

DANTE and UbuntuNet Alliance appoint XON to supply equipment and services to AfricaConnect

XON has been awarded the tender to supply and implement Juniper Networks and other equipment for IP routing, out of band equipment, traffic flow analysis software and ancillary equipment for the East African UbuntuNet network, currently funded via the AfricaConnect project which is managed by DANTE. In 2015, the contract will novate from DANTE to the UbuntuNet Alliance.

The AfricaConnect project, which is co-funded by the European Commission and African national research and education networks (NRENs), aims to establish a high-speed network connecting African research and education institutions with one another and to reinforce their existing connections to institutions in Europe and the rest of the world.

“There have been attempts in the past to create this type of network at an African level, dating back to the turn of the century when much of the continent relied on satellite connectivity,” says Anthony Laing, GM of networking at XON. “That resulted in progressive steps to the point where, along with new fibre connectivity along Africa’s East and West coasts and development of NRENs in many African countries, AfricaConnect is now feasible.”

He adds: “One of the many benefits is that connections between African NRENs will no longer need to go from one African country to London then back to the receiving African country. Those connections will now be local. Much of the credit for all of these achievements must go to the UbuntuNet Alliance, which is a strong and integral partner to AfricaConnect.”

Non-profit Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe (DANTE) plans, builds and operates advanced networks for research and education. GÉANT is one of the results of DANTE’s efforts and connects 50 million users across 10 000 education institutions in areas such as energy, environment, space and medicine. It is the network that connects Europe’s national research and education networks (NRENs). UbuntuNet is the African equivalent of GÉANT and AfricaConnect links the two.

“The UbuntuNet Alliance currently has membership drawn from 14 countries across Southern and Eastern Africa: The Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia,” says Cathrin Stöver, chief international relations communications officer at DANTE and AfricaConnect project manager. “The project has European partners comprising NRENs from across Europe – that represent the GÉANT community.”

“The sheer volume of users on the research and education networks coupled with the sizes of the files they must share demands its own network,” says Laing.

“You cannot get the requisite quality of service from existing traditional Internet service providers (ISPs).”

AfricaConnect was conceived to implement the findings of FEAST, a study commissioned by the European Community in 2008, to explore the feasibility of deploying a regional backbone to connect NRENs in Africa to each other and to GÉANT. The study concluded that there was latent demand for connectivity, that the project was feasible and recommended an AfricaConnect consortium be led by DANTE with the Association of African Universities (AAU), UbuntuNet Alliance, West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN) and European NRENs as partners.

“It is the aim of the AfricaConnect project to build a research and education network across Southern and Eastern Africa to ensure data communications across the NREN members of the UbuntuNet Alliance and between Africa and Europe,” says Stöver. “The new undersea cable systems both to the East and West of the African continent have opened the doors to increased terrestrial capacity across sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, the African UbuntuNet Alliance now has more than 20Gbps capacity to the GÉANT point of presence (PoP) in London.”

WIOCC has been awarded a connectivity contract for the backbone of the UbuntuNet network and XON's services and equipment will be used to interconnect the NRENs of the UbuntuNet Alliance before plugging into the WIOCC-procured backbone where traffic can be directed to Europe and beyond.

XON has operated since 1996, provides carrier-grade services and is a Juniper Elite Partner and Operate Specialist for Africa. It operates a network operations centre (NOC) in Johannesburg. The NOC provides high-performance redundant dual networks, remote administration and proactive management services. XON maintains its head office in Johannesburg, South Africa, with regional head offices in Durban and Cape Town and branches in Namibia and Kenya. It also has sales and support offices in every province of South Africa and maintains a presence through partnerships in over 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Media enquiries: Tamsin Henderson, DANTE
Contact details: +44 1223 371391,
Tamsin.Henderson@dante.net

Anthony Laing, XON
Contact details: 011 237 4500
anthony@xon.co.za

Issued by: Michelle Oelschig
Scarlet Letter
Contact details: 083 636 1766

michelle@scarletletter.co.za

About XON

XON was established in 1996 and designs, builds, operates and manages information and communication technology (ICT) solutions. It is a level 3 EmpowerLogic-certified BBEEE black-empowered business that embraces social responsibility and upliftment. Kapela Holdings, a BEE investment business, owns a 40% stake in XON.

XON operate retail, networking and security, infrastructure, electrical, power generation, alternative energy and maintenance as well as consulting and outsource services in the parent company and through wholly-owned subsidiaries. XON is a Juniper Elite Partner and also partners with some of the world's most prominent software and hardware OEMs such as Symantec, ADVA, Allot, Samsung, APC, Polycom, HP, Microsoft, Pricer and IBM, to deliver customized solutions that give customers and edge through technology.

XON maintains its head office in Johannesburg, with regional head offices in Durban and Cape Town and branches in Namibia and Kenya. XON has sales and support offices in every province of South Africa and maintains a presence through partnerships in over 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

For more information visit www.xon.co.za <<http://www.xon.co.za>>

About DANTE

DANTE (Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe) is a non-profit organisation established in 1993 that plans, builds and operates large scale, advanced networks for research and education. On behalf of Europe's National Research and Education Networks (NRENs), DANTE has built and operates GÉANT, a flagship e-Infrastructure key to achieving the European Research Area.

Working in cooperation with the European Commission and in close partnership with Europe's NRENs and international networking partners, DANTE remains fundamental to the success of global research collaboration.

DANTE manages research and education (R&E) networking projects serving Europe (GÉANT), the Mediterranean (EUMEDCONNECT), Sub-Saharan Africa (AfricaConnect), Central Asia (CAREN) regions and coordinates Europe-China collaboration (ORIENTplus). DANTE also supports R&E networking organisations in Latin America (RedCLARA), Caribbean (CKLN) and Asia-Pacific (TEIN*CC).

For more information, visit www.dante.net <<http://www.dante.net>>

About GÉANT

GÉANT is the pan-European research and education network that interconnects Europe's National Research and Education Networks (NRENs). Together we connect over 50 million users at 10,000 institutions across Europe, supporting research in areas such as energy, the environment, space and medicine.

Operating at speeds of up to 500Gbps and reaching over 100 national networks

worldwide, GÉANT remains the largest and most advanced research and education network in the world.

Co-funded by the European Commission under the EU's 7th Research and Development Framework Programme, GÉANT is a flagship e-Infrastructure key to achieving the European Research Area – a seamless and open European space for online research – and assuring world-leading connectivity between Europe and the rest of the world in support of global research collaborations. The network and associated services comprise the GÉANT (GN3plus) project, a collaborative effort comprising 41 project partners: 38 European NRENs, DANTE, TERENA and NORDUnet (representing the 5 Nordic countries). GÉANT is operated by DANTE on behalf of Europe's NRENs.

For more information, visit www.geant.net <<http://www.geant.net>>

About UbuntuNet Alliance

UbuntuNet Alliance is a regional association of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in Eastern and Southern Africa. It was established in the latter half of 2005 by five established and emerging NRENs as the regional Research and Education Network. To date, the footprint of the Alliance in terms of membership has stretched across the largest land mass of Eastern and Southern Africa with participating NRENs in 14 countries.

Currently, the Alliance connects in Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Tanzania, and Zambia through points of presence in London, Amsterdam and Mtunzini (South Africa). The Alliance works towards enabling collaboration in research and education over world class networks.

For more information about UbuntuNet Alliance, please visit www.ubuntunet.net <<http://www.ubuntunet.net>> .