

The Tunisian-born and London-headquartered AI startup, InstaDeep says it plans to launch an office in the Capital Kigali. Karim Beguir, InstaDeep CEO disclosed this at Deep Learning Indaba, the annual meeting of the African machine learning and artificial intelligence community with the mission to strengthen African AI.

The Kigali office will start with six employees who will be researching artificial intelligence on the continent. “It makes sense to deploy and grow our team in Kigali as Rwanda emerges as a leader in building the economy of the future. We’re excited to share this news at the Deep Learning Indaba with this dynamic community of African AI researchers and developers,” Beguir said.

Currently, the AI startup has over 240 staff across Tunis, London, Lagos, Dubai, Berlin, Cape Town, Paris, Boston, and San Francisco.

“Kigali offers an incredible opportunity for InstaDeep to keep strengthening AI in Africa, and to continue building towards sustainable solutions for the continent and beyond,” says Arnu Pretorius, InstaDeep’s head of AI research in Africa.

“Rwanda is at the forefront of policy, with the recent example of hosting a top AI global conference-ICLR-for the first time in Africa. Having an office in Kigali makes it possible for us to give many more opportunities for African AI talent from all corners of the continent.”

Pretorius will lead the Kigali office, according to a statement seen by Bendada.com.

He was recently awarded the Kambule Doctoral Award, an award which is curated by Deep Learning Indaba to recognise and encourage excellence in research and writing by doctoral candidates at African universities, in any area of computational and statistical sciences.

Rwanda is ranked as one of the top ten African countries on the AI readiness index. In April 2023, Rwanda became one of the few countries in Africa to develop a national AI policy with six priority areas including AI literacy, infrastructure, data strategy, AI adoption in the public and private sectors, and ethical implementation. The East African country says it needs about \$76.5 million to implement the policy in the next five years.

“The policy represents a significant milestone in the launch and development of Rwanda’s AI ecosystem and is a critical step towards achieving our national

development goals. We are positioning ourselves to become the leading destination in Africa for experimenting with and developing trustworthy AI technologies contextualized for the African continent,” says Paula Ingabire, the Rwandan minister of ICT and innovation.

Earlier this year, a German biotech company, BioNTech acquired InstaDeep with an upfront payment of cash and unspecified BioNTech shares worth £362 million, and a balance of £200 million payable based on InstaDeep’s future performance.

“The acquisition of InstaDeep allows us to incorporate the rapidly evolving AI capabilities of the digital world into our technologies, research, drug discovery, manufacturing, and deployment processes,” Uğur Sahin, CEO and co-founder of BioNTech, said at the acquisition.

Now that InstaDeep is the company’s subsidiary, it’s important to note that this is not the first time BioNTech will be kick-starting an important project in Rwanda. Last year, the German biotech company laid the foundation for the building of its first manufacturing facility in Kigali, to support the production of mRNA vaccines in Africa.