The first electronic world trade platform (eWTP) hub in Africa was launched in Rwanda; Key initiatives include assisting Rwandan small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to sell to Chinese consumers, promoting Rwandan tourism and providing capacity building to empower Rwanda's digital economy

President Paul Kagame and Jack Ma, the Alibaba Group Executive Chairman witnessed the signing of three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between the Rwandan Government and Alibaba establishing an eWTP (electronic world trade platform) hub in Rwanda. The agreements are intended to strengthen cooperation in support of Rwanda's economic development by promoting policy innovation, enabling cross-border trade of Rwandan products to Chinese consumers, facilitating tourism to Rwanda, and providing capacity building to empower the growth of Rwanda's digital economy.

As a regional pioneer with a vision to create world class digital infrastructure, Rwanda becomes the first country in Africa to establish an eWTP hub. The eWTP is a multi-stakeholder global initiative promoting public-private dialogue to foster a more effective and efficient policy and business environment to enable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to participate in cross-border electronic trade.

"The Electronic World Trade Platform opens up new frontiers in e-commerce and tourism for Rwanda, and will also boost the capacity and competitiveness of our entrepreneurs and businesspeople," said President Paul Kagame. "Rwandan producers will be able to sell directly to a much larger set of customers than before, while bypassing costly intermediaries. This improves productivity and profitability. There really are no downsides to doing business on a global scale."

"I am delighted that Rwanda is the first eWTP partner in Africa, and I look forward to the development of an innovative digital economy here," said Mr. Jack Ma, Founder and Executive Chairman of Alibaba Group. "Entrepreneurs in Rwanda, and elsewhere in Africa, are ready to seize the opportunities offered by the digital economy. It is up to all of us to help them succeed."

Under the agreements, Alibaba will work with the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) to help Rwandan SMEs sell their products, including coffee and handicrafts, to Chinese consumers through Alibaba's online marketplaces. With more than half a billion consumers, Alibaba is the world's largest online commerce company and home to leading cross-border marketplaces where Chinese consumers look to find the highest quality products from around the world. Several brands of Rwandan

single origin coffee are already available for sale on Alibaba’s Tmall Global platform.

Alibaba’s travel services platform, Fliggy, and the RDB will also work together to promote Rwanda as a tourist destination through a Rwanda Tourism Store for booking flights, hotels and travel experiences and a Destination Pavilion where Chinese consumers can learn about visiting the country, including its beautiful natural parks, through engaging video content. Alibaba affiliate Ant Financial will share expertise in inclusive financial tools, such as mobile payments, to support the Rwandan digital economy.

“The partnership between Rwanda and Alibaba will change people’s lives for the better. We are committed to leveraging the digital economy to support our exporters, local producers and artisans. We have already seen tremendous attention from Chinese consumers on Alibaba’s platforms in high-quality Rwandan products such as our top-tier single estate coffee, and we are confident that local products and travel experiences will continue to receive interest and support from the more than half a billion consumers on Alibaba’s platforms,” said RDB Chief Executive Officer, Clare Akamanzi.

Alibaba is also committed to providing capacity building to academics, policy makers and entrepreneurs on how to grow a digital economy. The Global E-commerce Talent Program (GET) is a five-day course to boost the competencies of Rwandan university teachers and deepen their understanding of the e-commerce industry, so they can train digital talent and future entrepreneurs to compete in the global economy. Fifty lecturers from Rwanda’s top universities attended the first GET program in August organized by Alibaba Business School in partnership with the Ministry of Education’s Higher Education Council and the RDB.

For policy makers, Alibaba will host a three-day workshop at its Hangzhou headquarters to showcase the nature, capabilities and promise of a new digital economy through first-hand experience with digital finance, logistics, e-commerce and big data industries. A delegation of Ministers and government officials responsible for the development of Rwanda’s digital economy will attend a workshop in Hangzhou in January 2019.

Alibaba will also continue to support Rwandan entrepreneurs through programs such as the eFounders Fellowship. In partnership with UNCTAD, Alibaba is training 1,000 entrepreneurs from emerging markets over five years. Two hundred of those entrepreneurs will come from Africa. Five Rwandan entrepreneurs have already

graduated from the eFounders Fellowship program.