



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE
2ND NATIONAL ICT SUMMIT CONFERENCE**

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11 NOVEMBER 2015

Honourable Speaker,
Members of this august house

Good afternoon!

1.

I am delighted for this opportunity to address this august assembly to inform the Honourable members about the recent 2nd National ICT Summit, which I addressed for the first time in my capacity as Minister responsible to oversee the overall ICT portfolio of the Republic of Namibia.

2.

The ICT Summit took place over two days under the theme: “***Bridging the digital gap***”. This is indeed, a laudable theme that speaks directly to my personal commitment, key performance indicators and declaration of intent, which I committed to the President of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob.

3.

As the political head of the ICT Ministry, I made a commitment that the ICT Ministry will strive to ensure that Namibia enjoys nation –wide coverage of ICT services over the next 14 to 18 months.

This will, without a doubt, require a robust approach of infrastructure development, commitment and a deliberate spirit of infrastructure sharing among industry players for the benefit of all Namibians.

4.

The challenge that I have here, Hon. Speaker, Members of the National Assembly is that Telecom Namibia, MTC and the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation [NBC] are reaching their customers and users of their services through base stations that they erect at strategic reception locations around the country.

5.

The disappointing thing of these key players is that one will find three [3] base stations of Telecom Namibia, MTC and NBC at the same location while they can share these reception towers for all three to utilise and erect other base station elsewhere in the country where other Namibians do not have access to these ICT services.

6.

As I have informed the 2nd National ICT Summit, my approach will be robust one which will focus and optimisation of the dark spots in the current 70% coverage that Namibians are receiving today, guaranteed by the existing infrastructure.

7.

My uncompromised expectation is that the existing 70% reception coverage is increased to the maximum 100% coverage.

By so doing, the achievement of this milestone will produce positive results for both consumers and industry and ultimately lead to inclusivity of all Namibians as far as internet coverage and ICT is concerned.

Honourable Speaker,

8.

The Ministry of ICT further commits to oversee the effective implementation of the communications legislation, addressing the accessibility, affordability and quality of information communication technology.

9.

The aim of which is to create a knowledge-based society that remains informed on Government and private sector activities.

My Ministry is further expected to promote unfettered access by the media to public information in order to strengthen democracy and good governance; consolidating Government information systems to ensure cohesive and integrated media communications from all Offices, Ministries and Agencies.

10.

It is our ultimate objective, for us at the ICT Ministry, to spearhead an inclusive approach where no Namibian will or MUST feel excluded or left out.

We are aligned and we have consensus that ICT plays a pivotal role in any society, this sector can educate or have the opposite

disastrous impact, if not managed accordingly and may have detrimental impacts for a Nation.

11.

The correct and optimal utilisation and application of ICT efforts such as this 2nd National ICT Summit will lead towards bridging the digital gap, as we attest in the theme of the 2nd National ICT Summit, which is: **Bridging the digital gap.**

We must, therefore, as key players reach out to all corners of Namibia, bringing our Himba communities and others such as the San into the mainstream of ICT, be it through media such as mobile phones, internet access, and radio and television connectivity.

Honourable Speaker,

Members of the National Assembly,

12.

The children, Namibian students and learner population are today in a fortunate position that they too are now connected to ICT through e-libraries, e-curriculum, e-laboratories and a variety of online study and online shopping services.

However, we need to increase this footprint so that all learners even in the remotest villages of this beautiful Republic of Namibia can enjoy these e-benefits that transforms the enormous demographics of the world into an e-global village.

13.

I am pleased to inform you that the various entities in our Government structure have implemented and rolled out e-governance programmes.

In the foreseeable future, we will experience a modern, electronic system for the validation of real-time border controls, speedy approval and issuing of Passports and visa applications and electronic voting machines (EVM, S) to cast your vote in a fast and secured manner.

14.

The 2nd National ICT Summit commended the milestones the Ministry of Home Affairs has achieved in delivering a passport within three working days from the application date.

Likewise, the Namibian Police, through e-policing with support from Interpol, will easily and effectively trace stolen vehicles, deal with criminals and arrest cross border crimes in an proficient manner.

15.

By the same token, the Ministry of Health and Social Services has made equally impressive breakthroughs in medicine today through the rapid growth, advancement and application of ICT equipment in hospital theatres where medical practitioners apply high tech equipment for heart surgery, caesareans, with minimal scarring for patients compared to the pre-independence era, thanks to the correct and aggressive use of ICT.

The efforts of the Namibian Government to implement e-government and decentralisation has led to the improvement of service delivery and bringing services closer to the people.

All ICT initiatives in the Government service are centrally coordinated by the e-Government programme in the Office of the Prime Minister; and I would like to congratulate the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister for the hallmark in coordinating this complex ICT function of Government.

