity. Huawei's integrated space-air-ground vision combines terrestrial and satellite networks to extend coverage into remote regions, oceans and airspace while providing resilient communications for emergency response and public services.

Beyond 2030

Huawei expects mobile communications to evolve from connecting people and things to connecting intelligence itself. Future networks will support hundreds of billions—and eventually trillions—of intelligent agents, requiring ultra-high bandwidth, ultra-low latency, integrated satellite communications and AI-driven orchestration. Huawei also called for greater collaboration around U6GHz spectrum, non-terrestrial networks and common standards. ■

Bank of Central African States (BEAC) joins Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS)

The Bank of Central African States (BEAC) has officially joined the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), marking a significant step in strengthening Africa's cross-border payment infrastructure and opening a new chapter for financial integration in Central Africa while driving greater intra-African trade.

As one of only two regional central banks on the continent, BEAC serves the six member countries of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC)—Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Chad. Its participation provides PAPSS with a strategic entry point into Francophone Africa and significantly expands the reach of the network across the continent.

With BEAC joining the network, PAPSS now connects 28 African countries, bringing together more than 190 commercial banks and fintechs, supported by 16 switches. Through its extended network partners, PAPSS participants are also able to send money to more than 250 additional financial institutions.

The participation of BEAC significantly strengthens PAPSS's connectivity with the CEMAC region, a market of more than 72 million people and a strategic gateway linking West, East and Southern Africa. Alongside the pilot phase planned with the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), scheduled to commence later this year, PAPSS continue to deploy the payment infrastructure capable of connecting all regions of Africa through a single African network.

H.E. Yvon Sana Bangui, Governor of BEAC and Chair of the AACB, said: "By joining PAPSS, BEAC is creating the conditions for faster, more affordable and more efficient cross-border payments between the CEMAC countries and Africa. We encourage commercial banks and financial institutions across our member states to embrace this

opportunity and prepare for participation in the platform. The success of African trade integration will depend not only on policy and infrastructure, but also on the active involvement of the financial sector. PAPSS provides a practical solution to support that vision."

Mike Ogbalu III, CEO of PAPSS, commented: "BEAC's participation in PAPSS represents a significant milestone in advancing Africa's financial integration. We commend His Excellency Governor Yvon Sana Bangui for his leadership and unwavering commitment. We also congratulate the entire BEAC team on this achievement. This development opens new trade and payment corridors between Central Africa and the rest of the continent, enabling faster, more affordable and more efficient cross-border payments that will support trade and economic activity."

Developed by Afreximbank in partnership with the African Union and the AfCFTA Secretariat, PAPSS enables instant cross-border payments in local African currencies, allowing funds to move across African markets within seconds without relying on third-party currencies or external intermediaries.

For banks and fintechs, PAPSS creates opportunities to extend services beyond national borders. For businesses, it means faster transactions, lower costs and improved access to regional markets. For individuals, it provides a more efficient and affordable way to send and receive money across Africa. More broadly, it strengthens Africa's financial sovereignty by enabling payments to be processed and settled on the continent.

PAPSS will work closely with BEAC through the end of 2026 to operationalize this membership, integrate financial institutions across the CEMAC region into the system, and facilitate the rollout of PAPSS services to businesses and individuals. ■

Starlink begins operations in Seychelles, expanding internet choices for consumers

Seychellois households and businesses now have access to another internet service option following the introduction of Starlink, a satellite based system designed to provide high speed connectivity directly through satellites orbiting the Earth.

The soft launch of the service took place yesterday during a press conference held at State House, jointly led by Vice-President Sebastien Pillay and the Seychelles Communications Regulatory Authority (SCRA).

The briefing outlined the regulatory framework governing Starlink's operations in Seychelles, the services the company will provide, and how the satellite based internet provider will complement the country's existing telecommunications sector.

Speaking at the press conference, Vice-President Pillay described the introduction of Starlink as an important development in Seychelles' digital transformation journey. He said the government remains committed to ensuring that all Seychellois have access to reliable, affordable and high quality internet services, while maintaining a fair and competitive telecommunications market.

The Vice-President noted that embracing new technologies is essential to supporting economic growth, improving public service delivery and creating new opportunities for businesses, students and communities across the country. He added that innovation must be accompanied by a strong regulatory framework that protects consumers, safeguards national interests and promotes healthy competition.

Representatives of SCRA explained that Starlink has been authorised to operate in Seychelles under the country's regulatory framework and outlined the Authority's role in ensuring compliance with national



laws, technical standards and consumer protection requirements. They also highlighted how satellite broadband can help improve connectivity in areas where conventional infrastructure may be more challenging to deploy.

Officials explained that, unlike conventional broadband services, Starlink requires users to install the receiver in an open location with a clear, unobstructed view of the sky to maintain a reliable connection with the satellites. Trees, buildings and other physical obstructions may affect the quality of the service. Customers are therefore encouraged to assess the proposed installation site carefully to ensure optimal performance.

The public was informed that subscriptions are now available through Starlink's online platform, where customers can register for the service, order the required hardware kit and complete the subscription process. It was also revealed that a number of people in Seychelles have already acquired Starlink kits and are using the service.

The press conference also provided journalists with an opportunity to seek clarification on the rollout of Starlink services, licensing arrangements, subscription procedures and the impact the new service is expected to have on the local telecommunications sector.

While yesterday's event marked the soft launch of Starlink in Seychelles, officials announced that a formal launch will be organised at a later date and is expected to include representatives from Starlink. The phased approach will allow the company to continue establishing its operations locally while giving consumers the opportunity to begin accessing the service.

The soft launch marks the beginning of Starlink's operations in Seychelles and reflects the country's continued commitment to embracing technological innovation while ensuring that developments in the communications sector are guided by a transparent and effective regulatory framework. ■

LELE MODISE

Shaping the Policy and Investment Architecture for Africa's Digital Future

Lele Modise is a distinguished African corporate executive, policy strategist and advocate for regulatory reform, with a career spanning banking and finance, private equity, infrastructure investment, mergers and acquisitions, telecommunications, technology, public policy and corporate governance. Over more than two decades, she has led complex legal, regulatory and public policy portfolios, advised on major transactions and infrastructure investments, and contributed to strategic transformation initiatives across multiple African markets. Widely recognised as both a respected executive leader and an influential policy voice, Modise is a strong advocate for digital and financial inclusion, regulatory modernisation, investment certainty, infrastructure development and responsible technology governance. Her work increasingly focuses on shaping the policy and investment frameworks required to enable Africa's growth in the digital age.

