



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ethiopia's tourism sector to benefit from the country's first travel and leisure platform

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (February 2, 2021) – Today, startup studio 1888EC announced a partnership with the Mastercard Foundation to create the country's first travel and leisure platform aimed at creating digital solutions and job opportunities within Ethiopia's tourism sector.

1888EC, a unique and innovative startup studio established through the partnership, is the first-of-its-kind in Ethiopia. The studio aspires to create disruptive innovators and change-makers and will champion digital transformation, venture building, and job creation.

1888EC recognizes that a significant part of Ethiopia's economy is dependent upon travel, tourism, leisure, and hospitality. The newly-formed studio's pilot project will be a digital platform that provides tourists with a myriad of options to explore and experience the "Land of Origins".

The platform, which will be developed as a prototype in the coming months, will be a modern and user-friendly interface for travelers to access more tourist destinations, book accommodations easier, feel safer by using a trusted app that tracks information, and offer packages to promote increased travel across the country while attracting greater foreign currency to boost the economy.

Its features and services will include access to verified tour guides, accommodation bookings, a best local attraction locator, local experience offerings, and many more options for travelers. The platform will showcase a diverse pool of vendors, including travel and tour service providers, vetted and trained drivers, tour guides, translators, and even local experience buddies. The platform will curate from existing service providers as well as onboard and train new providers. It will also recruit freelancers and train them to provide quality customer service.

"Despite recent challenges, the tourism and hospitality sector holds significant potential to drive the creation of work opportunities. The platform, with a special focus on boosting MICE tourism – meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions – will play a part in unlocking that potential and ensuring that benefits ultimately accrue to young people across Ethiopia and beyond," said Alemayehu Konde Koira, Country Head, Ethiopia, Mastercard Foundation.

1888EC's mission is to cultivate an ecosystem that will increase access and use of technology, while promoting job creation led by startups, entrepreneurs, and collaborative efforts with global partners.

“The partnership with the Mastercard Foundation – to develop and pilot digital solutions is a crucial step towards empowering young people, fostering entrepreneurship, and supporting job growth in Ethiopia – is enabled by digital transformation and the digital economy. We have a vision to play a significant role in building the startup ecosystem as well as leading the way on how to leverage emerging digital innovation to spur radical digital transformation and boost job creation in the tourism sector,” said Solomon Kassa, Founder of 1888EC.

1888EC will support young entrepreneurs to build their companies from the ground up. The objective of the studio is to guide young entrepreneurs who do not have the experience or knowledge of how to run a business. This will inherently mitigate and by-pass the risks young people would experience if they were to establish a company on their own. This will ensure young people are able to remain committed to their dream of entrepreneurship, and in turn, provide them with much needed business development support.

"The tourism and travel industry is a key development area for Ethiopia yet it has been hit the hardest from the COVID-19 pandemic. The residual effects of this global crisis translate to a slow and long recovery ahead in this industry and 1888EC is coming in at a critical time to accelerate this process. Ushering in a digitally-enabled tourism platform, will fuel job creation, expand access to services, enhance consumer information, and position the nation to a higher acceleration in the digital transformation domain," said Kidist Tesfaye, Start-up Consultant and Social Entrepreneur.

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**1888EC will release calls for partnerships and applications once the prototype has been developed and tested over the next few months.*

About 1888EC

Founded by Solomon Kassa (TV Personality, tech strategist, author & public speaker), 1888EC is a unique and innovative startup studio in Ethiopia. 1888EC aspires to create disruptive innovators and change-makers that will champion digital transformation, venture building, and job creation. As a place to cultivate the next generation of tech startup warriors, 1888EC refers to the date of the victorious Battle of Adwa on the Ethiopian Calendar (EC). Our motto, “Victory Re-imagined!” symbolizes the victory we want to re-imagine against poverty by empowering young entrepreneurs to improve the lives of many through tech-based solutions to everyday problems. For more information, please visit: www.1888.studio

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About the Mastercard Foundation

Mastercard Foundation works with visionary organizations to enable young people in Africa and in Indigenous communities in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work.

It is one of the largest, private foundations in the world with a mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion to create an inclusive and equitable world.

The Foundation was created by Mastercard in 2006 as an independent organization with its own Board of Directors and management.

For more information on the Foundation, please visit: www.mastercardfdn.org

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