Top startups shine at AfricArena Summit

The third annual AfricArena Summit kicked off Cape Town Tech Week with two days of intensive pitching from over 100 of the best African and African-focused tech startups and innovators from over 20 countries.

The Summit was also a destination for inspiration where seasoned entrepreneurs such as Vusi Thembekwayo and leading venture capitalists like the founders of Breega Capital shared their experiences and thoughts with attendees wanting to enrich their knowledge.

During the course of the weekend preceding the Summit, AfricArena ran a Founders' Bootcamp at FSATLABS and Workshop17 to prepare 48 startups to engage investors and corporate partners. At the same time, a Venture Unconference was held where over 40 top international VC firms came together to work on a co-investment deal aimed at increasing the capital available to startup founders from Seed to Series C stage.

With only a few minutes to impress the audience comprised of international and local investors on the lookout for world-class talent and solutions to some of the most pressing issues impacting the continent, the pressure was on for the 33 startups whose innovative ideas shone in 11 challenges that had run during the course of the year.

Over and above the rewards offered by the sponsors of each of the challenges, which included the chance to gain business and technical expertise, be connected with business opportunities and obtain financing, they were vying for prizes valued at over $200,000 from Amazon Web Services.

Shining startups

The challenge winners included:

Uptale, which took home first place in the French Tech Challenge for its immersive learning solution. The challenge was aimed at startups from the tech ecosystem in France operating in the AI, Robotics or Augmented or Virtual Reality domains and focused on scaling up on the African continent, as well as providing their product and services to the African market. Now, Uptale will get to tap into AfricArena and the French Embassy's networks and connect with key players in the African tech ecosystem.

Mtabe, a startup that uses artificial intelligence and SMS technology to deliver learning content to students who cannot afford textbooks and do not have internet access, was picked as the VIVA Technology Challenge winner for its ability to empower users in the African market by leveraging tech to make education better and more accessible. All three finalists will be attending Viva Tech in Paris in 2020 and the winner will have their very own exhibition stand at the event.

Winning the BNP Paribas and RCS sponsored Hello Tomorrow Challenge – a world-renowned deep tech startup competition concentrating on early-stage startups with projects that solve an industrial, societal or environmental unmet need or create a new market – was **ERADA Technology Alliance**. The startup is committed to eradicating disease in the developing world. Over and above the €3,000 in prize money, they have won a return flight to Paris to attend the Global Summit and participate in the Hello Tomorrow Global Challenge.

The search for an innovative fintech startup that will solve problems for smart cities, public utilities, healthcare, education, environmental stability and financial markets using smart contracts and stable coins has come to an end, with blockchain-based land registry, **House Africa**, taking the top spot in the Fantom Foundation Blockchain Challenge. The House Africa founders will now get to meet the Fantom and ZAR Network teams and their business will undergo incubation, acceleration or internationalisation, depending on what they require. Each of the finalists won $5,000 in cash prizes, with the winner getting $10,000.

As the winner of the Old Mutual Start-up Challenge, **Khoyn** will get to showcase their solution at VIVA Technology 2020 and have the opportunity to work with Old Mutual on developing their brand and offering. The company was selected for their social selling solution which can help South Africa's informal sector get cash into the formal digital financial services system.

With their unique gaming technology designed to create user experiences that engage, educate and entertain, **Alkottab Game** Studio took home the title of Air France Challenge champions. The challenge sought to enrich Air France's in-flight experience with new entertainment possibilities. As part of the prize, Air France will e-accompany and e-advise the winner on any business problem they may encounter. Additionally, Alkottab will now be part of the Flying Blue air-mile crowdfunding programme to help enable their international development.

Collaborative transit app, **Weego**, emerged triumphant in the VINCI Energies Challenge which was seeking solutions that are out to change our world in the areas of Mobility and Transport; Energy and Environment; Security and Resilience; Urban and Spatial planning; as well as in Open Data and Data Management. Now, Weego will attend the VIVA Technology showcase in Paris next year and receive assistance from VINCI Energies in developing a prototype or next version of their product/service.

