

Brazil's state-controlled Telebras has signed a memorandum of understanding with Spanish broadband submarine communications provider IslaLink for the deployment of a fiber optics undersea cable linking South America and Europe, Telebras said in a statement.

The cable is one of five that are part of a submarine fiber network being proposed by Telebras to connect Brazil, the Southern Cone, the US, Europe and Africa. It will have 24,000km of submarine cable when ready.

The network has an estimated cost of 1.8bn reais (US\$900mn), to be divided among public and private entities. Separate consortiums will be formed to manage each of the five stretches.

The cable departing from Ceará state capital, Fortaleza, and reaching Africa through Angola's capital, Luanda, is at the most advanced stage. A deal was signed with Angola Cables late last year. The US landing site is not yet defined.

The whole project is seen as strategic for Brazil as it will ensure the country's autonomy in international communications and higher-speed connections. Ultimately, the new routes are also expected to lower internet costs in Brazil.

The project runs in parallel with an initiative also advocated by Telebras to interconnect with fiber backbones in other South American countries to form a "ring." Brazilian authorities aim to reduce latency in regional communications, as data within Latin America needs to travel long distances prior to reaching its final destination. Telebras estimates that the amount of international traffic between Europe and North America is 600 times higher than within Latin America.