

## 2Africa: a transformative subsea cable for future internet connectivity in Africa announced by global and African partners

2Africa is one of the largest subsea projects in the world, connecting 23 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Europe

**14 May 2020:** China Mobile International, Facebook, MTN GlobalConnect, Orange, stc, Telecom Egypt, Vodafone and WIOCC announced today that they will partner to build 2Africa, which will be the most comprehensive subsea cable to serve the African continent and Middle East region. The parties have appointed Alcatel Submarine Networks ("ASN") to build the cable in a fully funded project which will greatly enhance connectivity across Africa and the Middle East.

At 37,000km long, 2Africa will be one of the world's largest subsea cable projects and will interconnect Europe (eastward via Egypt), the Middle East (via Saudi Arabia), and 21 landings in 16 countries in Africa. The system is expected to go live in 2023/4, delivering more than the total combined capacity of all subsea cables serving Africa today, with a design capacity of up to 180Tbps on key parts of the system. 2Africa will deliver much needed internet capacity and reliability across large parts of Africa, supplement the fast-growing capacity demand in the Middle East and underpin the further growth of 4G, 5G and fixed broadband access for hundreds of millions of people.

In countries where the 2Africa cable will land, service providers will obtain capacity in carrier-neutral data centres or open-access cable landing stations on a fair and equitable basis. This will support healthy internet ecosystem development by facilitating greatly improved accessibility for businesses and consumers alike.

The 2Africa cable has been designed to improve resilience and maximise performance, including the option of a seamless optical crossing between East Africa and Europe. The 2Africa parties and Airtel have signed an agreement with Telecom Egypt to provide a completely new crossing linking the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, the first in over a decade. This includes new cable landing stations and deployment of next-generation fibre on two new,

diverse terrestrial routes parallel to the Suez Canal from Ras Ghareb to Port Said, and a new subsea link that will provide a third path between Ras Ghareb and Suez.

The 2Africa cable will implement a new technology, SDM1 from ASN, allowing deployment of up to 16 fibre pairs instead of the eight fibre pairs supported by older technologies, bringing much greater and more cost-effective capacity. The cable will incorporate optical switching technology to enable flexible management of bandwidth. Cable burial depth has also been increased by 50% compared to older systems, and cable routing will avoid locations of known subsea disturbance, all helping to ensure the highest levels of availability.

**Jessica Gu, Director and Chief Technology Officer of China Mobile International stated:**

"The launch of 2Africa enables us to offer our customers seamless connections between Africa, Asia, and Europe together with our SEA-ME-WE 5 and AAE-1 subsea cable resources to further extend to Asia, which is an important milestone of our global development strategy. The utmost capacity and faster transmission allows us to satisfy the needs of African nations today and in the future, reflecting our firm commitment to building a global digital life."

**Najam Ahmad, Vice President, Network Engineering at Facebook commented:**

"We are excited to be collaborating with our 2Africa partners on the most comprehensive subsea cable that will serve the continent. 2Africa is a major element of our ongoing investment in Africa to bring more people online to a faster internet. We have seen first-hand the positive impact that increased connectivity has on communities, from education to healthcare. We know that economies flourish when there is widely accessible internet for businesses. 2Africa is a key pillar supporting this tremendous internet expansion as part of Africa's surging digital economy."

**Frédéric Schepens, MTN GlobalConnect CEO said:**

"MTN GlobalConnect is delighted to participate in this bold 2Africa subsea cable project. This initiative complements MTN GlobalConnect's terrestrial fibre strategy to connect African countries to each other and to the rest of the world. We are proud to be playing a key role in providing the benefits of a modern connected life, which is a core MTN belief."

### **Alioune Ndiaye, CEO of Orange Middle East and Africa stated:**

"As one of the world's leading multi-service telecommunications operators and present in 18 countries in Africa and the Middle East, it was natural for Orange to be part of the 2Africa project. This major investment will complete our existing submarine and pan-African terrestrial infrastructures to provide access to international connectivity in a redundant fashion throughout the west coast of Africa. It will enable Orange to securely meet the demand for increased bandwidth necessary for the continued digital development of regions throughout the 2Africa system."

### **Mohammed A. Alabbadi, STC's VP of WBU commented expressed:**

"stc is delighted to be a Partner in 2Africa. The 2Africa cable will be integrated into stc's MENA Gateway (MG1) data centre in Jeddah, enabling customers to access our extensive international content and extend their regional connectivity through stc terrestrial geo-mesh network that extends to all neighboring countries. This will undoubtedly play a significant role in enhancing stc's international network capabilities, whilst also positioning stc as a leading regional digital player in the MENA region. The partnership demonstrates stc's commitment, in line with Saudi Vision 2030, to deliver meaningful digital transformation and build a digital society for all."