The judges in the Sanofi Mental Health Challenge were blown away by **Syked**'s solution for empowering mental health patients which entails an online virtual private practice that provides counselling sessions to students in the comfort of their own home over secure video consultation and text support. They will now be flying to France to showcase their product at VIVA Technology 2020 and receive mentorship from Sanofi South Africa on developing their brand and offering.

The Sanofi Diabetes Challenge posed the question: How can we help diabetes patients to live healthier lifestyles by providing education and support to master their treatment, diet, exercise and emotional wellbeing? This was answered by

Baobab Circle which uses AI and behavioural science to help its users change their habits, reduce the financial burden of managing their conditions and improve their health. Baobab Circle will be working with Sanofi South Africa on growing their brand and offering. They too will be attending VIVA Technology 2020.

PayGas, an LPG retailer that provides gas for low-income clients through a cashless technology, was picked as the winner of the ENGIE Africa Challenge, the ultimate aim of which is to develop a clean cooking energy solution. As the winner, PayGas won a €10,000 cash prize from Engie and will receive funding for prototype development. Plus, they will get to test the efficiency and viability of their solution in the relevant environment within ENGIE's African business framework over a period of six months. Based on the results of the testing phase, this may lead to the solution's integration into the ENGIE Africa business portfolio and further co-development of the project.

The SA SME Fund Challenge, geared towards tech-based small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) in South Africa that have high potential for scale, saw **Jobox** being named as the successful startup. The student freelancing platform that connects businesses with high-quality students will be taken to Paris, France next year to present their work at VIVA Technology and won over R50,000 in tech equipment.

Best of Ecosystem

Also announced at the event were the top 10 startups handpicked as Best of Ecosystem from each of the major capitals around the continent during the AfricArena Tour – a crucial element of the Summit.

Over a seven-month period, the AfricArena team embarked on a tour of the 10 leading tech hubs on the continent to find the most promising tech-based startups in these areas. Among them were Cloud 9 XP from Kenya; FreshBox from Rwanda; Gerocare from Nigeria; African Food from Ivory Coast; Afrikamart from Senegal; Popaddress from Morocco; Echo from Tunisia; Xiot from Egypt; Africa Business Integration (ABI) from Cape Town and KHULA from Johannesburg.
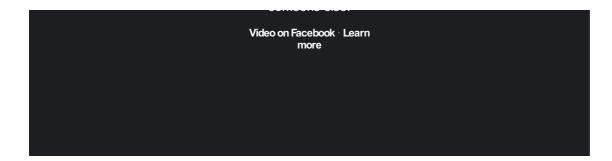
Of this year's winning startups, AfricArena founder, Christophe Viarnaud said, "Entrepreneurs are Africa's number one asset and the more than 100 startups that attended the Summit this year are amongst the very best innovators on the continent and demonstrated their desire to create innovation not only to resolve challenges in Africa but to make the world a better place."

Silicon Cape Director, Zimkhita Buwa added: "AfricArena is a platform filled with opportunity to showcase amazing African startups like these and give local and global investors an opportunity to hear their stories and provide the necessary funding required to scale these startups."

In addition to pitching sessions for the startups, The Summit hosted a refreshing session during which three tech hubs - Nairobi, Dakar and Cape Town - pitched to attract the best entrepreneurs. Each hub came up with creative ideas to illustrate the strengths of their ecosystem.

Finally, in a reversed role pitch battle, three investors – Tomi Davies, an angel investor and chairman of ABAN (Nigeria), Boldewijn Sloet from Africa Tech Ventures (Kenya) and Danai Musandu from Goodwell Investments (Netherlands) - pitched to the startups and corporates. Winning the battle and the most applause thanks to her innovative investor pitching was Musandu.

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The 2019 AfricArena Summit not only saw a surge in the number of corporate partners supporting the event, but also a massive increase in the number of investors that attended.

"This echoes the growing appetite for African startups to address core social needs. The Summit also concluded a 10-month long programme, with the AfricArena Tour covering 14 cities across Africa, the US, Europe and Japan. The Founders' Bootcamp and Venture Unconference introduced at this year's event have further established AfricArena as the unmatched global platform for stronger collaboration within the ecosystem. We aim to accelerate into 2020 to support the hypergrowth of the African tech venture economy," concludes Viarnaud.

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