



Press Release
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Orange Middle East and Africa and Digital Africa sign a strategic partnership to strengthen support and growth of African startups in the Orange Digital Centers network

Jérôme Hénique, CEO of Orange Middle East and Africa, and **Isadora Bigourdan**, CEO of Digital Africa, have signed a partnership agreement during the event Vivatech to promote and strengthen the growth of African startups by leveraging the expertise and resources of the Orange Digital Centers and Digital Africa.

As part of this collaboration, Orange and Digital Africa will work to identify and select promising tech startups across the African continent. Selected startups will be able to access a range of resources, including mentoring programs, technical support, funding, and networking opportunities through the Orange Digital Center and the Digital Africa community.

The Orange Digital Centers (ODC) are ecosystems in 17 countries in Africa and the Middle East and 8 countries in Europe, that support, train, and guide young people and those with innovative ideas, to enhance their employability and prepare them for the jobs of the future (AI, cybersecurity, etc.) or encourage them to become digital entrepreneurs.

The Orange Digital Centers bring together a range of free programs open to everyone all in one place, from digital training for young people to startup acceleration, as well as support and investment for project leaders.

To intensify its activities to develop digital entrepreneurship in the priority areas of each country: environment, e-agri, e-health, e-commerce... The Orange Digital Centers are entering today a new phase, ODC 2.0, with a special focus on women and the digitally excluded.

Digital Africa's mission is to strengthen the capacity of African entrepreneurs to design and deploy digital innovations at scale for the real economy. Acting as a catalyst, Digital Africa brings together a range of partners of all nationalities - startups, researchers, incubators, institutional investors, venture capitalists, cluster techs - all committed to African digital entrepreneurs, and foremost among them is Proparco, as sole shareholder.

Digital Africa's operational approach is based on a clear diagnosis of entrepreneurs' needs, directly from the field, to develop a set of programs around three main priorities:

- Strengthening the skills and tools needed to launch a startup, through access to trained local talent and data.
- Facilitating access to seed funding by implementing agile funding schemes such as the creation of investor communities.
- Supporting "made in Africa" innovation policies that are favorable to innovative digital entrepreneurs in Africa, as well as supporting the production of knowledge on digital issues in Africa.

Leveraging the vast network of Orange Digital Centers and Digital Africa, startups will be connected to potential investors, partners and customers, enabling them to develop their business and accelerate their growth.

Through this partnership, Orange and Digital Africa will continue to contribute to the development of a thriving startup ecosystem in Africa. By providing young entrepreneurs with the tools, knowledge and support they need, this collaboration aims to empower them to turn their innovative ideas into successful businesses. It is part of their shared commitment to promote digital innovation "made in Africa" and to foster socio-economic development on the continent.

At the signing ceremony, representatives from Orange and Digital Africa expressed their enthusiasm and commitment to the success of this partnership. They emphasized the importance of nurturing local talent, promoting digital inclusion, and unlocking the immense potential of African startups.

"Digital talent is key to transforming the African continent. This partnership with the Orange Digital Centers aligns with our strategy for identifying promising entrepreneurs locally and helping them to access support, funding, and lobbying tools through an international network of allies," said **Isadora Bigourdan, CEO of Digital Africa.**

Jérôme Hénique, CEO of Orange Middle East and Africa, added: *"We are very excited to launch this collaboration with Digital Africa, as it adds an essential component to our existing Orange Digital Centers network, facilitating access to flexible financing solutions specifically designed to meet the needs of seed-stage entrepreneurs. This collaboration represents real added value and will help stimulate the growth of the African startup ecosystem."*

About Orange

Orange is one of the world's leading telecommunications operators with revenues of 43.5 billion euros in 2022 and 136,000 employees worldwide at 31 March 2023, including 74,000 employees in France. The Group has a total customer base of 288 million customers worldwide at 31 March 2023, including 243 million mobile customers and 24 million fixed broadband customers. The Group is present in 26 countries. Orange is also a leading provider of global IT and telecommunication services to multinational companies under the brand Orange Business. In February 2023, the Group presented its strategic plan "Lead the Future", built on a new business model and guided by responsibility and efficiency. "Lead the Future" capitalizes on network excellence to reinforce Orange's leadership in service quality.

Orange is listed on Euronext Paris (symbol ORA) and on the New York Stock Exchange (symbol ORAN).

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About Digital Africa

Digital Africa's mission is to strengthen the capacity of African entrepreneurs to design and deploy digital innovations at scale to serve the real economy. Acting as a catalyst, Digital Africa brings together a set of partners of all nationalities - startups, researchers, incubators, institutional financiers, venture capitalists, and cluster techs - committed to African digital entrepreneurs, with Proparco at the forefront as the sole partner. Our approach is based on a clear diagnosis of the needs of entrepreneurs, directly from the field, to develop a set of programs around three main areas:

(1) Strengthening the skills of digital start-ups in the seed stage on the continent, through team training and access to local talent trained in the start-up jobs

(2) Facilitating access to financing adapted to the seed stage through the implementation of agile financing mechanisms as well as the animation of communities of investors

(3) Supporting 'made in Africa' innovation policies that are favourable to digital entrepreneurs innovating in Africa. Digital Africa has also developed a media "resilient Digital Africa" to offer visibility to new tech leaders and doers on the continent. It also operates as a data-centric organization, placing access and use of data at the heart of its model.

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