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DATA CENTRES: INTERVIEW

Dr Ayotunde Coker,
chief executive officer, Open Access
Data Centres

It's been an exciting year for me having taken up the role of CEO for Open Access Data Centres (OADC) in June. I was appointed to lead OADC initiatives that will play a major role in accelerating Africa's digital transformation. We are investing up to $500 million in a pan-African network of Tier III-certified data centre facilities. We are also rolling out a unique core-to-edge open-access data centre ecosystem based on delivering a combination of hyperscale, regional and OADC edge data centres. We have constructed over 30 data centres in the last 12 months, built an expert team, and created a strongly differentiated brand and client proposition.

Looking at trends this year, we rapidly recognised clients' desire for a truly high-quality service and delivery experience. We also identified the gap in the African market for deployment of non-core data centres to outlying locations. To date, Africa has largely either offered core data centres – often distant and implying significant data transmission costs – or left clients to construct and operate their own facilities. There is a need for deployment of a core-to-edge data centre architecture that supports organisations in outsourcing IT infrastructure whilst at the same time democratising the cloud by moving the network edge closer to the point of content generation and consumption.

We saw a clear opportunity for deployment of converged open digital infrastructure to speed Africa's digital transformation – getting away from islands of connectivity and democratising the cloud by taking it closer to the point of content generation and consumption.

Deploying smaller data centres into a much wider range of locations across a country enables extension of the cloud edge. Not only does this deliver managed, power-secure facilities supporting colocation and disaster recovery services for local businesses, it also means improved latency for new time-sensitive applications and business services, offers transmission cost savings through pre-processing of data at the edge, and supports network extension by 5G operators, regional broadband providers, ISPs, and value-added service providers.

Going forward, we will focus on completing the construction of our first-phase deployments, whilst continuing to evaluate and pursue further opportunities. We will ensure that we deliver operational and service excellence to every client and will continue to develop a healthy pipeline of sales opportunities, enhance our service portfolio with a range of value-added services and extend our core-to-edge proposition to new markets. ∎

Looking ahead: Data centre demand in Africa continues to grow rapidly. Our challenge is to attract an increasing proportion of that growth into our facilities. By the end of 2022, we will have successfully established our initial footprint of 35 data centres located across South Africa and Nigeria. As well as launching our core-to-edge architecture into Nigeria early in 2023, we also plan to extend our coverage into new markets, starting with the DRC in the first half of 2023.

We are excited by the opportunities presented by African markets and are looking forward to delighting clients with our transformational service experience.