Modise's professional foundation was established at Barclays Africa, now Absa Group, where she gained deep exposure to financial markets, corporate finance, investment decision-making and the regulatory systems that underpin economic growth. This experience informed a lasting appreciation for the relationship between capital, institutions and development and reinforced a core conviction that sustainable economic progress depends not only on access to capital, but on strong institutions and policy certainty capable of attracting long-term investment.



A defining phase of her career was at Bowman, where she advised on significant private equity, mergers and acquisitions and infrastructure transactions across the continent. Infrastructure became a central focus. Across sectors such as energy, transport, telecommunications and digital connectivity, she observed first-hand how infrastructure investment underpins economic expansion and social development. Through close engagement with investors, sponsors and corporates, she developed a nuanced understanding of how regulatory certainty, governance and policy stability shape investment decisions. This experience continues to inform her leadership philosophy, namely that Africa's progress depends on creating environments in which investment can be mobilised with confidence and deployed at scale.

At MTN Group, Modise operates at the intersection of technology, regulation, policy and investment, leading complex legal and regulatory portfolios across diverse African markets. Her work reflects a fundamental shift in development paradigms, where digital infrastructure is now as critical as traditional infrastructure. Connectivity, digital identity, cloud platforms, data ecosystems and fintech solutions are increasingly the foundations of economic participation. For Modise, technology is not merely a commercial sector, but a powerful enabler of inclusion, entrepreneurship and economic opportunity.

A consistent thread across her career is her commitment to advancing digital and financial inclusion as mutually reinforcing drivers of development. She argues that meaningful inclusion requires both access to infrastructure and access to financial systems. Together, these enable participation in the formal economy, expand opportunity and support social mobility. This perspective informs her engagement on issues ranging from mobile financial services and connectivity to digital public infrastructure and consumer trust.

The rapid convergence of technologies has rendered traditional regulatory models

increasingly outdated. Telecommunications providers now offer financial services, digital platforms facilitate commerce and artificial intelligence is transforming entire sectors. Modise has emerged as a leading advocate for regulatory modernisation that reflects these realities. She supports frameworks that enable innovation while preserving incentives for long-term infrastructure investment. In her view, effective regulation must create certainty, promote fair competition, protect consumers and support sustainable growth.

As African markets become more integrated, the importance of regulatory harmonisation continues to grow. Fragmented frameworks can impede innovation and raise the cost of investment. Modise advocates for greater alignment

As global debates intensify around artificial intelligence, data governance and digital sovereignty, she believes the continent has both the responsibility and the opportunity to shape emerging frameworks. Africa's leadership in areas such as mobile financial services and digital inclusion offers valuable lessons for the global community. Her vision is for Africa to play a leading role in defining the standards, institutions and governance models that will shape the digital age.

She remains firmly optimistic about Africa's trajectory, seeing a continent rich in talent, entrepreneurial energy and innovation capacity, with the potential to become a major force in the global digital economy. Realising this vision will require investment-enabling regulation, trusted

As global debates intensify around artificial intelligence, data governance and digital sovereignty, Modise believes the continent has both the responsibility and the opportunity to shape emerging frameworks.

across jurisdictions, particularly in areas such as digital infrastructure, financial services, data governance and emerging technologies. Such harmonisation is essential to strengthening investment certainty, accelerating innovation and enhancing Africa's global competitiveness.

Beyond her executive responsibilities, Modise is an active contributor to global policy and industry platforms. She serves as Vice Chair of the International Association of Directors and Chief Regulatory Officers, participates in GSMA-led policy initiatives and is engaged within the Lex Mundi global legal network. These roles provide a platform to contribute to international discussions on technology governance, regulatory evolution, digital inclusion and infrastructure investment, while ensuring that African perspectives are represented in shaping global frameworks.

Modise is a strong proponent of Africa as an active architect of its technological future.

institutions, world-class infrastructure and policies that balance inclusion with innovation. It will also require deeper collaboration between governments, regulators, investors and industry leaders. Her outlook is anchored in a simple but powerful belief that Africa's future will be shaped by Africans through sound policy, strategic investment and a commitment to inclusive growth.

From financial markets at Barclays Africa, to infrastructure and private equity at Bowman, to technology and regulatory leadership at MTN Group, Lele Modise has built a career at the intersection of capital, infrastructure, innovation and policy. She is increasingly recognised as a leading African executive and policy voice contributing to the frameworks that will define the continent's digital future. Through her leadership and advocacy, she continues to advance a vision of Africa not only as a participant in the global digital economy, but as a leader in shaping it. ■

Africa Tech Festival 2026 returns as Africa’s defining platform for digital transformation, investment and innovation



Africa Tech Festival will return to the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 16 to 19 November 2026, bringing together key stakeholders driving the next phase of Africa’s digital growth.

Now in its 29th edition, Africa Tech Festival, originally launched as AfricaCom, has evolved alongside the continent’s digital transformation, expanding its focus to encompass the full spectrum of technology, investment opportunities and policies that drive economic growth.

At a time when investment in connectivity, subsea cables, fibre networks, data centres and cloud infrastructure is reshaping Africa’s digital landscape, Africa Tech Festival serves as a catalyst for the conversations and partnerships driving that progress. South Africa’s Department of Communications



and Digital Technologies is a Strategic Partner of the event, with Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Hon. Solly Malatsi, confirmed to deliver the opening address.

“Africa Tech Festival is a strategic platform shaping Africa’s digital future, bringing together leaders from across the continent in government and industry to drive collaboration, investment, and innovation. As host country, South Africa is proud to champion an event that not only strengthens partnerships, but advances a shared vision of an inclusive, connected and globally competitive African digital economy,” said Minister Malatsi.

Africa Tech Festival 2026 is structured around six interconnected pillars that reflect the technologies and priorities driving Africa’s digital economy: Telecoms & Connectivity; Data Centres; AI; Cybersecurity; Startups; and Digital Transformation.

Together, these pillars provide a framework for addressing some of the continent’s most pressing priorities, including digital infrastructure expansion, greater connectivity and digital inclusion, responsible AI adoption, stronger data sovereignty and digital trust, and the partnerships and investments needed to unlock Africa’s next wave of innovation and

economic growth.

