

Google to open tech hub in Nairobi as part of Sh115.5bn Africa investment

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American tech giant Google is investing in its first-ever Africa product development hub in Nairobi as part of the tech firm's Sh115.5 billion investment on the continent over the next five years.

The California-based company announced in a statement on Tuesday that the new product development centre will help to create transformative products and services for people in Africa and around the world and will offer job opportunities "to visionary engineers, product managers, UX designers and researchers to lay the foundation for significant growth in the coming years".

The announcement follows last year's commitment from Google CEO Sundar Pichai that the firm plans to invest Sh115.5 billion as part of its Africa digital transformation programme.

Google said that the programme will increase access to cheap and fast internet, support local entrepreneurs and SMEs and help non-profit organisations.

"Google's mission in Africa is to make the Internet helpful to Africans and partner with African governments, policymakers, educators, entrepreneurs and businesses to shape the next wave of innovation in Africa," Google vice president for products Suzanne Frey said on Tuesday.

"Today I am excited to welcome all Africans passionate about improving the digital experience of African users by building better products to apply for the open roles at our first product development centre in Africa."

Ms Frey said that the company is already hiring engineers, product managers, user experience designers and researchers to staff the new centre.

The firm also opened an artificial intelligence centre last year in Ghana's capital Accra.

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“The potential for Africa to become a leading digital economy is right on the horizon and Google is committed to accelerating Africa’s digital transformation through human capital and enabling African-led solutions to African and global problems through better products,” Google managing director for Africa Nitin Gajria said during the unveiling.

Google’s new investment underscores the emergence of Nairobi as a regional tech hub following the unveiling of Microsoft’s Sh3 billion office and labs for its premier engineering hub, the African Development Centre (ADC), after three years of operation in the country.

The Microsoft’s facility, one of the largest software engineering centres in Africa, has research, design, engineering, and innovation teams as well as an incubation hub designed to scale up tech innovation on the continent.

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