Affordable Access in Africa: GSMA and Handset Affordability Coalition Pioneering Members Identify Six African Countries to Pilot Affordable $40 Smartphones

Descrizione

COMUNICATO STAMPA â?? CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

BARCELONA, Spain, March 3, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? The GSMA today announced that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda have been identified by the GSMA Handset Affordability Coalition for initial pilots to introduce affordable 4G smartphones.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the GSMA, the G6 African operators and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), formalises collaboration to pilot affordable entry-level 4G smartphones in Africa in 2026. The pilots build on the minimum requirements for low-cost 4G devices unveiled at MWC Kigali in 2025.

The GSMA Handset Affordability Coalition aims to lower the cost of entry-level smartphones worldwide and accelerate digital inclusion in markets where affordability remains a key barrier.

However, the current surge in the global cost of memory prices is making it increasingly difficult to attain a US$30 â?? US$40 price range required to unlock mass adoption. Against this economic context it has become even more important to reduce or eliminate taxes and import duties on entry-level 4G smartphones.

Vivek Badrinath, Director General of the GSMA, said: â??Affordable smartphones enable digital and financial inclusion, economic opportunity and innovation. 3.1 billion people have mobile coverage but are not connected to the mobile internet. Together with the G6 group of leading African operators, we are sending a clear demand signal to bring low-cost 4G devices to market. In a global context of rising memory costs, governments have an important role in bridging the usage gap. Removing taxes and import duties on entry-level 4G smartphones will be critical to achieving scale.â?•

A Vast Untapped Opportunity

Africa has one of the world's largest mobile internet usage gaps. Millions live within broadband coverage but remain offline, with handset affordability consistently cited as the biggest barrier to adoption. Affordable 4G smartphones at scale could bring tens of millions of people online.

Enabling Local AI Innovation

The impact of rising memory costs extends beyond connectivity. Memory-intensive technologies are essential for on-device AI, local language processing and the growth of regional tech ecosystems.

Against this backdrop, the GSMA-led AI Language Models Initiative is advancing scalable, locally relevant AI models. The Africa Pavilion at MWC26 will showcase a live demonstration of the first open Swahili reasoning model in collaboration with MeetKai Zambia, capable of browsing and translating online content to reduce language barriers to digital services.

Read full release here.

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