



## CyFy Africa: The Conference on Technology, Innovation and Society

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Honourable Ilyas El Omari, President, Regional Council of Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Region  
Honourable Moulay Hafid Elalamy, Minister of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy

It is indeed a great honor and privilege that this joint venture between the Ministry of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy, the Regional Council of Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima, and the Observer Research Foundation is off to such a flying start. and has been blessed by His Majesty Mohammed the Sixth.

As emerging regions of the world both India and Africa have followed a common trajectory into the modern world. We have both transcended the expeditionary greed that had hobbled our regions in the past and are now on the way to becoming the dynamos that will power the future. And it has been the strength of our unique cultural systems that has helped us re-emerge in a world where we today seek equality and opportunity. And we seek it because they are the means to realise the economic, social and cultural potential of a whole one third of humanity.

At a time when the pace of technology led transformations are set to alter businesses and societies in unprecedented ways our countries are also gearing up to embrace the opportunities provided by these changes. And as they do so they need to also secure themselves against the risks inherent in these.

New trends in technological development, are today implicating established democracies in unforeseen ways. We have seen domestic politics as well international relations across the world become prey to these. These trends have tremendous consequences for any country's social progress, its economic growth, and its national security.

A word about CyFy for those unfamiliar with it. Six years ago CyFy began as an International Global Conference on Cyber norms in New Delhi, India. In this time it has emerged as a global platform picking on and analysing the whole gamut of issues connected with technology, society and governance. And picking on these themes it does not take long to realise that the challenges posed were global. So have to be the solutions.



Therefore the need to seek new modes and models of partnership. To reach out to regions with a similar shared trajectory where deeply traditional societies are finding themselves moving in the fast lane into a new digital world.

This inaugural edition covers six distinct but overlapping themes as its central pillars — connectivity, digital inclusion, security, innovation, trade, and society. And you will hear a lot about them in the two days to follow.

But before we even begin to speak about many of these themes, we must as pointed out by one of our dinner panels last night, first address the core fundamental issue of access. For access is what this entire edifice rests on. Close to four billion individuals around the world still do not have access to even basic connectivity. They do not have use of the bare bones minimum infrastructure which can even make this possible.

Yes technology can empower. It has the potential to liberate innovation and opportunity from the constraints posed by location by geography, and by gender. We have examples of how New technologies have not just in California but even in Asia and Africa shown the potential to disrupt how and where innovation can take place. But that cannot blind us to the fact that technology is equally capable of disempowering.

The digital divide, the gap between the digital haves of this world and the digital have not's is one divide that does not merely widen but also deepens with every shift in technology. The Telecommunications Union reports that the proportion of women using the internet is 12% lower than the proportion of men; In our parts of the world this gender gap widens to 32.9% in some countries. This divide must disappear.

And the solutions that will make the obliteration of this divide possible will not come from Silicon Valley or Shenzhen — but must be developed locally. Therefore the need Across Africa and Asia to mold technologies in the service of lives not at the top of the pyramid but at its bottom. To reach the excluded.

Innovations to bridge this divide have been happening. India, through its digital identity program. Aadhaar, and African communities, through mobile payment innovations like M-Pesa, are helping bring untouched communities and individuals into the formal economy. Already, African nations have made tremendous leaps in leveraging digital tools to provide technology led solutions in healthcare, finance, agriculture and education.

Get access and inclusion right and India, Africa and the Arab world represent the demographic hopes of the entire world. Get these two wrong and they can represent the worst of the world's demographic nightmares. For these are all nations of the young. It is the education, social interactions and entrepreneurship



of youth that will create and make online world. It will be the one to make the digital world thrive or shrivel.

For it to thrive our economies need to generate millions of jobs — and generate them at a time when the future of work is itself undergoing a change. The work force of the future will need new skills and our education systems a new pedagogy to transfer and develop those skills.

But is the fear of automation crowding out jobs real? I would say that the sheer numbers our demographics represent ensure that in a world where data is said to be the new oil, India, Africa and the Arab world should thrive at the intersection of global data flows. They can be the largest well springs of data for the coming decades.

So Initiatives that that open up the world to the unconnected, to women, to rural communities can also bring new opportunities in the digital economy. They encourage the growth and expansion of a whole host data led services, making space for innovation and entrepreneurship across healthcare, for education, for developing the new skills and the new tools required in the new age. And after all data led services must first and foremost serve the public good.

Data privacy is become a big issue. And it is an issue that can also divide. Are we headed for a world where data privacy becomes a right restricted to the rich while the data of others only becomes mere cannon fodder?

It is in finding the answers to many the trick questions facing the world that this region may well be the one to create the templates, to write the norms, that should govern the flow of commercial bits and bytes across the continents.

For to do all this is to interrogate what it means to be human in the face of disruption. To find answers to what we want the future of our work, our relationships and our world to look like. So must Asia and Africa in a connected world come together to amplify their voices in the digital century. That in essence what CyFy Africa is going to be about.

Our effort at CyFy, would be to connect people to learn and see how many of these ideas can be multiplied. For in creating CyFy we along with our partners are creating a platform that does away with the idea of being owned by any one country or organisation. It is a platform for all, to express, create and share ideas that will shape our collective future in a very different world.

These are the conversations that will take place in the coming two days, here in Tangier, Morocco. WE are grateful to the Ministry of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy, the Regional Council of Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima to be the gateway for Africa's experiences to be shared with the world.



And it is thanks to the efforts and enthusiasm of Mr Elomari that the first edition of CyFy outside India is being held in Tangier Morocco. And that with the encouragement of Minister Hafid El Alamy it is set to now be an annual event.

We hope CyFy Africa to be the incubator where different experiences and learning can be contextualised for the evolving needs of the everyone.