Ghana's Trustur is crowned best democracy-affirming startup in Africa at Tech4Democracy, Cape Town

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The Africa Tech4Democracy Venture Day, a competition for startups developing technologies that reinforce democratic principles and values, was held on 7 March at the HPI d-school building at the University of Cape Town's middle campus. Tech4Democracy is an IE University initiative in partnership with the US Department of State and with the strategic support of Microsoft.

Trustur, from FloodGates Limited (Ghana), received the award for the best democracy-affirming startup in the continent. Trustur provides users with a verifiable and secure digital identity and promotes inclusion by simplifying access to government and other services. The other four finalists that pitched their innovations were Deaftouch (South Africa), Legal Standpoint (South Africa), Ongea na Demokrasia (Tanzania) and Uamuzi Foundation (Kenya). All finalists will receive up to $150,000 in Microsoft cloud credits, free productivity software and GitHub Enterprise access and mentoring from business and technical experts.

Trustur secured a spot in the Tech4Democracy Global Final that will take place in Washington, DC during President Biden's Summit for Democracy at the end of March, where all the winners of the five continental Venture Days (Europe, South America, North America, Asia-Pacific and Africa) will compete for a monetary prize.

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The jury was composed of a diverse group of experts from the entrepreneurship, academic and corporate sectors in Africa, namely: Andrew Bailey, senior manager: Innovation, University of Cape Town; Buntu Majaja, CEO, SA Innovation Summit; Zanyiwe Nthatisi-Asare, CEO, Digitally Legal; Richard Perez, founding director, Hasso Plattner School of Design Thinking Afrika, University of Cape Town; Vanessa Ramanjam, programme manager, Solutions Space, Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town; and Dikatso Sephoti, entrepreneurship consultant.

During the event, Irene Blázquez, director of the Center for the Governance of Change at IE University, stressed: "It is crucial to illustrate a democratic and liberal vision of technological development that upholds the values that explain us as a society."

Richard Perez, founding director of the Hasso Plattner School of Design Thinking Afrika at the University of Cape Town, stated: "It was a great honour to have played a role in this important initiative and to acknowledge our continent's innovations. Design-led thinking and human-centred design, with its emphasis on empathy and collaboration alongside creativity and rigour, offers the world a tried and tested framework to work on the complex challenges and problems that we face."

US Consul General Todd Haskell shared: "The United States has made significant commitments to ensure technologies work for, not against, democracies. That is why the United States is working to expand access to technology that fills gaps and helps citizens, activists, lawyers and judges to work together to continue to build their democracies and hold their institutions accountable."

The event also counted with the participation of Microsoft's Digital Advisor Khaliq Dollie and a keynote address on how technology can reinforce democratic values by technology entrepreneur Melvyn Lubega, founder of the first South African unicorn.

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