

04 March 2014

2014/2015 BUDGET INTERVENTION

I once again would like to commend the Hon. Minister of Finance for tabling a budget that is in synch with the nation's development agenda – a budget whose spending priorities in spite of incessant criticism in this Chamber, is beautifully aligned with the Fourth National Development Plan. Substantial allocations made over the MTEF period to key sectors of health and education although not adequate relatively speaking, will go a long way in addressing gaping infrastructural needs as well as delivery and quality imperatives confronting these sectors.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members, it is encouraging to note that Namibia is at long last taking steps to embrace the concept of the "Digital Economy" which will undoubtedly improve the efficiency of our operations while at the same time ensuring that our nation emerge from the self imposed digital orphanage. All other things being equal, digital inclusion and ict has potential to accelerate economic progress. This in turn, will place our nation in better stead in terms of pursuing higher levels of economic growth needed in order to stay the course of the set economic growth trajectory. As the Hon. Minister of Finance alluded to in her budget motivation, the advent of mobile telephony has enabled our nation to make giant strides in its quest to ensure financial and social inclusion.

Hon Stanley M. Simataa

Depty min & TCT

Provided we overcome perennial challenges such as low internet penetration, affordability of mobile connectivity, pervasive poverty rates and unreliable supporting infrastructure such as roads and electricity in rural areas, improved mobile penetration in our country, is a necessary pre-requisite for improved productivity. This therefore calls for greater alignment of the fiscal policy with the goals of the digital growth agenda. That notwithstanding, our nation still continues to be on the periphery and is constantly playing catch up in leveraging the potential of mobile telephony in delivering efficient and cost effective services in four sectors in particular. These are: the Financial sector where we have already witnessed the emergence of ewallet and most recently, the partnership between two Namibian entities MTC and Mobi Pay that will make it easy to conclude transactions using mobile phones. Traditional long queues at banks; the usual sea of agitated and frustrated customers during month end not to mention unmanned offices at the end of every month, will soon be a thing of the past. The health sector where last month we witnessed the historic launch of a mobile application developed by a Namibian – an application that heralds the advent of a new era that will obviate the perennial trek and stampede for places at maternity wards by expectant mothers. The agricultural sector where farmers need not trek long distances at great cost to either establish prices offered for their produce or consult the nearest veterinarian for an opinion. Indeed, the education sector where the mobile phone, provided we are bold enough and revise the existing policy which is inhibitive, can make teaching and learning virtual thus breaking the current classroom boundaries.

