West Africa's integration into the digital age held back

Great strides have been made to grow broadband connectivity in Africa in the past five years. However, despite this growth, West Africa still has to overcome massive challenges to fully integrate into the digital age.

MTN Guinea Conakry's CEO, Phumzile Joshua Phike said this to delegates attending the 10th annual Connecting West Africa conference currently taking place in Dakar, Senegal.

"Until 2008, Africa had a significant broadband capacity deficit. The continent predominantly relied on a cable serving sub-saharan Africa and satellite capacity which came at a high cost and delivered low capacity," says Phike.

He adds that "Africa has seen a more than proportional share of this growth, nevertheless there are some challenges that are still holding back West Africa's full integration into the digital age. These include inadequate terrestrial backhaul links to exploit opportunities presented by the tremendous growth in submarine cable infrastructure and demand for data."

Phike added that there were huge opportunities in connecting West Africa. These include "leveraging and delivering submarine cable access to both coastal and landlocked countries, growing Africa's internet market and establishing global partnerships with other global carriers for footprint expansion."

In line with MTN's vision "to lead the delivery of a bold, new digital world to our customers", Phike says MTN is in the process of deploying an IP/MPLS network to support the company's new vision across its footprint and beyond.

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