



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

**BUDGET MOTIVATION
2024/2025 FINANCIAL YEAR**

VOTE 29

BY

HON. EMMA THEOFELUS, MP

MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

8 April 2024

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

Allow me to rise before this August House to present and motivate Vote 29 of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) for the 2024/2025 financial year. Further, I seek your support for this Vote as we seek “*to lay the foundation for the accelerated use and development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Namibia and coordinate information management within the Government*” per the Ministry’s mandate.

First and foremost, I would like to reflect on the everlasting legacy of our late President, Dr. Hage G. Geingob’s legacy of inclusivity and a prosperous Namibian House. May His Soul Continue To Rest in Power.

Secondly, I wish to Congratulate H.E Dr. Nangolo Mbumba and H.E Dr. Netumbo Nandi–Ndaitwah on their appointment as President and Vice President of the Republic of Namibia respectively and wish to thank H.E Dr. Nangolo Mbumba for entrusting myself as Minister and my Deputy Minister Honourable Modestus Amutse with the responsibility of steering the ICT agenda in the Republic of Namibia.

On reflection on the Ministry’s role, the telecommunication sector expanded its fixed and mobile broadband networks by establishing several new sites across the country. Most sites were upgraded from 2G to 3G and 3G to 4G, allowing users to access meaningful download and upload speeds as provided in the National Broadband Policy. To date, 85% of the population is covered by broadband, and its usage stands at 73%. Telecommunication operators are profit- driven entities; hence, the desire to achieve 100% network coverage remains challenging. This is attributed to the fact that operators invest in commercially viable areas. This calls for the government to make a budget to subsidise the construction of ICT infrastructure in underserved areas.

Furthermore, the Ministry continues to create a conducive environment for media by advocating for a liberalised, conducive and self-regulating media culture. This is done through continuous engagements with the media locally and internationally.

The NBC's broadcasting network coverage is standing at 74.5% on Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) and 78% on FM (Radio), with the corporation's plans to attain 100% coverage through the implementation of Satellite Direct-to-Home (DTH) technology. As a result, viewers and listeners will receive television and radio programming directly within the confinement of their homes via satellite, enabling a wider range of channels and improved signal quality. In addition to the DTH engagements, the nbc is also working on providing decoder solutions. With the efforts to offer set-top box or decoder solutions, the corporation will ensure its customers have the necessary equipment to enjoy the television services seamlessly. Improving access to information via television and radio will elevate Namibia's socio-economic level. As an additional service offering, the nbc introduced its Over The Top (OTT) Streaming platform called nbcPlus on 28 September 2023. Currently, the nbcPlus platform boasts 28,900 users in Namibia and across its borders. The nbcPlus platform enables users to stream the NBC television channels and all eleven (11) radio stations on smart devices such as smartphones, laptops/ desktops, smart televisions and tablets.

As we move onto the business of the day, for the 2024/2025 financial year, the ICT Ministry received a total appropriation of **Seven Hundred and Two Million, Nine Hundred and Ninety-Three Thousand Namibia Dollars (N\$702,993,000.00)**. This will allow us to promote access to information, develop responsive ICT laws, policies and strategies, promote ICT infrastructure development and maintain operational efficiencies. In addition, this Ministry has functional responsibilities over the Namibia Press Agency (NAMPA), Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and the New Era Publication Corporation (NEPC), all of whom share in the MICT budgetary allocation. Herewith follows a synopsis of our key programmes and their respective allocations:

Programme 1: Information and Communication Technology Development

An amount of **Nineteen Million Three Hundred and Eighty-Four Thousand Seven Hundred and Four Namibia Dollars (N\$19,384,704.00)** was allocated for the development of policy and legislation to support, modernise and improve ICT development. In addition, this programme is responsible for coordinating compliance with regional, continental and international ICT

obligations. It further strives to bridge the digital divide through remote Rural Information Communication Technology Centres that are visible in all regions of our country.

