IQ-EQ is a leading investor services group that combines global expertise with an unwavering focus on client service delivery.

AVCA speaks to IQ-EQ about the company's growth, investment opportunities in Africa, and Mauritius being removed from the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) list of jurisdictions.

**Q: Tell us about IQ-EQ and how the firm has grown over the years. How does IQ-EQ distinguish itself from competitors?**

IQ-EQ is a leading investor services group that brings together a rare combination of global technical expertise and deep understanding of client needs. We have the know-how and the ‘know you’ to provide a comprehensive range of compliance, administration, asset and advisory services to fund managers, multinational companies, family offices and private clients operating worldwide.

We employ a global workforce located in 24 jurisdictions across the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia and have assets under administration (AUA) exceeding US$750 billion. IQ-EQ works with 11 of the world’s top 15 private equity firms.

Growing with our clients is important to us, and so far we’ve grown from 300+ people in our organisation in 2015 to over 4300 today. This is something we continue to work on, and plans are in motion to increase our footprint in Africa, the Middle East and Asia throughout the remainder of 2022 and beyond.

Within our Fund & Asset Managers segment, our global team of fund administration professionals provide alternative fund services for open and closed-ended fund structures, combining their technical understanding of funds with a proven track record in private equity, venture capital, real estate, hedge, hybrid, infrastructure, debt and credit fund administration across multiple jurisdictions.

Compared to our competitors, we have an unrivalled breadth of service offering, an extensive global footprint, deep domain knowledge, long-term relationships with our clients and we are adaptive to technological evolution, offering a number of proprietary technology platforms to meet client needs in areas such as investor reporting, ESG compliance and onboarding AML/KYC.

**Q: What are some of the opportunities that Africa presents for IQ-EQ, and how has doing business in Africa benefitted the firm?**

IQ-EQ's Africa, India and Middle East operations are led from Mauritius, which is increasingly being used as the springboard for doing business in continental Africa and provides an attractive risk mitigating platform due to its governance and legal framework as well as ease of doing business. A significant proportion of intra-Africa business is supported by the Mauritius International Financial Centre (MIFC).

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Within the IQ-EQ Group, there is also a noteworthy percentage of inbound Africa business supported by our UK and European offices. For instance, our teams in the UK and Crown Dependencies have long-standing
engagements with countries like Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa.

Q: Mauritis was removed from the Financial Action Task Force’s (FATF) list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring towards the end of last year. In your view, which other jurisdictions in Africa are making progress towards creating an enabling legal and regulatory environment for private investment to thrive?

Mauritius has been following the development of the Kigali International Financial Centre (KIFC) in Rwanda. The development of the KIFC is seen as a serious emerging competitor to the MIFC because Mauritius has positioned itself for a long time as the jurisdiction of choice for investments in Africa.

Rwanda and Mauritius have both, over the last few years, shared Africa’s top rankings for ease of doing business. The two countries also share an amicable working relationship that builds on their competitive advantage, especially since entering into a Double Taxation Agreement (DTA) in 2014. The DTA was meant to promote commerce, trade and business between the two nations, which have also signed an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) in 2001. However, the IPPA is not yet in force.

The KIFC is developing Kigali to become a leading financial centre on the African continent to stimulate investment and business in Rwanda, and therefore, Africa as a whole. Moreover, the KIFC observes international legal and regulatory standards which ensures legal certainty and improves the pro-business environment already present in the region. Rwanda is gradually become a competing gateway to Africa, and we will continue to see evidence of this in the near future.

Q: Last year, IQ-EQ launched ‘IQ-EQ Compass’ to help clients identify and manage ESG risks. Tell us more about ESG compliance in African private investment with reference to industry-leading activities by some of IQ-EQ’s clients.

There is no doubt that changes in the international regulatory landscape, paired with the COVID-19 pandemic, have accelerated investors’ interest in sustainable investments while also increasing pressure on organisations to provide more transparency around environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting. We believe that businesses are evolving – it’s not just about financial returns, but also ensuring they are having a positive impact on the world around them. Some companies are already conscious about the importance of ESG and have some sort of ESG adherence in place. However, most of them do not have a clear, formulated policy or ESG guidelines, and we want to help ensure they’re coping with regulatory demand.

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