

Smart Rwanda days returns with a focus on digitising the country

Under the theme 'Digitising Rwanda', the second edition of SMART Days Rwanda will take place in Kigali, Serena Hotel from 2-3 October 2014. The event comes as the country prepares to embark on the last five years of the 2020 vision and re-doubles efforts to achieve the transformation into a knowledge-based economy and society.



More than 400 attendees will include ICT industry experts from across the continent and beyond, policy makers, development partners and young innovators. Smart Rwanda Days will also host a Steering Committee meeting of Smart Africa Alliance, an initiative that was born in Rwanda during the TransformAfrica Summit that took place in October last year.

The gathering aims at stimulating the debate on how Rwanda and Africa at large can leverage ICT to accelerate its economic growth and competitiveness in the information age.

Keynote speakers at the conference will include President Paul Kagame and Dr. Hamadoun Toure, Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The conference will also feature high-level panel discussions on digital payments, internet governance, internet economy, open data, content localisation, digital innovation among others.

Rwanda's Minister of Youth and ICT, Jean Philbert Nsengimana, said SMART Rwanda Days provides a unique platform for participants to consider the progress that the contribution that ICT sector has made towards national development and renew strategies and partnerships to advance the country's unstoppable move towards a knowledge economy by 2020.

Focus on the role of innovation

"SMART Rwanda Days sends a signal to all the actors in the development arena to check how 'smart' they are in their respective domains. The focus remains on the role of innovation in transforming Education, Healthcare, Agriculture, Government Service Delivery and Business in general, especially Financial Services".

Minister Nsengimana highlighted that "For the Smart Rwanda Days specifically this year we chose 'Digitising Rwanda' as a theme, in recognition of the fact that Africa's digital economies are growing faster than traditional sectors and the potential for an even bigger contribution to national GDPs is yet to be unleashed".

In Rwanda, ICT contribution to GDP during the last two quarters stood at 2%, ahead of agriculture and mining. In terms of foreign direct investments, the ICT sector has worked as a magnet, attracting 45% of the total in-flows which is more than the next five sectors combined, including trade, financial sector, mining and manufacturing. A recent study revealed that ICT contributes 3.7% in advanced economies whereas in Africa, ICT contribution to GDP is at a growing 1.1% on average.

Facts about ICT in Rwanda:

- Rwanda has laid over 4,000 kilometres of fiber optic and is currently rolling out a super-fast 4G LTE network that will provide high speed internet to 95% of Rwandans by 2017.
- The ICT sector contributed more than 2% of the national GDP over the last two quarters, putting the sector's contribution ahead of all exports combined.
- Rwanda has four million mobile payments subscribers.
- The One Laptop per Child project has distributed 203,763 computers to students, covering 407 schools across Rwanda.
- More than 90% of health facilities in Rwanda are connected to the Internet.
- eSoko is an ITC service for the agriculture sector and has supported 11,000 farmers to make informed decisions about getting their produce to market.
- Rwanda's now has 7 million mobile subscribers, more than 60 percent of citizens - up from six percent in 2006.

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