



Alibaba Group Founder Jack Ma to Donate US\$10 Million to Establish Africa Entrepreneur Prize

Jack Ma Foundation will recognize 100 African entrepreneurs over the next 10 years focused on grassroots innovation, economic empowerment of women and small businesses

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa – August 8, 2018 – Today, Alibaba Group founder and Executive Chairman Jack Ma launched the Jack Ma Foundation ‘Netpreneur’ Prize, a new program created to support and fund African entrepreneurs who are working to address Africa’s most important challenges and further its digital economy through local entrepreneurship. The prize was announced at the “Netpreneurs: The Rise of Africa’s Digital Lions” conference.

The Netpreneur Prize – named for empowering a new generation of entrepreneurs, and focusing on small business growth, grassroots innovation and women founders – will award US\$10 million to 100 African entrepreneurs over the next 10 years. Starting in 2019, the Jack Ma Foundation will host an annual pitch competition, with ten finalists selected from across the continent to showcase their talent and business ideas and compete for US\$1 Million in prize money. All ten finalists will receive grant funding from the Jack Ma Foundation, as well as access to the Netpreneur community of African business leaders to leverage the community’s shared expertise, best practices and resources.

Jack Ma decided to create the prize after his first trip to Africa in July 2017 when he was inspired by the energy and entrepreneurial potential of the young people he met. While the competition will be open to entrepreneurs in all industries, Mr. Ma expects many of the applicants to be founders of businesses that are internet-driven given the open and inclusive impact technology can have on local economies. Applicants must be African nationals leading mission-driven organizations. The finalists will be selected by a team of judges from five regions representing the entire continent. Applications for the first pitch competition will be open from January 2019 until April 2019, and the finalist pitch competition will be held and broadcast across Africa in the second half of 2019. The program will be offered across the continent through lead continental partner, Nailab, and other regional hub partners.

Jack Ma said, “As a fellow entrepreneur, I understand the importance of getting support during the early days. This prize demonstrates our support of the next generation of young entrepreneurs across Africa who are paving the way for a better future and imparting positive change in their communities. I am inspired and encouraged by these entrepreneurs who, together, will help build a sustainable, inclusive economy for Africa and for the world.”

The “Netpreneurs: The Rise of Africa’s Digital Lions” conference – jointly organized by Alibaba Business School, the Jack Ma Foundation, and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – brought together more than 800 entrepreneurs, policymakers, academics, students, banks and venture capitalists to address the challenges and opportunities facing Africa’s entrepreneurs. Across Africa, e-commerce platforms alongside payments, logistics, tourism and big data partners are helping to lift national economies. The event explored the barriers facing a new digital Africa and the role that the public sector, investors, entrepreneurs and educational organizations play in this transformation.

Ban Ki-moon, Former UN Secretary General and Co-chair of the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, said, “With the rapid development of the global digital economy and the availability of technology, the next century belongs to Africa. I am excited to join the advisory board of the Africa Netpreneur Prize. Through this prize, we aim to support African entrepreneurs to build a more inclusive and prosperous Africa and dramatically shape the future prospects of the continent for the better.”

The Netpreneur Prize is the second initiative launched by Jack Ma to support African entrepreneurs. Last year, Alibaba Business School and UNCTAD announced the eFounders Fellowship Initiative, a program that will train 1,000 entrepreneurs from emerging markets, 200 of whom will come from Africa, with the purpose of building a community of young entrepreneurs committed to creating digital platforms to build more inclusive economies. This program supports the aims of the UN Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring no one is left behind in the digital economy. To date, 52 African entrepreneurs have participated in this two-week fellowship at Alibaba’s headquarters in Hangzhou, China. Participants make a two-year commitment to improving society through their businesses. The graduates of the first two African cohorts reunited with Jack Ma and UNCTAD Secretary-General Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi in Johannesburg on August 8. Since completing the program, many graduates have made significant progress with their businesses and become catalysts for digital transformation in their home countries, including raising rounds of investment as well as launching their own training programs.

“The rise of the digital economy provides growth and opportunity to the developing world, but it is up to us to make sure no one is left behind. The work that Jack Ma and UNCTAD are doing together will help empower the emerging generation of young African business leaders to participate in and lead that growth,” said Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi.

For photos, videos and additional information about the Netpreneur event and Jack Ma’s work in Africa, visit our corporate news site <https://www.alizila.com/jack-ma-visit-to-africa-media-resources/>

For more information about the Jack Ma Netpreneur Prize, please visit: <http://netpreneur.africa>

For more information about the eFounders Fellowship, please visit: <https://aqi.alibaba.com/efounders-fellowship>

About Jack Ma Foundation

Jack Ma Foundation (JMF) is a charitable organization founded in 2014 by Jack Ma, Executive Chairman of Alibaba Group. The foundation’s aim is to promote human development in harmony with both society and the environment, while its mission is to work towards a world of bluer skies, cleaner water, healthier communities, and more open thinking. From education to environment, to public health and personnel development in philanthropic sector, the foundation intends to awaken social consciousness and responsibility to cultivate an innovative and sustainable model for a better world.

Alibaba Group

Our mission is to make it easy to do business anywhere. Alibaba’s founders started the company to champion small businesses, in the belief that the Internet would level the playing field by enabling small enterprises to leverage innovation and technology to grow and compete more effectively in the domestic and global economies. Alibaba’s long-term strategic goal is to serve

two billion consumers around the world and support ten million businesses to operate profitably on our platforms.

Alibaba Business School

Alibaba Business School is a university established by the Alibaba Group and Hangzhou Normal University of China in October 2008. It is currently focused on implementing Alibaba Group's e-commerce training system, which has in the past decade nurtured millions of e-commerce practitioners and entrepreneurs, in China and overseas.

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