



Joint Workshop

Exploring Avenues for (Enhanced) Collaborations in the Digital Sphere in Africa

19 September 2024

1:00–4:00 p.m.

in English & hybrid

Venue: German Federal
Foreign Office

In this workshop, scientists from two projects – the Digital Transformation Lab (DigiTraL) and Megatrends Afrika – jointly explore avenues for collaborations with Africa in the digital sphere. In two panels, they present specific case studies to analyse opportunities and challenges of Africa’s digital partnerships, and highlight options for policymakers and other stakeholders. Discussions with additional insights from experts in the region and foreign policy practitioners will supplement the presentations.

Closed workshop upon invitation only and Chatham House Rules apply

Programme

13:00-13:05 | Welcome Address

Policy Planning Unit, German Federal Foreign Office

13:05-13:15 | Introduction & Setting the Scene

Iris Wieczorek, Senior Research Fellow, Head of DigiTraL, GIGA

The Digital Transformation Lab (DigiTraL)

Benedikt Erforth, Senior Researcher, Project Lead MTA, IDOS

Megatrends Afrika (MTA)

13:15-13:30 | Inspiration Talk (10 min) + Q&A (5 min)

Jann Lay, Senior Research Fellow, GIGA

Digitalization in Africa: Potentials for Collaborations

13:30-14:20 | Panel 1 – Digital Cooperation and Competition in Africa: A Transnational Perspective

This panel delves into the evolving landscape of digital cooperation between Africa and its key international partners. As the digital economy increasingly shapes global interactions, understanding the dynamics of infrastructure investments, data governance, and standards becomes crucial for African development. The panel discusses the underlying dynamics of cooperation and competition on the matter by uniting different perspectives. The discussion analyses China's strategic investments in Africa's digital infrastructure. It contrasts this with the US's claim for global leadership and the US government's Digital Transformation Initiative With Africa. The panel then analyses specific African demands for digital cooperation, the criteria for evaluating external engagements, and perceptions of Chinese, US and EU offers. This also includes assessing how African stakeholders navigate the competitive landscape of international digital cooperation, considering the implications for policymaking and sustainable development. The discussion is framed against the backdrop of the European Union's approach, which emphasizes ethical considerations, data protection standards, and regulatory harmonization aimed at fostering a value-based partnership. By integrating these viewpoints, the panel aims to provide a holistic understanding of the opportunities and challenges inherent in Africa's digital partnerships with key partners, highlighting strategic considerations for policymakers and stakeholders.

Moderator: Benedikt Erforth, Senior Researcher, Project Lead MTA, IDOS

Panelists (3-5 min input each)

Hangwei Li, Senior Researcher, IDOS

China's Digital Silk Road and Its Digital Partnerships with Africa

Jane Munga, Fellow, Africa Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Africa's Digital Transformation, Strengthening the Enabling Environment through Digital Partnerships

Melody Musoni, Policy Officer, ECDPM

African Demands, Perspectives and Expectations for Digital Partnerships

Discussant: Assessment by Member of the Federal Foreign Office

Discussion (30 min)

14:20-15:00 | Coffee Break



15:00-15:50 | Panel 2 – Digital Transformation in Africa: Policies for Fostering (Digital) Partnerships

This panel aims to explore the diverse landscape of digitalization and its effects on (technological and economic) developments across Africa, highlighting the significant progress made in various countries and the potential for enhanced collaborations. This session presents in-depth case studies from various African countries (e.g. Kenya), illustrating the diverse local conditions and specific needs that shape their digitalization journeys. These case studies are essential for understanding the regional disparities and tailored approaches to foreign policy for digital cooperations under initiatives like the Global Gateway. Specifically, the panel looks at the regulatory frameworks that have either facilitated or hindered progress in digitalization, and discusses the role of digital literacy and technical skills initiatives in fostering an inclusive digital workforce. In addition, opportunities for digital partnerships to foster local innovation and home-grown solutions to address specific African challenges and contribute to economic growth is a key theme, showcasing successful examples of local tech innovation, their impact on communities, and the support systems that have nurtured these innovations, such as incubators, accelerators, and funding mechanisms.

Moderator: Christian von Soest, Senior Research Fellow, GIGA

Panelists (3-5 min input each)

Tevin Tafese, Research Fellow, GIGA

Current Status and Emerging Trends in Africa's Digital Development, Regulations/ Financial Cooperation to Promote Local Innovation and Investment

Anette Ruml, Research Fellow, GIGA

Digital Status-Quo in Kenya and Avenues for Cooperation

Christin Schul-Kaunga, Head of the Digital Transformation Center Kenya, GIZ

Africa's Perspective on Digital Regulations

Discussant: Alexander Fierley, Deputy Head of Mission, Head of Economic Department, German Embassy in Kenya

Discussion (30 min)

Digital Transformation Lab (DigiTraL)

GIGA's Digital Transformation Lab (DigiTraL), funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, analyses the political drivers and real-world consequences of the digital transformation taking place around the world. The Global South in particular is an important actor in and shaper of this transformation. The project concentrates on the following questions in its current phase: Where do individual countries and regions in the Global South stand with regards to digitalization? Where are the points of contact for (tech) partnerships with Germany? Where are new developments arising (e.g. emerging threats from digital disinformation; related reactions and interventions in the Global South)? What cooperative relationships exist in the field of digitalization in the Global South, and how can the German government and other stakeholders in Germany best respond to this?

Megatrends Afrika (MTA)

Megatrends Afrika is a joint project of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), and the Kiel Institute for World Economy (IfW). Global megatrends are driving or influencing processes of transformation on the African continent. In the project, we explore how megatrends affect African states and societies. We seek to develop ideas for German and European cooperation with African partners that help to make ongoing transformations fairer and more sustainable. As an interdepartmentally financed research and advisory project, we receive funding from the German Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Federal Ministry of Defense.