The event will feature dedicated content programmes, executive forums, exhibitions, networking opportunities and investment-focused discussions designed to connect decision-makers from across Africa and around the world.

“It is now clear that this is a defining moment for the ICT sector in Africa. AI adoption is transforming business processes, but it also raises questions around inclusion, data sovereignty and the capacity of digital infrastructure. Africa Tech Festival is the only forum where leaders from across the tech ecosystem – telecoms operators, hyperscalers and corporate end-users – can come together to find the answers,” said David Monaghan, VP, Africa Tech Festival.

As Africa’s digital economy continues to attract global investment and attention, Africa Tech Festival showcases the continent’s capabilities and leadership while connecting African stakeholders with international investors, technology companies and policymakers. Beyond the annual event, it continues to serve as a year-round forum for thought leadership, industry engagement and ecosystem development, helping shape the policies, investments and innovations that are accelerating Africa’s digital transformation. **T**

Building Digital Trust: Securing Africa's Next Phase of Growth

As Africa accelerates its digital transformation, **Azizagha Kazimov, Regional Sales Director – Africa Region at 7Generation**, explains why cybersecurity must evolve from an IT function into a cornerstone of economic resilience, national security and digital sovereignty

Q: As Africa's digital economy expands, how is the cybersecurity threat landscape evolving?

Azizagha Kazimov: Africa is undergoing a rapid digital transformation driven by mobile banking, e-government services, digital identity programs, and expanding telecom infrastructure. While these developments create new opportunities for growth, they also increase exposure to cyber threats targeting financial systems, government platforms, telecom networks, and critical infrastructure.

AI is accelerating this trend. AI-powered phishing, deepfakes, and automated fraud campaigns are making cyberattacks faster, more scalable, and more difficult to detect.

Effective cybersecurity begins with visibility. You cannot protect what you cannot see. As Africa's digital ecosystems become more

interconnected, cybersecurity is evolving from a technical concern into a strategic priority for economic resilience, national security, and digital sovereignty.

Q: Which sectors across Africa are currently the most vulnerable to cyberattacks?

AK: Telecommunications remains one of the most exposed sectors because it underpins nearly every layer of the digital economy, from connectivity and digital identities to financial transactions. Financial institutions are also increasingly targeted as the adoption of mobile banking and digital payments continues to grow across Africa.

Government agencies remain attractive targets due to the sensitive nature of public databases, identity systems, and critical national infrastructure. At the same time, sectors such as energy, healthcare, transportation, and utilities are becoming

more vulnerable as they continue to digitize their operations.

One of the biggest challenges is the growing convergence of telecom networks, financial ecosystems, and digital identity platforms. As these systems become more interconnected, cyber risks become more complex and potentially more impactful.

Q: How can governments strengthen national cyber resilience and protect critical infrastructure?

AK: Cyber resilience requires far more than deploying security software. It demands a long-term national strategy that combines technology, regulation, operational readiness, and skilled personnel. Governments must establish clear cybersecurity frameworks, strengthen coordination mechanisms, and ensure that critical infrastructure operators maintain

effective monitoring and incident response capabilities.

Equally important is building sovereign cyber defense capacity. Countries that lack internal investigative and response capabilities often struggle to react effectively to large-scale incidents. Investments in cyber intelligence, digital forensics, advanced analytics, and real-time monitoring are becoming essential components of modern national security.

Cybersecurity should be approached as a permanent national capability rather than a one-time technology project. True cyber resilience is achieved when strategy, technology, and operational readiness work together.

4. What role should public-private partnerships play in improving cybersecurity readiness?

AK: Public-private cooperation is no longer optional. Telecom operators, financial institutions, technology providers, and governments each have visibility into different parts of the digital ecosystem. When these stakeholders collaborate effectively, they can improve threat detection, accelerate incident response, and strengthen national cyber resilience.

The most effective partnerships are built on intelligence sharing, coordinated response mechanisms, common security standards, and mutual trust. Cybersecurity is fundamentally an ecosystem challenge, and no single organization can effectively address modern cyber threats in isolation.

Q: How important are cyber awareness and workforce development in addressing Africa's cybersecurity challenges?

AK: Technology alone cannot solve cybersecurity challenges. Many of today's most successful cyberattacks still rely on phishing, social engineering, and other techniques that exploit human behavior. Building cybersecurity awareness across governments, businesses, and society is therefore just as important as deploying advanced technologies.

At the same time, Africa faces a shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals. Investing in education, training, and workforce development will be critical to building long-term cyber resilience. Ultimately, strong cybersecurity depends on both technology and people.

Q: Which emerging threats should policymakers and business leaders be watching most closely?

AK: AI is reshaping the cyber threat landscape by making attacks faster, more scalable, and increasingly sophisticated. AI-powered phishing, deepfake impersonation, automated fraud, and synthetic identities are lowering barriers for attackers while increasing the effectiveness of cybercrime.

Organizations should also pay close attention to attacks targeting software supply chains, cloud environments, telecom infrastructure, and digital payment ecosystems. As systems

sharing, harmonized cybersecurity standards, coordinated incident response, and joint operational exercises.

International cooperation is equally important. Governments, telecom operators, financial institutions, technology providers, and law enforcement agencies all play a role in identifying threats, disrupting criminal networks, and supporting cross-border investigations.

No single country or organization can effectively address these challenges alone. In cybersecurity, collective defense is often the most effective defense.

Q: What is your outlook for cybersecurity in Africa over the next five years?

AK: Over the next five years, cybersecurity will evolve from a technical function into a strategic national priority across Africa. Governments and enterprises will continue

“Cybersecurity is evolving from a technical concern into a strategic priority for economic resilience, national security and digital sovereignty.”

become more interconnected, attackers increasingly exploit third-party providers and indirect entry points.

At the same time, cybercrime is becoming more organized and professionalized. The rise of “cybercrime-as-a-service” is making advanced attack capabilities accessible to a much wider range of threat actors, creating new challenges for governments and businesses alike.

Q: How can African countries strengthen cross-border cooperation on cyber defense and incident response?

AK: Cyber threats do not recognize national borders, and effective cyber defense requires regional cooperation rather than isolated national responses. African countries can strengthen resilience through intelligence

investing in cyber resilience, critical infrastructure protection, and advanced threat intelligence capabilities, while AI reshapes both cyber threats and defense strategies.

