

MTN: Offering SASE to Capitalize on the Combined Needs for Network and Security

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MTN has recently announced the commercial launch of its SASE solution, marking yet another key milestone in its efforts to capitalizing on the growing business opportunity that arises along with the increasingly complex needs of network access and, on top of it, security. A key strength of the solution offered by MTN is the intelligent features and the easy-to-deploy nature of the solution aimed to help the vast amount of enterprises in the region, small and medium enterprises included.

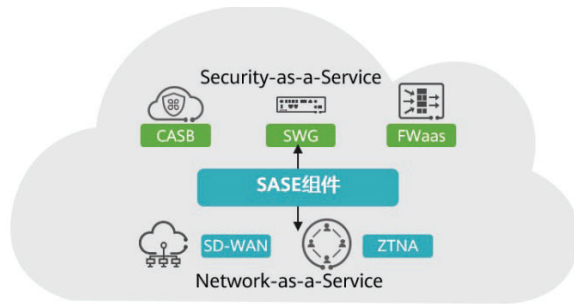
We expect the needs for digital solutions such as network and various other services to continue to proliferate as we usher in the era of artificial intelligence. Accordingly we shall try our best to offer the best products and solutions to meet such demands and grow our business in the enterprises market. We see it as an example of what we are trying to do in the digital services market on top of the network business.

Growing needs of enterprises for network and security

MTN aims to be a leader in not just telecommunications

network but also digital services. We have been steadfast in this strategy as we believe that the needs of enterprises have grown more and more sophisticated nowadays.

It has been an overwhelming trend in recent years to see the needs of enterprises for network and security services becoming more sophisticated as the digital transformation deepens and more and more companies deploy their operations on the Cloud. First, there has been a paradigm shift in the visitor traffic as more and more of the enterprise operations are put on the Cloud. Their maintenance teams have to manage and maintain the needs in terms Cloud, Network and Security, stretching the IT human resources. Second, remote work and home office have been more popular, and this has brought more risks as the employees log in to the internal network



from various environment. There is a growing demand for secure network access. Third, network and security have traditionally been separate, resulting in larger costs as compared with integrated solutions combining both network and security services.

SASE, or Secure Access Service Edge, does exactly that.

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As a new type of architecture that provides Cloud-native network and security services, it meets the needs of the enterprises by addressing the challenges they face. The concept was first put forward by Gartner in 2019 and the leading service providers have since rolled out solutions meeting the demands of the enterprises. Typically, it combines the Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) comprising SD-WAN and ZTNA at the bottom, and Security-as-a-Service comprising CASB, SWG and FWaaS on the top.

Small and medium enterprises in the Southern African market needs it, too. Given the rapid pace of migration to cloud, with the advancement of corporate intelligence, enterprise service data access needs have increased. Office traffic has increased from the headquarters to the branch. The security barrier has been indefinitely stretched. On top of that, there is the increase in pace of threats posed by multiple variants of ransomware and viruses thus stretching traditional security systems in keeping up. The skillset of the enterprises in addressing the complex and evolving security threats is limited. Enterprises in general face the problem of security alarm fatigue.

Huge growth market where MTN has a strength

According to the Worldwide Security Spending Guide released by International Data Corporation (IDC), the IT investment in network security worldwide totaled 215 billion US dollars in 2023, and is expected to hit 373.29 billion US dollars in 2028, with a five-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.7%. To seize the growth opportunity, MTN is vigorously deploying enterprise network security services.

Network operators have an inherent advantage in providing network security services for customers because all traffic is transmitted over their networks. It has the brand awareness, market experience, and extensive network coverage in Africa. The viability of MTN SASE solution has been verified in the finance industry.

It's worth noting that MTN has evolved from being a Telco to a Techco. We do provide end-to-end ICT solutions to enterprises under 5 main towers, including unified communications, IoT, managed network services, cloud, and security.

We expect the trend of increasingly complex network and security environment to continue as we move to the age of AI. The increasing trend of generative AI and ransomware industrialization has enhanced the viral variant pace.

With this vast solution portfolio coupled with ubiquitous state-of-the-art connectivity solutions, we have an innate advantage in providing network security services to our customers. That's why we are introducing the security solution, SASE, which is gradually changing the network security pattern of enterprises with its efficient, flexible, and unified network security management. Eventually we aim to be a one-stop provider for all round ICT solutions needed in the ever-changing digital world.

Joint innovation combining strengths of partners

In the process of bringing the SASE solution to the market, we have found a niche for MTN based on its strength such as the strong brand and the extensive operations across the Southern African region. We are the largest mobile network operator in Africa, bringing modern connected life to 288 million customers in 18 markets. We have been serving the enterprises customers in many countries, too.

Equally important is that we have been working closely with Huawei by leveraging the capabilities of Huawei Xinghe Intelligent SASE Solution. The recent launch of the SASE solution is a joint action, too.

Huawei has a strength in its vast portfolio of ICT technological products and solutions, including its technologies in security and the Cloud. In fact, by leveraging AI-powered detection technologies, Huawei Xinghe Intelligent SASE Solution leads the industry with an unknown threat detection rate of 91%. Thanks to the Xinghe Intelligent SASE Solution, Huawei has won multiple awards including the Network Security Innovator of the Year given by the ITP Media Group.

The cooperation between MTN and Huawei will benefit the many enterprise users, including the small and me-

dium enterprises in industries like education and retail. Our SASE solution will bring more efficient, intelligent, and secure protection capabilities to enterprises in Africa while opening up a wider growth market for us.

We expect to see the needs of enterprises to be more sophisticated as the trends of digital transformation and the needs for Cloud-native capabilities grow, even as AI further accelerates the pace of technological innovation across the world. We believe that by offering digital services where we have a niche, we can continue to capitalize on the new growth opportunities and achieve sustained business success.

