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1. Brief Introduction and Background:

The Smart Africa Alliance is a Pan-African institution with 30 Member States. It is a bold and innovative initiative from African Heads of State and Governments who are committed to accelerate sustainable socioeconomic development on the continent, by harmonizing policies, regulations and ushering Africa into a knowledge economy through affordable access to Broadband and usage of Information and Communications Technologies.

Smart Africa's vision is to transform Africa into a single digital market through a number of carefully selected interventions within the field of ICT and leverage the continental economies of scale, as Africa seeks to develop further.

This vision is supported by 3 groups of objectives:

- a) Develop affordable digital infrastructure across the continent;
- b) Promote and facilitate framework conditions for doing business and investing across Africa;
- c) Accelerate the birth and development of a truly digital society including boosting the entrepreneurship ecosystem to promote economic growth and job creation.

In order to move the strategy to tangible actions, each Smart Africa member state selects a flagship of its choice and champions that particular flagship initiative with objectives to lead its implementation in their respective countries, for other countries to then adopt. The aim is to ensure that each country has a specific contribution to the overall goal and then benefits from others' experience as well.

In the case of broadband, a number of initiatives have been undertaken towards improving the state of broadband in Africa. Below are some specific initiatives which have been undertaken:

2. SMART Broadband 2025 Strategy Project: A flagship project led by Senegal

The SMART Broadband 2025 Strategy led by the republic of Senegal is an ambitious initiative to deliver increased affordability and access to broadband connectivity by 2025 to Africa that will unleash opportunities of emerging digital economy and position Africa as a player in the 4th Industrial Revolution. It achieves this by enhancing broadband interconnectivity in Africa, breaking cross border barriers and being a foundational building block to realize a Single Digital Market (SDM) by 2030.

SMART Broadband 2025 is a call to action and the promise of; affordable broadband service at 3Mbps minimum download speeds, increased access to content at least 30% of which is generated and stored in Africa, devices partially manufactured in Africa, increased broadband penetration by 50% from the existing 39%¹ in 2019 up to 51% by 2025 thereby adding 308 million people on broadband. SMART Broadband 2025 also promises to transition 12 additional countries to over 20% penetration; bringing the total number of countries that surpassed this threshold to 46 – a penetration level that provides a threshold of pervasive exploitation and realization of digital economy benefits.

SMART Broadband 2025 provides a holistic approach through seven thematic areas designated as pillars to deliver sustainable broadband. The pillars are: a) technology, infrastructure and devices; b) demand side-capacity building, awareness and affordability; c) content, application and services; d) innovative economic models to mobilize investment; e) policy and regulatory frameworks; f) cyber security and trust; and g) social inclusion – gender equality.

Under the guidance of the Smart Africa Alliance, the Smart Africa Secretariat convened a Working Group co-chaired by The Republic of Senegal and Facebook Inc. in July 2019 to explore how Africa can enhance broadband. The Working Group comprising of Member States and the Private Sector underscored the complimentary role to realize broadband in Africa and through a consultative process. Therefore, the SMART Broadband 2025 Strategy document will serve as a guideline for member states in

¹ <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>

increasing the penetration of broadband. Presently the SMART Broadband 2025 Strategy document is its final stage and will be ready and launched before the end of 2020.

3. Cloud and Data Centers for Africa Project; A flagship led by Djibouti

The creation of data centers in Africa represents one of the foundations for a single digital market and for the continent's digital future. Content and services hosted locally are cheaper to download, because they do not have to pass through costly international connections. The latency induced by the international routing of packages has negative effects on user experiences in Africa and threatens the deployment of key future technologies like IoT, cloud-based AI solutions, among others. The security of sensitive data, as well as African states' ability to monitor and regulate digital activities can be improved through the localization of data centers.

The project is a flagship for the Republic of Djibouti and will be carried out through the creation of a working group made up of member states, partner organizations like the AfDB, and a cross section of the private sector in the field of datacenters. The initial phase which shall mainly be a study will have the following deliverables:

- Conduct an analysis of the African environment and identify key factors to attract and support data centers implementation;
- Identify main challenges for the development of data centers in Africa today;
- Carry out a market study (demand and current supply) of the African data center market, including both colocation services and hyperscale;
- Define a roadmap, including strategic and financial planning, for the construction and exploitation of regional data centers in Africa;
- Provide policy recommendations to set up a positive regulatory environment for the development of data centers.

4. The Intra-African Connectivity Project: A flagship led by Guinea

The purpose of this project is to connect each African country to the other, to allow for access and affordable internet either by Submarine, Terrestrial or Satellite technology. An estimated 15000 km of terrestrial fiber and 11,098km of submarine fiber is required to achieve this target. The project is under the flagship of a flagship of Guinea and in collaboration with Tata and other private sector members of the Smart Africa Alliance.