We are also likely to see stronger regulatory frameworks, deeper regional cooperation, and greater adoption of advanced cybersecurity technologies across both the public and private sectors.

Most importantly, cybersecurity will increasingly be recognized as a foundation for economic growth, digital trust, and national security. Africa's digital future is extraordinarily promising. The countries that succeed will not necessarily be those that digitize the fastest, but those that build the highest levels of trust, resilience, and security into their digital ecosystems. ■

RegTech Africa and Startup World Cup deliver landmark regional pitch competition at Presidential Villa, Abuja



The 2026 RegTech Africa Conference and Expo (RACE 2026) concluded on a landmark high, bringing to a close a three-day gathering of regulators, investors, technology innovators, policymakers, financial institutions, and startup founders from across the continent. Held at the prestigious State House Banquet Hall, Presidential Villa, Abuja, the conference reaffirmed its standing as Africa's premier platform for advancing regulatory technology, digital financial services, and ecosystem-wide innovation — and this year's edition may have been its most significant yet.

RACE 2026 convened a rich cross-section of Africa's financial and technology leadership for panel discussions, workshops, and policy roundtables designed to address the continent's most urgent regulatory and digital transformation challenges. From central bank representatives and compliance professionals to venture capital investors and growth-stage founders, the conference created a uniquely convergent space — one where regulation, innovation, and capital could meet in productive

conversation.

Among the highlights of the conference was the highly anticipated RegTech Africa Startup World Cup Abuja Regional Challenge, as a centrepiece event of the expo. Organised through a strategic partnership between RegTech Africa and Pegasus Tech Ventures — one of the world's most recognised startup pitch competitions — the Abuja Regional Challenge brought together 15 carefully selected startups drawn from hundreds of applications received across Africa. The finalists, representing sectors spanning fintech, regulatory technology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and GovTech, pitched their solutions before a distinguished panel of judges, investors, and ecosystem leaders. Entries were evaluated on innovation, scalability, revenue potential, business sustainability, societal impact, and quality of presentation.

"At RegTech Africa, our mission has always been more than convening conversations — it is about building an active, enabling infrastructure for the African startup

ecosystem. Through platforms like the Startup World Cup Regional Challenge, we are deliberately creating pathways for Africa's most promising innovators to gain global visibility, access to capital, and the strategic partnerships they need to scale. RACE 2026 demonstrated clearly that when regulators, investors, and entrepreneurs share the same room, the outcomes are transformative not just for individual companies, but for the continent's broader financial and regulatory landscape." — Cyril Okoroigwe, Chief Executive Officer, RegTech Africa

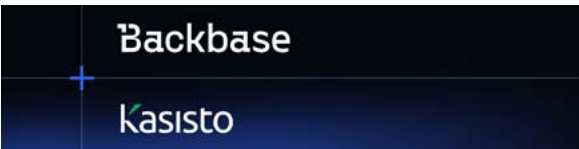
The partnership between RegTech Africa and Pegasus Tech Ventures reflects a growing recognition that Africa's regulatory technology and fintech sectors are ripe with world-class solutions deserving of global platforms. By anchoring the Regional Challenge within RACE, both organisations demonstrated a shared commitment to ensuring that African innovation is not simply acknowledged locally, but positioned for meaningful participation in global startup ecosystems. The pitch day drew significant energy from

the conference audience, with attendees, exhibitors, and delegates from across Africa and beyond actively engaging with the competing teams and their solutions.

After a rigorous selection process, the panel of judges crowned Mehtic Technology — developers of the BankPlus Core Banking Infrastructure platform — as the winner of the 2026 Abuja Regional Challenge. The company will now advance to represent the region at the Startup World Cup Global Finals in Silicon Valley, United States, where startups from across the world will compete for a \$1 million investment prize and strategic global partnerships. Their selection from a highly competitive field is a testament both to the quality of African fintech innovation and to the rigour of the Regional Challenge process.

"RACE 2026 exceeded every expectation we had for it. From the quality of conversations in the conference halls to the electric energy of the Startup World Cup Pitch Day, what unfolded at the Presidential Villa over those three days was a genuine statement about where Africa stands in the global RegTech and fintech conversation. The partnership between RegTech Africa and the Startup World Cup produced something special — a competition that not only celebrated the ingenuity of African founders but gave that ingenuity a genuine global stage. I am immensely proud of how this edition came together, and deeply encouraged by what it signals for the future of the African innovation ecosystem." — Belinda Nkechi Idinmachi, Startup World Cup Ambassador.

As RACE 2026 draws to a close, the RegTech Africa team has reaffirmed its commitment to continuing to build and strengthen the infrastructure of Africa's regulatory and financial technology ecosystem — through conferences, startup development programming, policy dialogue, and strategic global partnerships. The success of this year's Abuja Regional Challenge sets a powerful precedent for what future editions of the competition, and of RACE itself, can achieve. ■



Backbase acquires Kasisto as African banker survey names legacy information technology the top barrier to AI adoption

Backbase acquired Kasisto, a pioneer in agentic AI for banking and financial services. Kasisto's agentic platform, financial services intelligence, and New York-based team are now part of Backbase and the AI-native Banking OS.

The transaction integrates Kasisto's financial intelligence models into the Backbase platform, building an architecture that helps financial institutions overcome legacy IT constraints that have stymied digital transformation across Africa.

This announcement follows a recent survey of 277 bank executives across Africa, conducted by Backbase with African Banker magazine, which revealed legacy system integration as the primary obstacle to AI adoption. This bottleneck prevents established institutions from scaling digital offerings fast enough to compete with agile, cloud-native fintechs and mobile money operators.

Legacy maintenance costs billions globally, but the impact is especially acute in Africa, where banks face high operational costs and a growing mobile-first unbanked population.

"This acquisition addresses a structural constraint specific to how African banking has grown," said Ayman Daoud, Vice-President of Africa regions at Backbase. "We see too many banks build AI in isolated pockets, like a chatbot in digital self-service or automation in the contact centre, without resolving the disconnect between those teams and back-office operations. By embedding Kasisto's reasoning AI into the core operating model, we're giving

African banks one system that can answer a question and complete the work behind it within the governance and compliance regulators require."

Banking-grade agentic AI, embedded in the Banking OS.

