

MOTION ON FREE WI-FI

MOTIVATION BY HON. MODESTUS AMUTSE

Hon Speaker,
Hon Members,

1. We are living in the world where Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become critical drivers of productivity, innovation and growth. The digital divide experienced today in many countries of the world can be closed in Namibia, by introducing a supportive regulatory framework enabling all citizens irrespective of their economic background to access useful information indiscriminately, through free Wi-Fi at all public and private facilities countrywide.
2. Hon Speaker, not long ago, we launched e-parliament, not only to prescribe to current global trends of digital evolution, but also to become a relevant democracy where every Namibian regardless of economic background can follow the debates and access information. However, this reality has excluded some of our electorates from the disadvantaged economic communities, who cannot afford data to follow our debates.

3. Not only that, but the rapid evolution and complexity of digital technologies, which moved the direction of e-learning, e-commerce and e-ministerial services demand that we as policy makers prepare the country and its inhabitants not to be left behind. It is our duty to ensure that we recommend a framework, which can eventually enable all Namibians and especially our youth, to access vital information.
4. Hon Speaker, the right to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by Article 21 (1) (a) of our constitution, can only be best guaranteed by us, with the introduction of a framework, providing for administrative justice to such a freedom.
5. The exercise of fundamental freedoms in general as enshrined under Chapter 3 of our constitution, especially the element of freedom of expression demand that we resort to a resolution that would encourage the public and private sectors to support a stand that would guarantee free access to information.
6. Therefore, availing of free Wi-Fi by various stakeholders will guarantee that individuals make informed decisions in the process of expressing themselves and imparting information. Hon Speaker, Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration on human rights and the International Covenant

on Civil and Political Rights states that: “ the right to freedom of expression includes not only freedom to impart information and ideas of all kinds, but also freedom to seek and receive them, regardless of frontiers”

7. Once a free Wi-Fi framework is agreed upon and implemented, people who are vulnerable or marginalized will have equal rights to access information to build their capacities in their different spheres of lives. The year 2030 upon which, we base our Vision for broad-base industrialization and economic transformation is around the corner, and investing in a framework for a free Wi-Fi is a step in the right direction, especially for our youth population. It will also contribute immensely to narrowing the gaps between the rich and poor when it comes to accessing information.
8. Statistics shows that about 1.28 million people in Namibia used internet between 2019/20 and the number continued to improve over time due to increased network coverage across the country. Currently, the average cost for data usage per 1MB is N\$0.90 or about N\$61.00 per 3GB on some special data bundle options. Some Telecommunication Companies in Namibia also offer free data between 24h00 and 06:00, and one can only assume that at this times, it was made possible by a limited number of users as many people are probably sleeping.

9. Hon Speaker, I believe that this noble idea would motivate telecommunication providers to expand the Network coverage and speed, so that the whole of Namibia have Network and strengthen their broadband capacities, of which, the 4th generation is currently only or more concentrated in major town areas, while rural communities only have the narrowband coverage or still waiting to be connected.

10. The Free Wi-Fi approach has improved on democratic participation by the general public in important debates and general access to information in countries such as Finland, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, Uk, Latvia, Japan just to mention a few. If you are in Tshwane SA today, Wi-Fi is accessed free, so as Cape Town, Stellenbosch or Kigali in Rwanda, Gaborone- Botswana, Nigeria and Kenya. If those countries can do it, then we can do it even better even if we are to start in some areas, but especially rural schools, public offices, public transport, private institutions and towns.

11. I hence submit that the house debate and subsequently refer this motion to a relevant Parliamentary Standing Committee for further investigation and report back to the House.

I thank you