The initial phase, which is completed, involved the interconnection among three countries comprising of Mali, Guinea, and Senegal. Processes have been initiated for four (4) additional member countries interconnections which is scheduled to complete by the end of 2020. The second phase consists of ten (10) African countries and

scheduled to complete by 2021. The remaining African countries, with priority on the Smart Africa members will be in the third and final phase, planned to be completed by 2025. The expected outcome of this project shall include:

- A connected Africa which will make internet and broadband accessible and affordable.
- Voice, SMS and Data traffic generated and destined for Africa will stay within the boundaries of the continent.
- Data protection framework will be outlined to protect member countries, businesses, and individuals.

5. Bulk Purchase of Submarine and Satellite Broadband Bandwidth Capacity Project: A Smart Africa Initiative.

Smart Africa has launched an initiative, with the aim of making broadband affordable for the member states by working to secure an agreement with international broadband providers for long-term bulk sub-marine and/or Satellite bandwidth. The agreement will be based on the principle of more for less, as volume grows, the cost per MB of data volume should go down. Based on surety of aggregated projections of broadband volumes from all member states, this should give the providers an assured, steady level of income over a long period, hence the need to reduce costs. At present and for the initial phase, Smart Africa has engaged a Consultant to conduct a study and analysis that will focus on the current 30 Smart Africa countries (Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, DR Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Sierra Leone, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe), with best efforts for the remaining 24 countries. Deliverables expected from the study and analysis which is scheduled to be completed by the end of JULY 2020 shall cover among the following:

- Market Intelligence and Background Analysis
- Strategy and Operational Plan
- Terms of Reference for Purchase of Wholesale Broadband
- Insights and advice for negotiating with providers
- Draft agreement for use with the broadband providers
- Draft agreement for use with member states and organizations who sign up for bulk purchase

SMART AFRICA COVID19 RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. The Smart Africa Technical Call for Proposals to counter COVID-19:

The onset of the COVID-19 presented an opportune time to accelerate the digital transformation of Africa ranging from health, education, finance, business, among others. On the 25th of March 2020, the Smart Africa Secretariat released a call for projects to develop a common platform that can support Member States to mitigate the global impact of COVID-19, using widely available and familiar channels such as USSD, SMS, Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR), WhatsApp and the Web.

This technology platform is highly customizable and adaptable to increase usability in various Member States, considering the language differences, the diversity of technologies and devices used by the target beneficiaries. Among other things, the platform is expected to achieve the following:

- Allow citizens to perform a self-evaluation for symptoms of the virus and self-reporting in order to support triage and the orientation of cases to relevant public health authorities.
- Allow citizens to report on the community status;
- Allow citizens to access relevant and verified information about the disease, including updates and alerts from public health authorities;
- Allow public health care officials to handle the flux of calls and requests related to COVID-19;
- Allow health care systems to gain insights from the current and future trends of the outbreak and identify potential community outbreaks;
- Allow proper tracing in order to reduce the spread of the virus.

2. Release of a technical support document to Member States:

The secretariat also released a technical document that addressed issues ranging from broadband connectivity, financial support, data protection, food security and education. The recommendations, specifically for broadband, are shown below :

Recommended Immediate Actions:

- Declare telecom services as essential services.
- Reduce taxation on internet services and devices used to access them.
- Work closely with telecom service providers on zero-rating some essential online services for health, education, and work.
- Ensure data privacy and protection of citizen data.

Recommended Medium Term Actions:

- Invest a portion of the Universal Access Funds toward digital skills literacy and extending connectivity to the unconnected.
- Encourage network infrastructure sharing as a way to increase deployment of broadband to the unconnected.
- Encourage spectrum re-farming for quick deployment of services.

- Review spectrum licensing strategies for 4G.
- Initiate e-governance and e-service solutions

Recommended Long Term Actions:

- The Smart Africa Secretariat will launch the Smart Broadband Ambassadors, with a mandate to see to the implementation of the projects indicated in the strategy document.
- Countries come together to inter-connect the continent, through the initiative of the intra-African connectivity project, aimed at connecting every country by terrestrial or submarine cable.
- Countries encourage the roaming like at home scenario for citizens to reduce the cost of communication.
- Support the Smart Africa project for affordability on bulk purchase of wholesale capacity for all.
- Countries encourage the use of digital identity for good.
- The Smart Africa Secretariat has embarked on a project on Smart Devices, and this aims at making devices affordable and accessible. This entails Smart devices for broadband, Smart devices for Education and Smart devices for digital transformation. A call for all to participate on this project will see to the masses getting access to devices relevant to the increase of broadband penetration.