We aspire to invest in ICT infrastructure development under this programme to propel economic growth and enhance job creation. Therefore, I am pleased to inform this August House of our plans to implement the Universal Access Service initiative by rolling out 15 Radio Access Network sites/towers. **Thirty-five million Namibia Dollars (N\$35,000,000.00)** is set aside for this initiative to bridge the digital divide in the unserved and underserved areas. At the same time, plans are underway to establish the Cybersecurity Incident Response Team, which will serve as a focal point for coordinating responses to cyber incidents and be the primary contact point to liaise with national, regional and international bodies dealing with cybersecurity.

Honourable Chairperson,

In our quest to create an enabling and conducive environment for ICT producers and consumers, the Ministry of ICT will facilitate the enactment of the Data Protection and Cybercrime Bills while proceeding with efforts to amend or repeal and replace the current Communications Act. In addition, we plan to finalise the consolidated National ICT Policy and National Digital Strategy together with their associated Implementation Action Plans to Cabinet for approval and implementation.

Lastly, under this programme, we will finalise the appointment of the Electronic Information Systems Management Advisory Council (EISMAC), as provided for in the Electronic Transactions Act, Act No. 4 of 2019. Once the EISMAC is fully operational, we will be able to take full advantage of electronic commerce, implement modalities for legal recognition of electronic signatures and establish an online Consumer Protection Committee. As we may all be aware, e-commerce brings numerous advantages to the business community, such as lower operational costs, improved customer experience, and enhanced access to bigger markets and consumers.

Programme 2: Print Media Affairs

This programme will receive an allocation of **Twenty-One Million Five Hundred and Seventy Thousand Six Hundred and Eighty-Eight Namibia Dollars (N\$21,570,688.00)** to coordinate government communication and effectively communicate government policies, programmes and

projects to the public through various platforms. Furthermore, under this programme, we continue to run multiple initiatives to instil a sense of patriotism, nationhood and national pride among the citizens of Namibia.

The much-anticipated Access to Information Act No. 8 of 2022 will be implemented in the 2024/2025 financial year. This piece of legislation seeks to address the important issues of government transparency and guarantee our citizens' freedom of information and the right to access public information. It also aims to improve accountability and citizens' relationship with government. Its regulations are due for tabling in Parliament during its current session. Following this, the Office of the Information Commissioner will be established to address the important issues of transparency – not just in the public sector but also in the private sector. **An amount of Nineteen Million Nine-Hundred and Thirty Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty-Four Namibia Dollars (N\$19,930,744.00)** will be allocated for the operationalisation of the Information Commission.

In preparation to fully support the implementation of the Access to Information legislation, we plan to conduct capacity building and orientation workshops for Communications Officers from Offices/Ministries/Agencies, Regional Councils, Local Authorities and Public Entities. Further, we plan to expand on the Annual Public Entities Communication Officers Awards to recognise and encourage excellence within the public sector in executing the communication function.

Honourable Members,

By doing this, Namibia is poised to reign supreme as number one in Africa and among the top twenty globally in terms of World Press Freedom ranking. In this regard, the government will continue to maintain a positive environment for freedom of expression and access to information, including ensuring a free, independent, and pluralistic media that is in line with the Windhoek+30 declaration.

Under the same programme, the Ministry continues to implement the Government Communication Strategy, which serves as a bridge between the government and the public, fostering active engagement, support, and collaboration toward achieving sustainable development. The success

of this strategy lies in maintaining an open, transparent, and inclusive approach, ensuring that citizens feel informed, engaged, and excited about the government's developmental initiatives.

Lastly, under the Print Media Affairs programme, the Ministry will continue to roll out the National Symbols campaign across the country. This campaign aims to educate the public on the correct use and observation of associated protocols of national symbols and related elements. The campaign, targeting school-going learners and the general public, proved successful and popular in 2023. We are undertaking this project in close collaboration with stakeholders such as the Office of the President, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, the Namibia Police Force, and regional and local authorities.

The New Era Publications Corporation (NEPC) will receive an amount of **Twenty-Seven Million Five Hundred Thousand Namibia Dollars (N\$27,500,000.00)**. NEPC will continue disseminating pertinent information through its daily newspaper, New Era, reporting on community and government-related matters.

