

# Massive cable project set to give Africa internet boost

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Workers at the Kenyan port of Mombasa haul ashore a fibre optic cable in June 2009 as part of a scheme to boost internet connectivity in East Africa

Telecoms and internet giants unveiled Thursday a mammoth project to lay a subsea cable around Africa to boost internet access to the underserved continent.

The consortium, which includes China Mobile International, Facebook, Orange and Vodafone, said a cable 37,000 kilometres (23,000 miles) long will make landfall in 16 countries in Africa and the Middle East.

"The system is expected to go live in 2023/4, delivering more than the total combined capacity of all subsea cables serving Africa today," said the group, which includes regional operators.

The cable will be one of the longest in the world, providing the continent with new high-speed links to Europe and the Middle East.

The connector will travel down the east coast of Africa and then up the [west coast](#) and connect to Britain, using new technology that doubles the number of optical fibres.

"Africa 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," the consortium said.

Its statement did not detail the cost of the scheme.

Many Africans access the internet via their phones, and even those who have a land line generally have slow speeds with the rest of the world due to insufficient bandwidth.

Internet reliability is also a problem—the cable serving the west coast of Africa and which links to Britain has suffered disruptions this year.

The consortium said the new cable will be buried in trenches 50 percent deeper than before, and skirt areas where existing cables have been damaged.

The announcement comes after a major scheme to provide high-speed [internet access](#) via satellites in low-Earth orbit, OneWeb, filed for bankruptcy as the coronavirus pandemic complicated its efforts to secure additional financing.

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