Kasisto's platform, KAI, is purpose-built for regulated financial environments, unlike general-purpose AI models. It uses specialised financial LLMs that understand context, apply institutional judgment, and operate strictly within banking governance and compliance frameworks. In the continent, the platform has already been successfully deployed by Absa and Nedbank, where, in the latter, it cut the number of live agent conversations by half within just a year of launch.

Combined with Backbase's flagship Banking OS, Kasisto's conversational and agentic AI turns customer intent into governed execution: verifying eligibility, applying policy, and triggering workflows to resolve requests without manual handoffs. The result is AI that not only fields queries but finishes them, with proactive, compliant outbound engagement before a customer need becomes an inbound service request.

"Agentic AI will define how banks compete over the next decade. Africa is particularly well placed to leapfrog western banks with decades-old core systems. Backbase and Kasisto give those institutions purpose-built agentic intelligence from day one, rather than retrofitting it onto legacy infrastructure later." said Lance Berks, CEO of Kasisto. ■



MTN Business has reaffirmed its commitment to empowering Ghana's entrepreneurial ecosystem by awarding a total of GHS160,000 in cash prizes and business support packages to ten small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the MTN Business MSME Day Business Pitch Competition.

The competition, organised as part of the SME Accelerate Programme, brought together ten promising Ghanaian businesses to pitch their ideas and demonstrate their potential to drive innovation, create jobs and contribute to the country's economic development.

The finalists were 10-10 Foodie, Awhenepa Cookery, Edible Treats, House of Lush, Manehlla Foods, Tahir Field Recycling, Tropical Snacks, Bubune Africa Limited, Dyluri Beauty and Lebenam Skin.

Following a highly competitive pitching session, Tahir Field Recycling, Edible Treats, Dyluri Beauty, Manehlla Foods and Tropical Snacks emerged as the top winners. Each business received a cash prize of GHS30,000, bringing the total amount awarded to the five winners to GHS150,000.

In addition to the cash prizes, the winners received Business Eye and MiFi to enhance their operational efficiency and business growth. The top three finalists will also

participate in the MTN Business Mini MBA Programme in partnership with Nova Business School, an initiative designed to equip entrepreneurs with practical business management skills and strengthen their capacity to compete in an increasingly dynamic business environment. The remaining finalists will benefit from entrepreneurship and skills development training provided by E4 Impact.

Although Tahir Field Recycling and Edible Treats achieved the highest scores in the competition, MTN Business awarded equal prize amounts to all five winning businesses, demonstrating its commitment to creating opportunities for a wider range of SMEs to scale and succeed.

The remaining finalists, 10-10 Foodie, Awhenepa Cookery, House of Lush, Bubune Africa Limited and Lebenam Skin, each received GHS2,000 in prize money, along with MTN products and business solutions, including Y'ello Biz Routers, Business Eye solutions and other digital tools to support their digital transformation journeys.

Speaking at the event, the Senior Manager for SME Sales, Partnerships and Business Broadband at MTN Ghana, Mohamed Abubakar Siddiq, said the Business Pitch Competition forms part of MTN's commitment to supporting the growth and sustainability of SMEs, which play a critical

role in Ghana's economy.

He said "SMEs are the backbone of Ghana's economy, contributing significantly to job creation, innovation and economic growth. At MTN, we understand both the opportunities and challenges that come with building and growing a business. Through initiatives such as the Business Pitch Competition and the SME Accelerate Programme, we are providing entrepreneurs with the funding, digital solutions and business knowledge they need to grow resilient and sustainable enterprises. Our goal is to help SMEs unlock their potential, create jobs and contribute meaningfully to national development".

Founder and CEO of Tahir Field Recycling, Tahir Pumar, expressed gratitude to MTN Business and its partners for the opportunity, describing the recognition as a major boost for the company's growth ambitions. "This recognition is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team. The prize money will enable us to increase production capacity, expand our operations and create additional employment opportunities for young people. We are grateful to MTN Business for investing in the growth of Ghanaian businesses," he said.

The MSME Day Business Pitch Competition forms part of MTN Ghana's efforts to champion entrepreneurship and create opportunities for SMEs through funding, digital solutions, mentorship and capacity-building initiatives. Now in its third year, the SME Accelerate Programme is a year-long initiative designed to support the growth and sustainability of SMEs across Ghana. The programme features SME clinics, business webinars, exhibitions and curated networking opportunities aimed at equipping entrepreneurs with the knowledge, tools and connections needed to succeed. So far, three SME clinics have been held across three regions, impacting more than 700 SMEs. Three additional clinics are scheduled to take place in Accra, Takoradi and Tamale. The programme also includes a Mini MBA training programme for SMEs in partnership with Nova Business School. ■

Lagos Governor commissions the Arridex Omnifactory, West Africa's first multi-technology industrial additive manufacturing facility

Arridex has formally commissioned its Omnifactory, West Africa's first multi-technology industrial additive manufacturing facility, at a ceremony in Lagos commissioned by Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Governor of Lagos State, and attended by senior government officials, industry leaders, and members of the diplomatic corps and investment delegation attending the Invest Lagos 3.0 forum.

The Invest Lagos delegation included participants from the forum's panel session on The Future of Technology and Innovation, at which Kayode Adeleke, Group Chief Executive Officer of Arridex, spoke to the role of technology and innovation in the industrialisation of Africa, drawing directly on Arridex's operational experience across oil and gas, maritime, aerospace, defence, construction, and manufacturing.

The Arridex Omnifactory integrates multiple additive manufacturing technologies under a single roof, including Laser Powder Bed Fusion (L-PBF), Cold Spray, Fused Filament Fabrication (FFF), and Selective Laser Sintering (SLS), enabling on-demand production of industrial components, spares, and improved part designs for critical industries. Its large-format capabilities extend to full-size marine components and other large-scale industrial structures.

The Omnifactory's commissioning is the point at which two decades of accumulated capability become infrastructure. Arridex began operations in 2005 as an asset integrity practice in Nigeria's oil and gas sector and grew sector by sector into maritime, defence, construction, technology, and aerospace. The organisation has recorded zero lost-time incidents across more than seven million man hours of operations.

For Nigeria and West Africa, the Arridex Omnifactory addresses a structural



dependency that has long affected operational continuity across critical industries. Asset owners managing ageing infrastructure have routinely contended with extended procurement lead times, supply chains spanning multiple jurisdictions, and the increasing obsolescence of legacy parts whose original manufacturers may no longer exist. The Omnifactory manufactures those components on demand in Lagos.