Furthermore, NEPC continues to empower small-scale entrepreneurs by allocating over **Three and a Half Million Namibia Dollars (N\$3,500,000.00)** annually towards distributing its newspaper, a process outsourced to local third parties. This promotes economic growth and creates job opportunities for locals. Additionally, NEPC has renovated its residential properties, which are now rented out to UNAM students, contributing to infrastructure development and addressing student housing needs. To improve corporate governance and operational efficiencies, NEPC will undertake a comprehensive review of its policies to align them with the newly approved corporate structure and Integrated Strategic Business Plan ending in 2028.

Programme 3: Audio-Visual Media and Regional Offices

A total amount of **One Hundred Forty-Six Million Eight Hundred Twenty-Four Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty-Five Namibia Dollars (N\$146,824,725.00)** has been earmarked for this programme, which includes an allocation to all MICT decentralised functions under the 14 Regional Councils. This programme provides a range of multi-media products and services through the Government Information Centre (GIC) and regional offices. It is further mandated to

promote Namibia internationally as a preferred film destination while developing the local film industry.

During the 2024/25 financial year, the Ministry will continue fully maximising the GIC as a one-stop-shop for the proactive dissemination of factual and credible information on government activities, programmes and projects. As a result, we plan to increase the frequency of participation by central and regional governments, including Public Enterprises. The same platform will be used to communicate key decisions made by the Cabinet to improve the livelihood of our people. This initiative aims to create and disseminate government information efficiently, enhance citizen engagement, employ effective digital resource management, and handle emergency communication effectively.

Therefore, I encourage you all to provide the necessary cooperation and support when approached to share much-needed information about what we are doing and the progress made on our promises.

Honourable Speaker,

Under this programme, we have allocated **Six Million Namibia Dollars (N\$6,000,000.00) to the Namibia Film Commission Secretariat (NFC) for the Namibia Film Development Fund.** This fund is for the promotion of Namibia as a preferred film destination internationally while developing the local film industry.

This coming year, the Commission will conduct comprehensive research and develop a detailed report outlining a strategic roadmap for establishing and growing a thriving film industry in Namibia. The aim is to clarify and identify the projects, programmes, and activations that Namibia can introduce to stimulate the contribution of film and television production to the delivery of Vision 2030 extensively.

Furthermore, the NFC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Kwa-Zulu Natal Film Commission last year (2023). This MOU will lead to the activation of projects relating to skills development, marketing, festival support, content creation, exhibition, and distribution.

We are ceased with efforts to get the NFC to become fully autonomous, which currently is a Division within the Ministry. Therefore, we are looking into the amendment of the NFC Act, 2001 (Act No. 11 of 2001), which will allow the Commission to be self-sustained.

Honourable Members,

Under Programme 3, the **Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)** will receive an amount of **Three Hundred and Eleven Million, Eight Hundred and Fifty-Three Thousand Namibia Dollars (N\$311,853,000.00)** for their Operational Budget and **Eighty Million Namibia Dollars (N\$80,000,000.00)** towards their Development Budget.

As the nation approaches the national and presidential elections, NBC strategically aligns resources to orchestrate a multifaceted coverage plan. This initiative aims beyond mere reporting and production, aspiring to encapsulate the diverse perspectives and dynamics across every region of the country. Further to this, expanding the corporation's broadcast infrastructure network can create job opportunities, attract investments and foster innovation within the media industry. A robust broadcast infrastructure can also contribute to the country's overall economic development by promoting information dissemination, supporting local content creation, and attracting advertisers. Furthermore, expanding the broadcasting network and system upgrades will enhance communication and the dissemination of information across various sectors, resulting in enhanced customer satisfaction and the retention of viewers and listeners.

Moreover, for consistent and measurable tracking of staff performance, the NBC will strengthen the current implementation of a Performance Management System (PMS) with the new performance agreements being effective from 1 April 2024. This will significantly enhance NBC's policies and operations by fostering an efficiency-driven environment. Through the PMS, the NBC will be able to define and communicate clear performance expectations by aligning individual and team goals with organisational objectives.

Equally, fully implementing the NBC Integrated Strategic Business Plan will create a framework for addressing administrative bottlenecks and promoting more efficient service delivery. This will

be complemented by regular monitoring, collaboration and a commitment to continuously striving to achieve its objectives.

