A series of ambitious innovation partnerships between the UK and Africa are expected to stimulate significant economic growth and support the creation of thousands of new jobs.

The partnerships, announced by the Prime Minister as the UK strengthens ties with the region, will be established in African countries with growing tech sectors where there are young, expanding populations with ideas and innovations developing at a rapid pace.

Building on the UK’s already-strong investment in science and research in Africa, the partnerships will enable UK and African entrepreneurs to share skills and ideas and encourage future trade.

The increased engagement comes after the Department for International Trade announced the appointment of a dedicated HM Trade Commissioner to Africa. Emma Wade-Smith will now lead a team which will provide expert in-country investment and export advice for UK and African companies.

The tech sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in Africa. The continent’s start-ups raised 50% more venture capital in 2017 than in 2016, and the majority of this is being invested in South Africa (£130 million), Kenya (£114 million) and Nigeria (£89 million).

Nigeria and Kenya’s technology sectors are also growing rapidly and generate more than 10 and 11% of their respective economic output.

**The partnerships with South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria include:**

● Dedicated UK science, technology and innovation teams who will build on the strong existing science relationships with South Africa and Kenya, including through the shared investments in the Newton Fund and high-end research programmes like the Square Kilometer Array. The aim is to leverage all of UK’s investments in science and research and broaden this into the regions across Africa to achieve real impacts and support mutual interests

● New regional tech experts in Kenya and Nigeria to build links between the UK and Africa’s cutting-edge digital sectors; support a wide range of start-ups to grow and create jobs; and help those in need of digital skills get access to training

● A significant new DFID programme to accelerate the growth of promising technologies and support start-ups to grow sustainably, including through early-stage investment, connecting them with private financing, and building connections with UK peers

● The rollout of digital skills and entrepreneurship programmes including TeXchange, Global EdTech Awards, Go Global and Founders and Coders programmes in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, so the UK becomes the partner of choice for start-ups to expand internationally

Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright said: “These innovation partnerships will not only help countries turbocharge their development, but they will also promote the UK as the place to start and grow a digital business.

“Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya’s technology sectors are growing rapidly and generating a significant part of their economic output. This means huge opportunities for UK businesses and for future partnerships.

“New ideas, game-changing research and cutting-edge science are good news for our African partners and good news for the UK’s world-leading scientists, technologists and researchers who are representing the country on a global stage.”

Emma Wade-Smith, Her Majesty’s Trade Commissioner for Africa, added: “I’m delighted to see these ambitious partnerships being driven forward in one of Africa’s most rapidly-growing sectors.

“We’re already seeing fantastic work being done to transform the UK and Africa’s shared entrepreneurial spirit into jobs and growth. In my role, I see first-hand the huge potential that Africa holds for British businesses looking to create modern trading partnerships.”