Arridex holds Pioneer Status in additive manufacturing, granted by the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), it is the first company qualified by the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) for additive manufacturing deployment in the oil and gas sector, and has a joint venture partnership with the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) for the local production of military-grade additive manufactured components, a set of recognitions that collectively signal the institutional grounding of what the Omnifactory represents.

Arridex is also the first African member of the Additive Manufacturer Green Trade Association (AMGTA), and a Designated Strategic Partner of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC), with Kayode Adeleke serving on the CWEIC Global Advisory Council.

Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Governor of Lagos State said: "I have opened West Africa's first multi-technology industrial additive manufacturing facility in Lagos. By producing industrial components and spare parts here in Lagos, Arridex is helping to reduce our dependence on imports, strengthening critical industries and supporting economic growth. I commend the Arridex team for their vision and commitment to building solutions that serve not only Nigeria but the wider African continent. Lagos will continue to support investments that create opportunities, grow local capacity and position our state as a hub for innovation and industry."

"We did not set out to build the biggest company, but a resilient one. For over two decades, we have chosen the harder path, and that is to make in Africa what others import, to meet global standards without exception, and to put purpose before profit. The Arridex Omnifactory is where that conviction becomes infrastructure. The name on the door is new, but the work behind it is not. We are not stopping here. By the first quarter of 2027, we will commission the Arridex Mega Omnifactory, which will stand among the largest single-site industrial additive manufacturing facilities in the world. The next chapter of global manufacturing can be written from Lagos. We are building it." Kayode Adeleke, Group Chief Executive Officer, Arridex. ■



Building Trust First: Why Digital Identity Will Define Africa's Digital Economy

Interview with Bronius Skudutis, CEO of Mediafon Datapro

Q: Digital identity is increasingly becoming the foundation of digital economies. How do you view its importance for Africa's transformation journey?

Bronius Skudutis: Digital identity is becoming a basic requirement for participation in the digital economy. Without a trusted and easy way to prove who they are, people face limited access to financial services, government platforms, healthcare, and many other digital services.

For Africa, this is not only a technology issue, it is an economic one. The easier it is for people to identify themselves, the easier it becomes to access services, do business, and participate in the formal economy.

Roads enabled physical trade. Trusted digital identity enables digital trade. It creates the trust layer that allows governments, businesses, and citizens to interact confidently in the digital world. Without trusted identity, it is difficult to scale digital services, expand financial inclusion, attract investment, or reduce fraud.

That is why digital identity is becoming such an important priority across Africa.

Q: What are the biggest fraud challenges facing governments, telecom operators, and financial institutions today?

BS: When discussing fraud, we often jump straight to new technologies, new regulations, or new strategies. In reality, many countries and organizations already have the necessary frameworks in place.

The bigger challenge is implementation.

Are identity checks being performed consistently? Can organizations connect the right data points to identify anomalies, duplicate records, or suspicious behaviour? Are additional verification steps triggered when risk indicators appear?

In my experience, fraud is often not the result of missing rules. It is the result of missed signals. Organizations usually have more information available than they realize. The challenge is turning that information into timely decisions and action.

Q: How can digital identity solutions improve financial inclusion across underserved communities?

BS: Financial inclusion is often discussed as a question of access, but access starts with trust. A bank, mobile money provider, or lender needs confidence that the person on the other side of the transaction is who they claim to be.

Digital identity helps remove that barrier. In some cases, biometric verification can make the process even more secure and convenient, especially where traditional identity documents may be limited or difficult to verify.

What matters is not the technology itself, but the outcome. When people can be identified quickly, securely, and remotely,

real problem, solve it step by step, prove that the system works in practice, then move to the next problem. Repeat.

“ Roads enabled physical trade. Trusted digital identity enables digital trade ”

Countries rarely succeed because they have the best strategy. They succeed because they execute consistently. The real challenge is moving from plans and pilot projects to solutions that people use every day.

The strongest programs usually begin with practical objectives: improving access to financial services, reducing fraud, or making government services easier to use. They demonstrate value, build trust, and then expand over time.

Africa's opportunity is not to copy someone else's model, but to take proven ideas and implement them in a way that works locally.

Q: How can policymakers balance security requirements with privacy and data protection concerns?

BS: I think the debate is sometimes framed the wrong way. Too often, privacy is treated as a reason not to act, while security is used as a justification to collect more data. In reality, security and privacy are often presented as competing priorities, but citizens expect both.

national Device Import Registration (DIR) and CEIR initiatives, one lesson stands out: people are usually not opposed to

registration itself. They want to understand why it is needed, how their data will be used, and how it will be protected. After all, nobody questions the need to register a car because the benefits are clear. The same principle applies in the digital world. When the value is clear and trust is established, adoption follows.

Q: What role will biometric technologies play in future digital identity ecosystems?

BS: Biometrics will play an important role in the future of digital identity, but their success will depend on how they are integrated into the broader ecosystem. On their own, biometrics can verify a person. Combined with trusted identity data and effective verification processes, they become significantly more powerful.

The main advantage of biometrics is convenience. People can forget passwords, lose documents, or change phone numbers, but biometric characteristics provide an additional layer of verification that is always available.

That said, biometrics should complement other identity and security mechanisms, not replace them. The real value comes when different verification methods work together and adapt to the level of risk involved.

The future is likely to be less about collecting more data and more about verifying identity with greater confidence while keeping the user experience simple and secure.

Q: How can telecom operators leverage digital identity frameworks to enhance customer trust and service delivery?

BS: Telecom operators play an important

“ Digital trust is not declared—it is demonstrated. Citizens do not trust strategies. They trust systems that work ”

financial institutions can reach more customers, and citizens can access services that were previously out of reach.

Q: What lessons can African countries learn from successful digital identity implementations around the world?

BS: At Mediafon, we have seen this repeatedly across digital infrastructure projects in different markets. Start with a

In my view, policymakers should start with a simple principle: collect only the data that is genuinely needed, encrypt and protect it properly, and be transparent about how it is used. Security should be designed on the assumption that breaches can happen, which means sensitive data must remain protected and unusable even if it falls into the wrong hands.

From Mediafon's experience implementing



role in the digital economy, but trust cannot be built by operators acting alone. It requires a broader ecosystem with trusted identity frameworks and reliable sources of verification.