Over the past three financial years, from April 2021 to March 2024, the nbc has successfully allocated a substantial portion (N\$94 million) of its financial resources towards reducing its historical PAYE debt. With the recent announcement of a one-time write-off of the remaining historical PAYE debt through dealing with the legacy tax liabilities initiative for selected public enterprises, the nbc anticipates a significant positive impact on its financial position. This strategic move ensures nbc's continuity as a going concern, reflecting its solvency in its financial standing. The lingering legacy debt, encompassing capital, interest and penalties currently recorded in the nbc's books, has created an impression of insolvency. However, with this initiative, the company aims to dispel such perceptions. Furthermore, the company's financial records are fully up to date, and the annual statutory audit of the Annual Financial Statements (AFS) for the fiscal year 2022/2023 will be conducted in due course.

Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,

Programme 3 also gives provision for the allocation of an amount of **Twenty-Seven Million and Seven Hundred and Six Thousand Namibia Dollars (N\$27,706,000.00)** to the **Namibia Press Agency (NAMPA)** to enable them to continue to inform, educate and empower our nation towards the realisation of our developmental goals.

NAMPA will use part of the allocation to revamp and take full ownership of the integrated NAMPA Picture and Editorial Archiving System (NPEAS), which is a brilliant virtual newsroom that allows NAMPA journalists to access and operate within the Agency production platforms from anywhere in the world with the utmost ease and efficiency.

With a full-out diversification of products that now include documentary productions, special publications and complementary audio-visual services, the allocation will position NAMPA firmly to provide well-researched and credibly sourced news to ensure that all Namibians and the globe at large – irrespective of continent, country, region, town, village or even the remotest of settlement

- are not left out and are indeed empowered through information as our citizens prepare to exercise their democratic right to participate in the general elections this year.

Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,

Honourable Members,

In line with the Agency's five-year Integrated Strategic Business Plan (2023-2028), NAMPA will be working to renew and aggressively promote its corporate brand visibility to exploit the NAMPA Act fully, Act No. 3 of 1992, as amended. The Act empowers the news agency to act as a de facto commercial arm of government in the production, collection and dissemination of information and Information Technology products and compile, print, produce, publish or distribute any literary matter.

For this reason, the NAMPA Strategic Plan effortlessly tallies and is in tandem with the Government Communication Strategy (2022-2027). Furthermore, with this funding, NAMPA is positioning itself to fill the communication and information deficit we politicians have often lamented in Namibia. The Agency plans to connect our media and creative sectors to produce and enable high-quality culture journalism through training, advocacy and relationship-building.

Among such, NAMPA will invest in training and building the capacity of all Namibian journalists (public and private) to cover our emerging sectors of oil, gas, and green hydrogen.

Programme 4: Coordination and Support

Our last Programme will be allocated an amount of **Sixty-Two Million Eight Hundred Seventy-Four Thousand Four Hundred and Twenty-Four Namibia Dollars (N\$62,874,424.00)**. This is for the provision of corporate services support to the entire Ministry by ensuring the effective management of its financial resources, general administration, transport, human resources, and internal information technology (IT) systems. Under this programme, budgetary provisions are in place for capacity building, internships, innovation, and re-engineering for improved public service delivery.

Lastly, this programme oversees the roll-out of the Ministry's capital project by constructing regional offices to augment its decentralisation efforts. As a result, a total amount of **Twenty- Five Million Namibia Dollars (N\$25,000,000.00)** is earmarked for the construction of the Ministry's Hardap Regional Office of which significant progress has been made to date.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

I would like to sincerely thank Hon Ipumbu Shiimi and Hon Obeth Kandjoze, and their staff for coming up with a balanced budget that not only echoes our Late President's hope for "a new beginning for the Namibian House", but one that validates the hopes and aspirations of the Namibian people such as you and I.

I wish to further thank my Deputy Minister, Executive Director, the rest of management and staff of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology for rendering me the necessary support to steer this ministry and stand before you today to make this budget motivation.

I submit Vote 29 to this House for favourable consideration and subsequent endorsement. We envision it as a catalyst for universal and equitable access to information and accelerated communication technology development for socio-economic growth.

Thank You!