### **Adel Hamed, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, commented:**

"Telecom Egypt's contribution to 2Africa marks an important milestone in our endeavor to contribute to digital transformation in Africa. Egypt's relationship with African states has and will always be one of Egypt's top priorities, it extends here to align with Egypt's strategy to contribute in the current development in Africa. We are honored to be part of such a revolutionary project alongside renowned global and African partners. For years, we have accomplished tangible steps in revamping our international infrastructure and increasing our assets' geodiversity in order to keep pace with the rising global demand for large bandwidth and global reach. We trust that 2Africa will be a rich addition to our diversified investments in the subsea cable industry."

### **Vinod Kumar, Chief Executive Officer of Vodafone business noted:**

"Improving connectivity for Africa is a significant step which lays the groundwork for increased digitization across the continent. 2Africa will give local businesses and consumers a better online experience while more connectivity between Africa, Europe and the Middle East will help to build a wider, more inclusive digital society across the globe. We're delighted to work with our partners in the project to help deliver this."

### Chris Wood, WIOCC's Chief Executive Officer said:

"For over a decade WIOCC has been the hyperscale capacity provider for Africa, based upon a strategy of ongoing strategic investment in key subsea and terrestrial infrastructure. Participation in 2Africa continues this commitment to providing large capacity users with the resilient network they need to support their customers' ever-growing bandwidth requirements. Our investment both future-proofs our network capabilities and provides additional resilience to maximise uptime for our critical infrastructure."

### Alain Biston, President of Alcatel Submarine Networks said:

"We are honored by the trust of our partners and proud to have been selected for this project. With this state-of-the-art subsea system, Africa will take a giant leap to the digital age thanks to the best-in-class technologies. Africa is a long story for ASN: we have deployed the majority of submarine cables around the continent. 2Africa will be a great new chapter."

Further information can be found on the 2Africa website at [www.2africacable.com](http://www.2africacable.com)

(NB. the website may take up to 48 hours to go live from release of this announcement. In the meantime, please use [contact@2AfricaCable.com](mailto:contact@2AfricaCable.com) for enquiries).

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### About China Mobile International

China Mobile International Limited (CMI) is a wholly owned subsidiary of China Mobile. China Mobile is now the largest telecom operator in the world by network scale and subscriber base, and is among the top in terms of market capitalization and brand value. In order to provide better services to meet the growing demand in the international telecommunications market, China Mobile established a subsidiary, CMI, in December 2010, mainly responsible for the operation of international business. Leveraging the strong support by China Mobile, CMI provides a full range of comprehensive international telecommunications services, which includes IDD, roaming, Internet, MNC services and Value Added Business across the globe. For more information, please visit <https://www.cmi.chinamobile.com/en/front-page>.

## About Facebook

Founded in 2004, Facebook's mission is to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together. Over 2 billion people use Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Messenger every month to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what is going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them. Facebook is defined by its unique culture – one that rewards impact. The company encourages people to be bold and solve the problems they care most about. The phrase “this journey is 1% finished” reminds the company's teams that they have only begun to fulfill Facebook's mission. As the company evolves its journey to bring the world closer together, it stays true to the same core values to guide the way it works and the decisions it makes every step of the way: be open, be bold, move fast, focus on impact, and build social value. For more information, please visit <https://www.linkedin.com/company/facebook/about/>.

## About MTN GlobalConnect

MTN Group Limited entered the telecommunications scene at the dawn of South Africa's democracy, in 1994. In 1998, the company began its expansion by acquiring licenses in Rwanda, Uganda, and Swaziland. Since then, it continued to grow, with a view of bringing world-class telecommunications and digital services to markets across Africa and the Middle East. Through MTN's extensive investment in advanced communication infrastructure over the past two decades, the talent and experience of its people, as well as the strength of its brand, the company has grown to now have a presence in 21 countries, connecting over 230 million people. MTN GlobalConnect offers an integrated suite of communications products and services, including traditional mobile voice and data, digital and mobile financial services, and enterprise services. MTN continues to believe in the investment potential of emerging markets and thus delivers quality services that respond to its customers' present and future needs. Every initiative undertaken, every innovative stride made, every award-winning product developed, is aimed at making its customers' lives a whole lot brighter, as the company leads the delivery of a “bold, new Digital World”. For more information, please visit <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mtn/about/>.

