From Kigali to the continent: Ericsson's vision for a connected Africa

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What are the main innovations and announcements Ericsson is presenting at MWC Kigali 2025; and how do these align with the company's vision for the future of connectivity?

At Mobile World Congress 2025 in Kigali, we had a joint booth with MTN Rwanda to showcase the power of 5G and what it can enable. MTN recently launched its 5G network, and we wanted to bring its capabilities to life through real-world use cases.

One of the highlights was our connected 5G robotic dog – equipped with multiple sensors – which demonstrated how low-latency, high-reliability connectivity can be used for real-time image recognition. For instance, the dog could identify a broken fence or check whether workers were wearing life jackets.

We also showcased cloud gaming to demonstrate the importance of ultra-low latency, and the Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses, which streamed high-quality video even in crowded environments. These examples illustrate how 5G enables mission-critical networks, differentiated connectivity and innovation built on open platforms.

In addition, we highlighted our network APIs, showing how developers and partners can create new use cases directly on top of the 5G network – truly opening the door to the next wave of digital innovation.

In what ways is Ericsson advancing 5G innovation across Africa?

We work very closely with operators across the continent to push the boundaries of both performance and sustainability. Energy efficiency is a particularly important focus in Africa, where power supply can be limited.

Our newest generation of radio products significantly reduces power consumption, helping operators cut operational costs (OPEX) while maintaining performance. For example, our latest Massive MIMO radio, the AIR 3266, boosts spectral efficiency and uplink performance, while reducing energy consumption by up to 30 percent. It also has a 50 percent smaller carbon footprint.

With AI, we can also manage traffic patterns dynamically, optimizing both energy use and network performance. Our triple-band and dual-band Massive MIMO products, now being deployed across multiple African markets, combine multiple frequencies in one compact form factor, reducing tower load, improving efficiency and expanding coverage in congested areas.

How will the evolution of networks influence the future landscape of connectivity?

With 5G deployments accelerating in Africa, connectivity is no longer just about faster speeds: it's becoming an open platform for innovation. This is especially powerful for Africa's young, tech-savvy population, who are eager to create, collaborate and scale their ideas globally.

5G is helping bridge the digital divide, particularly in financial inclusion. Through mobile money services, people can now access micro-lending, banking and insurance – financial tools that were previously out of reach.

We're also seeing major rollouts in countries like Morocco (in preparation for the African World Cup), Nigeria and South Africa. Globally, 5G is midway through its deployment cycle, but for Africa, this is just the beginning of a very exciting journey.

How is Ericsson incorporating sustainability into its strategic initiatives?

Sustainability runs through everything we do – from energy efficiency to reducing carbon emissions and supporting smarter, more efficient cities.

For instance, connected traffic management systems can dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These are examples that could have a huge impact in African cities as well.

We also see 5G enabling smart agriculture – helping farmers use connected sensors and data to improve productivity. In Rwanda, for example, drones are delivering blood supplies and medicine across the country, showcasing how connectivity can save lives and strengthen essential services. These services can further be improved by using mission critical solutions for digital airspace management.

What role will Ericsson assume in the development of AI, edge computing, and IoT technologies?

AI is already deeply embedded in our product portfolio, not only within individual network components but also across the entire network. We're moving toward intent-based networks, where AI interprets user intent and dynamically optimizes network performance in real time.

We also see AI driving smarter cities, digital economies and e-government services – with billions of connected agentic AI devices expected to operate on networks in the near future. These will generate new types of traffic patterns, especially in the uplink, and will transform how networks behave.

Crucially, we see AI as a huge opportunity for Africa. It will create new, high-skilled jobs, particularly for young digital natives who understand technology intuitively. Combined with 5G as an open innovation platform, this presents an extraordinary chance for Africa's youth to lead in global digital innovation.

How do you envision connectivity transforming lives across Africa?

Connectivity has the power to transform lives across Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to record the fastest growth in mobile subscriptions globally – around 4 percent annually – adding more than 260 million new connections by 2030 compared to 2024.

As coverage and capacity expand, this growth will translate into wider access to financial services, healthcare, education and smarter tools for farming and business. In agriculture, connected technologies could help farmers improve efficiency and yields, while innovators continue developing digital solutions to address local challenges in energy, logistics, and commerce.

Africa's youth – especially entrepreneurs and creators – stand to benefit the most as greater connectivity opens global opportunities. 5G and Fixed Wireless Access can help level the playing field, empowering Africans to create, compete and connect on a global scale. ■