Honourable Speaker,

17.

The Economic Commission for Africa initiated and launched in Namibia in collaboration with the ICT Ministry the SCAN-ICT Project in Namibia.

The Project aims at undertaking a survey to collect and analyse ICT data and statistics and to compare core ICT indicators in order to measure the status of ICT development in the country with the output of the Namibia Scan-ICT Database Website.

18.

Furthermore, the launch of the West Africa Cable System (WACS) in 2012, Namibia's network was re-designed and upgraded to carry the increased bandwidth and capacity from WACS.

Regional Government network service hubs were established in all political regions to ensure seamless Government service delivery in all the regions. These infrastructure will make it possible for the implementation and effective e-government and decentralisation.

19.

It is important to note that security in this ICT era is crucial both locally and globally and regulation of this industry is critical to curb cybercrime and provide for safe electronic banking transactions; safe flow of personal data and the protection of children online.

Our Government is at an advanced stage of finalising the Electronic Transactions and Cybercrime Bill to protect our citizens.

Honourable Speaker,

Members of the National Assembly,

20.

ICT in today's age, provides excellent software to determine the cost of capital projects which can easily determine the amount of building material, such as bricks, cement and sand needed for the construction of a particular building.

Likewise, ICT can deliver a three-dimensional sketch that provides stakeholders an excellent opportunity to visualise how the architecture will look like upon completion.

21.

The commercial sector, especially the banking industry matured over the years with the directive of the Central Bank of Namibia for all banks to develop banking systems for Namibia through localisation systems as dictated by the Banking Charter.

It was enforced upon the banking sector to develop products and banking services targeting the unbanked population of

Namibia to make the sector inclusive for all Namibians. Already Bank of Namibia announced the phasing out of cheques as a method of payment.

22.

We recently saw the successful roll out of the e-wallet banking service for which I am a living testimony as a dedicated user. While I am a politician, I am also a farmer, living in Windhoek with my team on the farm; it is no longer required of me to travel to the region only to pay salaries, e-wallet requires the click of a button and wallah, the money lands real-time from Windhoek into the workers' account in the Region.

23.

In addition, other banking products such as Online Banking, cellphone banking and the purchase of pre-paid commodities such as airtime and electricity are classic examples of how ICT has advanced to date.

Due to the rapid progression of this sector, media too derive great benefits. We have seen and heard live TV and radio broadcasts and commentaries of the Rugby World 2015, the FIFA World Cup, the Olympic Games and other international sporting events by merely picking up a remote control.

24.

The convergence of technologies with new technologies such as Over the Top technologies (OTT) enable viewers to access television programmes on their smart phones and therefore viewers are not limited to watching TV only from television sets. Even movies can be watched on your phone, just by a click of a button.

25.

Considering all these innovations and milestones, **Honourable Speaker**, is indeed possible to say the sky is the limit and it is up to us, the Government, the Communication Regulatory Authority of Namibia, Telecom Namibia, TN Mobile, Paratus, MTC, the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation and all others including the private sector to continue doing the right things and build a great industry that will make all Namibians proud.

**In closure, Honourable Speaker,
Members of the National Assembly,**

26.

Borrowing from the great and late Myles Munroe, who once said, and I quote: **"One of the greatest tragedies in life is to watch potential die untapped"** unquote.

27.

Let us join hands and live up to the vision for ICT for all Namibians, led and managed by empowered ICT professionals able to unlock the full potential of technology and human capital and deliver value to our citizens, visitors and investors, so that Namibia becomes a leader in ICT development.

28.

The ICT Summit is an annual event of the calendar of the Ministry of Information Communication Technology. The recommendation from my dedicated team who organised the 2nd National ICT Summit is that the 3rd National ICT Summit will be bigger and better.

We envisage to extend the ICT Summit from 2 to 3 days next year and allocate a full day to the youth, the student fraternity to exhibit their ICT innovations at the 3rd National ICT Summit.

29.

I have made commitments at the 2nd National ICT Summit and pledge to give feedback at the 3rd National ICT Summit for the achievements made and it will be at this platform that I want to report about the infrastructure sharing model Telecom Namibia, MTC and NBC have achieved and how the sharing of base stations and infrastructure has ensure 100% coverage of the 70% coverage we receive to date.

30.

The next step would be for all players under the leadership of the Ministry of Information Communication Technology for us all to collectively ensure that the remaining 30% is covered to facilitate that the entire Namibia from Ariamsvlei in the South to the furthest point in the North; and from Nakop in the West to the furthest point in the East has 100% ICT and internet coverage.

31.

If we can achieve this as the ICT industry; Namibia will be well on course to transform Namibia into a knowledge based economy through which ICT will play an instrumental role to create job and not the economy that will create job losses.

I thank you, Honourable Speaker!