## About Orange

Orange is one of the world's leading telecommunications operators with a revenue of 41 billion euros in 2017 and 152,000 employees worldwide as of 31 December 2017, including 93,000 employees in France. Present in 29 countries, the Group has a total customer base of more than 273 million customers as of 31 December 2017, including 211 million mobile customers and 20

million fixed broadband customers worldwide. Orange is also a leading provider of global IT and telecommunication services to multinational companies, under the Orange Business Services brand. In March 2015, the Group presented its new strategic plan, Essentials 2020, which places customer experience at the heart of our strategy with the aim of allowing them to benefit fully from the digital universe and the power of its new generation networks. Orange is listed on Euronext Paris (symbol ORA) and on the New York Stock Exchange (symbol ORAN).

For more information, please visit [www.orange.com](http://www.orange.com) , [www.orangebusiness.com](http://www.orangebusiness.com) , or follow us on Twitter: [@presseorange](https://twitter.com/presseorange).

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### About STC

STC is a forward-focused digital champion that has always been focused on innovation and evolution, thinking ahead to stay ahead as a truly meaningful and purposeful organization. The company offers a variety of ICT solutions and digital services in several categories including telecommunications, IT, financial technology, digital media, cybersecurity, and other advanced digital solutions. With that, STC is leading digital transformation nationally and regionally. For more information, please visit <https://www.stc.com.sa>.

### About Vodafone Group

Vodafone Group has extensive experience in connectivity, convergence, and the Internet of Things, as well as championing mobile financial services and digital transformation in emerging markets. Since making the first mobile call in the UK on 1 January 1985, Vodafone has grown into an international business and one of the most valuable brands in the world. The company has mobile operations in 24 countries, partners with mobile networks in 42 more, and provides fixed broadband in 19 markets. As of 30 September 2019, Vodafone Group had approximately 625 million mobile customers, 27 million fixed broadband customers, and 22 million TV customers, including all of the customers in Vodafone's joint ventures and associates. For more information, please visit <https://www.vodafone.com/>.

### About WIOCC

WIOCC is building Africa's first, truly hyper-scale network infrastructure. With the ability to efficiently deliver 100Gbps capacity and an extensive investment programme to develop our pan-African solution even further, WIOCC is the natural partner for OTTs, content providers, telecom



operators, and ISPs looking to take advantage of Africa's opportunities. The company utilises more than 55,000km of terrestrial fibre and in excess of 75,000km of submarine cable assets to offer affordable, reliable, managed connectivity to over 550 locations across 30 African countries. WIOCC's international reach extends to key commercial centres in Europe, Asia, and North America, providing a one-stop shop for fully-scalable international connectivity into, within, and out of Africa. Operating exclusively as a wholesaler, the company's focus is on putting you, our client, first. Building and maintaining strong, long-term relationships means WIOCC can develop bespoke solutions to meet your current requirements, with the flexibility to match future demands for growth and extra resilience and geographical expansion. You will find that only WIOCC has the depth of experience, local expertise, capacity, flexibility, and scalability to take you where you want to be. For more information, please visit <http://wiocc.net/>.

### About Alcatel Submarine Networks

Alcatel Submarine Networks leads the industry in terms of transmission capacity and installed base with more than 600,000 km of optical submarine cable deployed worldwide, enough to circumnavigate the globe 15 times. From traditional Telecom applications to content & Over-The-Top service provider infrastructures as well as offshore Oil & Gas applications, ASN provides all the elements of a global turnkey undersea transmission system, tailored to the individual customer's needs. An extensive service portfolio completes its comprehensive offering for the submarine business, including project management, installation and commissioning, along with marine and maintenance operations performed by ASN's fleet of cable ships. For more information, please visit <https://web.asn.com/en/>.

### About Telecom Egypt

Telecom Egypt is the first total telecom operator in Egypt providing all telecom services to its customers including fixed and mobile voice and data services. Telecom Egypt has a long history serving Egyptian customers for over 160 years maintaining a leadership position in the Egyptian telecom market by offering its enterprise and consumer customers the most advanced technology, reliable infrastructure solutions and the widest network of submarine cables. Aside from its mobile operation "WE", the company owns a 45% stake in Vodafone Egypt. Telecom Egypt's shares and GDRs (Ticker: ETEL.CA; TEEG.LN) are traded on The Egyptian Exchange and the London Stock Exchange. Please refer to Telecom Egypt's full financial disclosure on [ir.te.eg](http://ir.te.eg). For more information, contact:

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