

The [UNCTAD Digital Economy Report 2021](#) points out the dependence of Africa on foreign networks for data exchanges under internet communication protocols.

Africa and Latin America, together, route only 4 per cent of the total data flows exchanged at international level. Only in Africa, this percentage is [estimated](#) at around 1%. This means that data flows in the continent follow very long paths, being first routed to other countries, mainly China and the United States, where large number of hyperscale data centres (accounting for about 50% of the world's data centres), store and process such data before they flow back to Africa.

This opens great opportunities for Africa to become in future a data centre platform, as internet penetration rates rise and the continent begins to catch-up with other regions. In this regard, already some African countries, like Kenya, have adopted regulations requiring the storage of personal data in local data centres for purposes of protection of revenue (Section 50, [Data Protection Act, 2019](#) ).

The [African Union Digital Transformation Strategy \(2020–2030\)](#) also highlights how a lack of supervisory frameworks for data protection and data storage/processing/handling is a weakness of the continent. Realizing the vision of digital transformation for Africa will therefore require appropriate policies and an enabling environment.

Finally, the strategy reiterates the importance for Africa to have a data centre infrastructure in order to ensure cost savings, but also for data sovereignty purposes, to ensure localization of all personal data of African citizens.