

GLOBAL TECH ADVOCATES DELEGATION TO DUBAI FOR EXPAND NORTH STAR & GITEX GLOBAL

In mid-October, a delegation of Advocates from around the world descended upon Dubai to attend Expand North Star and Gitex Global, arguably the largest tech event in the world.

My thanks as well to the following GTA Leaders who joined the delegation for all or part of the trip:

- **Tech China Advocates:** John Zai, Kelly Chan and Ritchie Li
- **Tech Ghana Advocates:** Akosua Annobil
- **Tech India Advocates:** Af Malhotra
- **Tech Netherlands Advocates:** Esther O'Callaghan
- **Tech Nigeria Advocates:** Emem Rita Usanga
- **Tech Nordic Advocates:** Jeanette Carlsson

In addition, members of the GTA Advisory Board – Priya Guha, Debu Purkayastha (and Esther) joined the delegation wearing their investor hats. I represented Tech London Advocates and UK Tech Advocates, and our delegation included Stephen Welton from BGF Foundation and British Business Bank as well as Eric Collins from Impact X. GTA partner and sponsor Future Energy Ventures also joined the delegation represented by Moritz Jungmann.



THE INVESTOR SUMMIT

Most of the delegation arrived to participate at the Investor Summit on the Sunday. This was the first year that Expand North Star was separate to Gitex Global (the former was based at Dubai Harbour and the latter was based Dubai World Trade Center). Every investor who attended was requested to meet with 20 startups. As such, many in the delegation spent their time in the investor lounge and feedback on the quality of the startups in attendance was overwhelmingly positive.

On the Monday, I spent much of my time canvassing all nine halls at Expand North Star and had the opportunity to meet with some Advocates who were hosting stands including Ganapathy Sankarabaaham from Varja Global (and had a great conversation around generative AI and how it can make companies more productive) along with Sami Nur from Opto Health.

Vajra Global website: <https://vajraglobal.com>

Opto Health website: <https://optohealth.co.uk>

In the evening Global Growth Hub and London & Partners co-hosted a reception at North Star by Night. This was led by Omar and Sara French and involved hosting a delegation of scaleups from the UK and India. Both the GTA and L&P delegations were in attendance at what proved an enjoyable event, followed by the Baristi Beach Party (which I heard from an Advocate continued into the wee hours!)

On the Tuesday morning, I had a constructive meeting with Hadi Badri, CEO – Economic Development at the Dubai Economic Development Corporation along with Mohamed Sharaf, COO of Investment Attraction. We discussed how Global Tech Advocates and Dubai Economy and Tourism can collaborate to better support Dubai and Tech UAE Advocates as well as conduct greater outreach through the GTA network to share more about Dubai as a launchpad to explore expansion in the region. More to follow.

I then managed to attend Gitex Global at the Dubai World Trade Center, a huge event and venue which boasted strong global representation, with much focus on the Middle East region along with Africa and India.

Later in the day, I headed back to the Investor Lounge at Expand North Star to catch up with Omar, Af and Elliott Denham. Elliott manages the Sandbox program at the Dubai Technology Entrepreneur Campus, focusing on incubation programs funding for early-stage startups in Dubai. He shared great insights about the startup ecosystem, and how it has grown rapidly over the past few years.



TECH NIGERIA ADVOCATES LAUNCH

A standout moment of the trip was GTA hosting the launch of Tech Nigeria Advocates. We held a small reception on the terrace of the Avani Palm View Hotel. Emem Rita Usanga is leading the new group, and she spoke about her plans to roll-out the group and priority areas of focus – the new website is up and running at:

<https://technigeriaadvocates.com> and you can also follow on Twitter/X on [@TechNaijaAdv](https://twitter.com/TechNaijaAdv).

Around 30 Advocates attended the reception, including many of the GTA leaders, to support Emem and the launch of this new group. Tech Nigeria Advocates is the second GTA group in Africa following the launch of Tech Ghana Advocates last year. All the best to Emem!

Dubai is clearly emerging as a leading tech hub across the region, with aspirations to continue to build on its success. I also attended Gitex Global in 2022, and so can sense that the momentum behind Dubai is building towards becoming a significant tech hub in its own right.

I have spoken recently about the 'emerging arc of tech' from Dubai and other Middle East hubs, through India (please see my GTA Summit in India 2022 writeup) through South East Asia (earlier this year GTA launched Tech Thailand Advocates – by the time you read this, Tech Malaysia Advocates will have launched along with Tech Philippines Advocates).

The growth, investment and dynamism across this 'arc' is a harbinger of what we will see in the coming years. Dubai will play a critical and leading role in that journey, and I encourage tech leaders across the various hubs in GTA to go see for themselves.