For example, customer information should be verified against authoritative sources rather than relying solely on data provided during registration. This helps prevent identity abuse, supports compliance requirements, and provides better protection for citizens against fraud.

In some areas, a centralized approach can bring significant benefits. A national SIM registry, for example, allows customers to see how many SIM cards are registered in their name, set reasonable limits, and quickly identify unauthorized registrations or suspicious activity. This not only helps prevent fraud but also gives citizens greater visibility and control over their digital identity.

“Africa's opportunity is not to copy someone else's model, but to take proven ideas and implement them in a way that works locally”

Ultimately, trust comes from verification, transparency, and giving people confidence that the system is working in their best interest.

Q: What policy measures are needed to strengthen digital trust across African markets?

BS: Three policy measures matter most:

trusted sources of verification, clear accountability across institutions, and consistent enforcement of existing rules.

Many countries already have strategies, regulations, and frameworks in place. The next step is making sure institutions can securely verify information against trusted registries, while citizens have visibility and control over how their information is used.

Another critical element is citizen empowerment. When individuals can see and control what is registered in their name, trust becomes immediate, personal, and measurable.

Digital trust is not declared, it is demonstrated. It comes from systems that work reliably, detect abuse early, and give users confidence that they are protected.

Citizens do not trust strategies. They trust systems that work. ■

SAMENA Council welcomes MTN Group to its membership of operators, tech providers, and ecosystem partners



The SAMENA Telecommunications Council has announced the membership of MTN Group to its membership. MTN represented by Lele Modise, the Group's Chief Legal and Regulatory Officer and an internationally-recognised professional featured on the Legal500 GC Powerlist and Chambers Global rankings as well as Vice-Chair of the ITU Industry Advisory Group on Development Issues and the Private Sector Chief Regulatory Officers forum (AIGDI-CRO).

As a Pan-African digital operator, MTN Group brings practical experience from markets where infrastructure investment, digital inclusion, regulatory certainty, cross-border connectivity, and trusted platforms are closely linked. Through the SAMENA Council, MTN Group aims to contribute operator perspectives to regional industry discussions on critical issues. This includes advancing discussions on infrastructure protection and resilience, enabling sustainable investment models, strengthening data governance frameworks, and promoting trusted digital infrastructure. Additional interest areas for MTN include shaping conversations on cybersecurity, AI readiness, and enabling policy and regulatory frameworks that support long-term sector development, innovation, and inclusive growth across the



Bocar BA, CEO of SAMENA Council

region.

Commenting on MTN's membership of the SAMENA Council, Lele Modise stated: "Our participation in the work of the SAMENA Council reflects our commitment to shaping bold industry dialogue that supports resilient networks, in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment, catalyzes investment-ready policy frameworks, and drives inclusive digital growth across the markets we serve, thus ensuring better outcomes for customers, enterprises, and the societies."

Welcoming MTN Group and Modise to

the Council, CEO of the SAMENA Council Bocar BA stated: "We are pleased to welcome MTN Group to the SAMENA Council. MTN's experience as a major operator, digital infrastructure investor, and provider of fintech and connectivity platforms across Africa is highly relevant to the priorities of the Council. As telecom infrastructure becomes more central to national resilience, economic development, enterprise growth across industries, and digital transformation, MTN's perspective will add practical value to our regional industry dialogue and to the wider effort to strengthen secure, sustainable, and investment-ready digital ecosystems."

As networks increasingly transform and support new essential services and as AI, cloud, fintech, enterprise platforms, and cross-border data flows increase demand on connectivity, operators and ecosystem partners need stronger alignment around infrastructure security, regulatory clarity, cyber resilience, and long-term investment models. In this context, leading operators' participation in the SAMENA Council supports more focused cross-regional conversations and recommendations on how critical digital infrastructure should be developed and how sustainable digital ecosystems needs to be built. ■

Bernard Beya appointed as CEO of Liquid Intelligent Technologies DRC

Liquid Intelligent Technologies has appointed Bernard Beya as Chief Executive Officer of its operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

“The DRC represents one of the most exciting growth opportunities in our region, and Bernard’s appointment comes at an important moment in our journey. His deep understanding of the local market, combined with his commitment to customer success and operational excellence, will help accelerate our ambitions to expand digital infrastructure and enable greater economic growth across the country,” said Sutha Siva, EVP: Group Chief Operating Officer at Cassava Technologies.

Bernard brings over 20 years of leadership experience in telecommunications, including deep expertise in the DRC market. He joined Liquid in September 2022 as Chief Financial Officer and was appointed Acting CEO in November 2025, overseeing the organisation’s strategic, operational

and commercial direction. His proven track record of delivering results and building stakeholder trust highlights his capability to lead Liquid DRC effectively.

“I am honoured to lead Liquid DRC’s next phase of growth. Our priority is to build on the strong operational and financial foundation we have established to deliver greater value for our customers and partners. As a business of Cassava Technologies, we can expand access to reliable connectivity, cloud, cyber security, colocation and compute AI for our customers. We can play a meaningful role in accelerating digital transformation for the country’s enterprises, government, and communities,” said Bernard.

As the Democratic Republic of Congo advances its digital transformation

agenda through significant investments in digital infrastructure, connectivity, and skills development, Liquid Intelligent Technologies is well positioned to support these national ambitions, helping unlock inclusive economic growth and drive the country’s digital future. ■



Liquid C2 secures gold-level in Google’s Verified Peering Provider Programme, providing improved cloud connectivity in Africa

Liquid C2 has achieved gold-level status in Google’s Verified Peering Provider (VPP) programme. This accreditation highlights the strength and reliability of its peering infrastructure with Google. It places the company among a select group of global providers and positions it as the most widely peered gold VPP partner in Africa.

For customers, this means easier access to Google services via Liquid’s network. The impact is significant because it eliminates delays and congestion from shared internet paths. Businesses enjoy faster access, lower latency, uninterrupted service, and more reliable performance when using Google Workspace, Google Cloud, and AI workloads.

Liquid C2’s qualification spans Johannesburg, Lagos, Nairobi and London, creating a geographically distributed, high-availability foundation that supports customers globally.

“Securing Google’s VPP status represents a significant step forward in Liquid’s efforts to strengthen Africa’s digital infrastructure,” said Vinay Hiralall, Chief Commercial Officer, Liquid C2. “In today’s cloud-first economy, network performance is a key driver of competitiveness. This recognition strengthens our ability to deliver consistent, low-latency access to Google services at scale, supporting enterprises across Africa as they expand into global digital markets.”

