

Investing in fibre is key to enable the growth of Africa's digital economy

Global trends show Africa maintaining its position as the fastest growing region in internet usage, though data volumes remain substantially lower in comparison to other parts of the world.



Image source: Gallo/Getty.

At the end of June 2019, the International Telecoms Week facilitated a panel discussion session where members spoke about the importance of investing in fibre infrastructure within Africa, in order to facilitate development and growth of the continent's digital economy.

Principal Analyst at TeleGeography, Patrick Christian, evaluated the African digital economy — he noted that the study of global trends show Africa maintaining its position as the fastest growing region in internet usage though data volumes remain substantially lower in comparison to other parts of the world.

Christian underscored the importance of the role that content providers — such as Google, Microsoft and Facebook — play in driving internet traffic. He believes having more content beginning to reside and be exchanged within Africa will add tremendous benefits to the ecosystem.

The panel included members from MainOne, Google, Avanti Plc, Angola Cables, CSquared Africa, and WIOCC who engaged in compelling discourse highlighting the key factors for development in Africa's digital economy.

The dialogue centred on the notion that the development of the terrestrial network is key to growing the digital economies of all African countries. A point further emphasised by MainOne's CEO, Funke Opeke, who stated that the organisation is currently working in Lagos, Nigeria to enable digital transformation through the deployment of 2500km of fibre, adding to the almost 1000km of fibre currently deployed.

Opeke says, "Our immediate focus is to ensure we have fibre to the towers, fibre to schools, health care facilities, and other government agencies, fibre to the enterprise/business districts, and with a density to reach within 1km of the majority of citizens in Lagos. We envisage having network density whereby over 60

of the population is within 1km of fibre access with the planned deployment.”

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