

AfricArena 2020 Summit shines light on entrepreneurship, innovation and investment

AfricArena held this year's annual Summit as a hybrid event; both in person at Workshop 17 in Cape Town and virtually via their web based AfricArena Air platform and through a new innovative mobile app - AfricArena Wired.



Strengthening their position as the African tech ecosystem accelerator, the AfricArena Summit culminated in the announcement of 20 startups from 18 countries being crowned as winners in various ecosystem and open innovation challenges with winners walking away with combined prize money of over \$350,000 in cash and AWS credits awards as well as a few lucky winners receiving tickets to Viva Technology in Paris next year.

Braving strong economic headwinds and managing current health and safety requirements, AfricArena brought together key players of the African tech ecosystem through a series of hybrid in-person and virtual events.

Taking place from 23-26 November 2020, AfricArena 2020 saw 34 of Africa's most promising startups, ranging from Seed to Series B/Growth, take to the stage at Workshop 17 in Cape Town to pitch their solutions to various open innovation challenges sponsored by Bpifrance, AirFrance/KLM, Ozow, Viva Technology, and the French Embassy.

The four-day conference also featured 10 keynotes from tech ecosystem heavyweights and a dozen panel discussions from the best minds in tech, business and investment. Opened by France's Minister of Digital Affairs, Cedric O, the keynote speakers included Robert Paddock, co-founder of Valenture Institute and GetSmarter (one of the largest exits in Africa), Zach George of Startupbootcamp, AfriTech and Nedbank VC, Siby Diabira of PROPARCO, Lelemba Phiri of Africa Trust Group, and African tech startup maverick Iyinoluwa Aboyeji (co-founder, Andela, Flutterwave and Future Africa).

A recurring theme that threaded through the discussions was how modern tech has defined Africa in the 21st century. Anna Collard's keynote opened this discussion by highlighting contextualised challenges and opportunities lying in the cybersecurity market; this was followed by panels on the utilisation of data for good, and on the adverse, how tech can be weaponised.

The thread between these programmes was unpacking the startup-investor relations in Africa and dissecting the push and pull factors that exist. The startups at the Boost Camp were treated to talks by Clive Butkow of Kalon Venture Partners, and entrepreneurs Glenn Gillis and Sheraan Amod, who shared their expertise in building strong businesses. The Venture Unconference brought together 35 leaders in investment discussing a way forward to remove the frictions in the investment process, through regulatory measures, and contractual tools such as Term Sheets and SAFEs as well as the requirements for the Startup Act that a number of the attendees are currently working on.

Winning startups

Casky from Morocco won the "Scale from Africa to Europe Challenge" by Bpifrance; Kusini Water (South Africa) won the AirFrance/KLM Challenge for tech innovations in water analysis and purification; and SmartWage (South Africa) took the first prize for the "Future of work challenge" by Viva Technology.



SmartWage wins VivaTech AfricArena competition

27 Nov 2020



In the Challenge of 1000, which was sponsored by the French Embassy: Mellowan/Mellowcabs won the Smart Cities category; My Pregnancy Journey won the Impact category; and Kudoti took the prize for the Future of Africa category.

The AfricArena Tour "Best of Ecosystem winners" included:

- CloudFret (Morocco)
- TaskMoby (Ethiopia)
- Oze (Nigeria)
- Circle (Egypt)
- Enova Robotics (Tunisia)
- Yego (Rwanda)
- BezoMoney (Ghana)
- Seekewa (Ivory Coast)
- FoodSasa (Tanzania)
- Yusudi (Kenya)
- Maad (Senegal)
- Tripplo (South Africa, Johannesburg)

- 3DIMO (South Africa - Cape Town)

A unique challenge this year was a hackathon challenge launched in partnership with fintech growth startup, Ozow, whereby Ozow was looking for an application/proof of concept (MVP) that demonstrates the most innovative use of the Ozow payment API and associated technologies. The three finalists pitched in front of Co-founder and Head of R&D, Mitchan Adams, and the two runner-ups were awarded ZAR25 0000 each, while the winner, Lebogang Nkosi received R100,000 in cash.

Zimkhita Buwa, board member at Silicon Cape and head of Intelligent Business Applications Core Practice at Dimensions

Data (Middle East and Africa) said, "Well done to the AfricArena team on yet another successful event, especially with all you had to contend with this year. AfricArena 2020 was a remarkable experience both in-person and over the virtual platforms – it was no small feat making this experience accessible to more people. Congratulations too to the winning startups! As an ecosystem, your success is our success, so may you soar to greater heights!"

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