The achievement is part of Liquid’s broader strategy to expand advanced cloud connectivity and strengthen global technology partnerships. It builds on a growing relationship with Google, including the launch of Africa’s first Google Cloud-powered Partner Experience Centre in Johannesburg.

As a business of Cassava Technologies, Liquid continues to expand digital inclusion across markets through its portfolio of cloud, cyber security, and digital solutions. This ensures that organisations of all sizes can access advanced technologies and participate more fully in Africa’s digital economy. ■

Global leaders launch AI for Good Global Commission to expand access, strengthen trust and accelerate impact



Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame, Salesforce Chair and CEO Marc Benioff, and ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin has announced the launch of the AI for Good Global Commission.

The Commission brings together more than 40 Founding Members — including Heads of State and Government, industry CEOs and top executives, and Heads of UN agencies — to help define practical pathways to strengthen trust, expand access and unlock AI’s potential to solve real-world challenges at the speed the technology demands.

The newly formed Commission occupies a unique position in the global AI landscape. By connecting leaders who build technology, deploy it at scale, shape policy and represent communities, the Commission seeks to help forge responsible AI solutions across sectors and borders while ensuring the participation of developing countries.

“One thing is certain: technology is supposed to be a force for good, and we have a responsibility to use it accordingly,” said President Kagame, Co-Chair of the Commission. “Let us work together to reduce inequality, and allow more and more of our citizens to benefit from the good AI can deliver to all of us.”

“The promise of AI is built on not only incredible opportunities for the growth of our economy, but on the foundation of trust that is required for our shared success,” said Benioff, Commission Co-Chair.

With 2.2 billion people still offline, one-quarter of the world is cut off from AI advancements. A key focus of the AI for Good Global Commission will be to bridge digital divides and help ensure that AI becomes a tool for solving global challenges, not deepening inequalities.

The new AI for Good Global Commission

builds on the foundation of the multi-stakeholder ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, which helped shape global priorities for connectivity, digital inclusion and economic development.

“No organization can single-handedly put AI at the service of all humanity,” said Bogdan-Martin, Vice-Chair of the Commission. “It will take collective leadership and the combined expertise of partners from across sectors to ensure AI benefits all people, everywhere.”

The AI for Good Global Commission will have its inaugural meeting during ITU’s AI for Good Global Summit 2026 (7-10 July) in Geneva, Switzerland. The Summit is part of Digital Week, a series of digital cooperation events taking place in Geneva from 6-10 July, which also includes the first UN-mandated Global Dialogue on AI Governance (6-7 July) and the WSIS Forum 2026 (6-10 July). ■

First WATT Renewable Limited and MTN Nigeria launch renewable energy infrastructure programme for critical operations and electric vehicle charging sites

First WATT Renewable Limited and MTN Nigeria have announced a strategic renewable energy infrastructure partnership designed to reduce diesel dependence, improve operational resilience at MTN's critical facilities and supply renewable energy systems to power electric vehicle charging infrastructure across selected MTN locations in Nigeria.

The programme comprises two major project components. The first is an Energy-as-a-Service deployment that will provide approximately 34 MWp of solar photovoltaic as a generation capacity and 40 MWh of battery energy storage across selected MTN facilities nationwide. These sites include data centres, switch facilities, cable landing stations, customer service centres and other network critical locations.

The second is the supply of renewable energy infrastructure to power 60 kW EV charging stations across eight MTN facilities located at Ikoyi, Matori, Ojota, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Asaba, Kano and Ibadan.

Together, both components are designed to reduce dependence on diesel-based systems, lower operating emissions, support operational uptime, strengthen business continuity, and increase the contribution of renewable energy across MTN's operational sites, including selected EV charging locations.

As digital demand continues to

grow, reliable energy infrastructure remains critical to the performance of telecommunications networks and the wider digital economy. This partnership will



support MTN Nigeria's efforts to strengthen the resilience of critical operations while increasing the use of renewable energy across selected facilities.

Based on current project assumptions, the programme is expected to support the avoidance of an estimated 25,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (tCO₂e) over five years, subject to operational performance and final emissions calculations.

Commenting on the partnership, Oluwale Eweje, Chief Executive Officer of WATT Renewable Corporation, said:

"This partnership is a defining milestone

for First WATT and an important step in strengthening the energy infrastructure that supports Nigeria's digital economy. By deploying solar photovoltaic generation and battery energy storage across selected MTN facilities, we are helping to improve energy reliability at critical locations where uptime is essential.

"The EV charging component also demonstrates how renewable energy infrastructure can support Nigeria's transition to lower-carbon mobility. By providing renewable power systems for EV charging sites, this programme helps address one of the key requirements for wider EV adoption: reliable and cleaner energy supply."

Speaking on the initiative, Tobechukwu Okigbo, Chief Corporate Services and

Sustainability Officer at MTN Nigeria, said:

"As Nigeria's energy and mobility landscape evolves, renewable energy will play an important role in building cleaner and more reliable infrastructure. This partnership supports our efforts to reduce diesel dependence, improve operational efficiency, and strengthen the resilience of the systems that power connectivity.

"It is also aligned with Project Zero, under our Doing for Planet sustainability pillar, through which we are focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency, and increasing the use of renewable energy across our operations." ■

GLOBAL ICT, TELECOM & SATCOM EVENTS 2026

27-28 August 2026  Zanzibar, Tanzania	05-07 October 2026  Dubai, UAE	27-28 October 2026  Bangkok, Thailand
31-03 Aug - Sep 2026  Lagos, Nigeria	13-15 October 2026  London, UK	02-05 November 2026  London, UK
31-03 Aug - Sept. 2026  Riyadh, KSA	13-15 October 2026  Messe Wien Vienna, Austria	08-11 November 2026  Doha, Qatar
11-14 September 2026  Amsterdam, Netherlands	14-15 October 2026  Lagos, Nigeria	09-10 November 2026  Riyadh, KSA
16-18 September 2026  Dubai, UAE	15-16 October 2026  Nairobi, Kenya	17-19 November 2026  Cape Town, South Africa
05-07 October 2026  Dubai, UAE	26-27 October 2026  Dubai, UAE	08-11 December 2026  Dubai, UAE

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