

France Telecom-Orange signs agreement for new submarine cable in the Indian Ocea

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France Telecom-Orange and the other members of the LION2 consortium signed an agreement today in Mayotte to build a new submarine cable in the Indian Ocean. The agreement comes less than a year after the inauguration of the LION submarine cable (Lower Indian Ocean Network) linking Madagascar to the rest of the world via Réunion Island and Mauritius. With this latest agreement, France Telecom-Orange enters the second phase of its Indian Ocean development plan, pursuing its strategy for the regional expansion of broadband internet.

The 3,000 km-long LION2 cable will extend the LION cable to Kenya via the island of Mayotte. The cable will provide Mayotte, for the first time, with access to a broadband internet network benefiting from a transmission capacity and service quality equivalent to those available in Europe. For Kenya, LION2 is an important project that will strengthen its connectivity to international networks and cover its capacity requirements for years to come.

The project is being conducted by a consortium of France Telecom-Orange and its subsidiaries Mauritius Telecom Ltd, Orange Madagascar and Telkom Kenya Ltd, along with carrier companies Emtel Ltd., Société Réunionnaise du Radiotéléphone and STOI Internet.

The construction of the LION2 cable represents a total investment of around 56.5 million euros, about 31.25 million euros of which will come from France Telecom SA. Service is scheduled to begin in the first half of 2012.

An alternate route to Europe, Africa and Asia

With the LION and LION2 cables, three telecommunication highways will be available to route voice and data telecommunications via La Réunion and Mauritius. Two new landing stations will be built, one in Kaweni for Mayotte and the other at Nyali near Mombasa for Kenya. The second of these is doubled up with existing stations and will be used to redirect traffic if needed.

The new cable will also provide an alternate route for secure broadband transmissions through Europe and Asia for all of the African countries in which the Group is located. This diversification of transmission arteries and connection points is a key factor in the performance of the Group's networks.

LION2 relies on wavelength division multiplexing (WDM), currently the most advanced technology for submarine cables. With WDM, cable capacity can be increased without additional submarine work. The maximum potential capacity is 1.28 Tbps.

A key asset in the Group's broadband network in Africa

Through the development of its submarine networks, France Telecom-Orange is helping to build a high quality global network. The cables constitute broadband arteries that give the Group high-performance tools at controlled cost to meet growing demand from its customers. As such, they are a key asset for the Group's objective of providing widespread internet access (narrowband and broadband) in Africa, where it is present in around twenty countries.

France Telecom is also a stakeholder in the submarine cables that are currently being deployed on the Atlantic side of the continent. In 2010, the ACE cable (Africa Coast to Europe) will link South Africa to France by providing broadband internet connections to twenty-three countries in Western Africa.

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