



communications
& digital technologies

Department:
Communications & Digital Technologies
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Chairperson of NCOP, Hon, Mr AN Masondo

Hon. Deputy Chairperson Hon. Ms SE Lucas

Honourable members of the NCOP

Ministers and Deputy Ministers present; and

All Protocol Observed

It is a privilege to be here in this house to present to you progress of the work done by the Department and sector in advancing communications and digital technologies in the country.

Hon Chair, as we approach the last year of this administration, I wish to highlight the strides and successes, as well programmes we will implement towards closing this Administration.

Honourable Members

The Department was tasked with mandates to advance the medium-term strategic framework (MTSF) targets. I wish to highlight some of these targets and successes, namely,

- auctioning of the high demand spectrum
- concluding the digital broadcasting migration
- ensuring that the country has the adequate digital skills to participate in the digital economy
- and ensuring that we modernised and digitise government to be able to deliver services.

3.1 High Demand Spectrum Licensing:

On the auctioning of the High Demand Spectrum, I am happy to announce that after 7 years of delay, we auctioned the High Demand Spectrum for wider use by society.

Not only will the access to this spectrum inject economic benefits, but will also improve the digital infrastructure to enable 5G and deployment of new technologies. I acknowledge the 6 operators who participated in the auction that raised over 14 billion rands to the fiscus. The revenue collected from the completion of the spectrum auction has unlocked new investment and contributed to the fiscus.

Over and above this, the operators committed to honouring social obligations that we will ensure that public schools, public clinics and hospitals, police stations, and Offices of Traditional Authorities are connected. The rollout will commence this year and we ensure to ensure that in the next 36 months, all these institutions are connected.

3.2 Broadcasting Digital Migration:

Another programme which will ensure a vibrant economy is the migration from analogue to digital broadcasting.

Hon Chair of the NCOP, following the President announcement during the 2023 State of Nation Address (SONA), the Department and entities are finalising the installations of outstanding registered households and complete the switch-off of analogue transmission in the remaining four (4) provinces of Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal, Western Cape and Gauteng.

We have successfully switched in five provinces, namely Free State, North West, Northern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. These province are now enjoying wider quality of services and programmes, ranging from 24 hours news channels provided by the SABC, educational content, sports and other entertainment programmes.

We will be switching off in the remain provinces, ensuring that no one is left behind,. As a caring Government, we have made sure that needy households are subsidized with Set Top Boxes (decoders). We also made sure beneficiation to the communities, by making sure that installers are sourced locally. We have over 14 000 installers in this programme participating and I am happy to announce that over 50% of those are women.

The provincial governments, district and local municipalities are supporting this process as well as COGTA to raise awareness about the progress and what is expected of communities. Post installation infrastructure of a Consumer Contact Centre placed at Sentech is in place to support beneficiaries about programme related challenges.

3.3 Broadband:

Chairperson

In our quest to ensure that 80% broadband access, we will have adopted a new model of SA Connect to ensure we reach majority of our population.

In this regard, we adopted a 3-tier model. The revised model and implementation plan for the SA Connect Phase 2 proposes the following key interventions:

- Electronic communications service providers licensed by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) be obligated to connect 18 036 schools, 3 873 health facilities and 8241 tribal authority sites within 36 months from date of licensing;
- The Department and ICASA are currently negotiating with the telcos who did not fulfil their social obligations from the 2014 licensing conditions to connect the 15 691 government sites, including 949 libraries and Thusong Centres.
- SITA will provide and maintain connectivity to government sites through the current allocation of individual departments; and
- Connection of South African communities and homes to the internet will be facilitated by Broadband Infracore (BBI) and Sentech working with SITA and the ICT industry on an Open Access Principle. This will enable the access to backbone infrastructure including base stations and Points of Presence, and the virtualisation of Government network to also provide a public network platform. This partnership will enable small and emerging services providers such Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Wireless Access Service Providers (WASPs), Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) and the ICT Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to connect communities within 36 months.
- As such, the BBI, Sentech and SITA will provide 840 Open Access Base stations and 33 539 community Wi-Fi hotspots to cater for 5 830 208 households, through the WASPs, ISPs and MVNOs, as part of transforming the industry.

3.4 e-Government:

On modernising government, we are rolling out the National e-Government Strategy and Roadmap is to guide the digital transformation of public service in South Africa into an inclusive digital society where all citizens can benefit from the opportunities offered by digital technologies to improve their quality of life.

The MTSF 2019 - 2024 makes provision for the Department to ensure the implementation of the National e-Government Strategy and Roadmap to realise digitalisation of whole of government by 2024.

A 3-year implementation plan of the National e-Government Strategy has been developed and approved. In addition, the DCDT has prioritised the re-design of the National e-Services Portal and the uploading of prioritised e-Services, in collaboration with the State Information Technology Agency (SITA). As a deliverable of the approved eGovernment Strategy and Roadmap, the DCDT together with the DPSA and GCIS identified 255 identified services to digitize and modernize the government public-facing business.

3.5 Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (PC4IR) Strategic Implementation Plan: The PC4IR report was approved by Cabinet on 23 September 2020. It was thereafter published in the Government Gazette No.

43834 on 23 October 2020. The Department conducted robust stakeholder consultation and input was incorporated into PC4IR Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP). The PC4IR SIP was finalised in March 2022.

The DCDT programmes of action for 4IR were developed in the PC4IR Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), which was concluded and approved. The DCDT developed a M&E framework to assist in the monitoring of the PC4IR implementation, this framework will be operationalised through the onboarding of 4IR initiatives across the country which will be monitored to identify their socio-economic impact. The PC4IR SIP position the DCDT as a lead facilitator and coordinator of 4IR in the country, through the PC4IR all public and private institutions work together to digitally transform South Africa. Key to the DCDT's role an awareness strategy for 4IR was developed as an initiative to be rollout to build strong relationships with stakeholders. The success of this strategy has resulted in witnessing multiple programmes in the past financial year where, Provincial government and industry have been seen working and implementing initiatives that complement the recommendations of the PC4IR.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Institute: One of the key recommendations from the PC4IR report was related to the establishment of a national Artificial Intelligence (AI) Institute. "AI involves the theory and development of computer systems to perform tasks usually requiring human intelligence and requires to be a bedrock technology in the 4IR underpinning the connections in the cyber-physical and biological systems. The need for research and development (R&D) and implementation are critical and must be embedded within the state. This embeddedness will enable the generation of new knowledge and creative technology applications in sectors such as health, agriculture, education, energy, manufacturing, tourism and Information technology, communications (ICT), amongst others. The report further state that once the AI Institute is established its mandate should include training to the whole of society and hinge on creating a positive social impact." (PC4IR Report, 2021). The launch of the AI Hubs on 30 November 2022 at the University of Johannesburg and on 24 March 2023 at the Tshwane University of Technology will ensure we develop skills for the country.

3.6 Rapid Deployment Policy: As part of fast-tracking priority structural reforms the Department has finalised the policy and policy direction on rapid deployment of electronic communications networks and facilities. The implementation of the Rapid Deployment Policy with a standard model for granting of municipal permissions will ensure that there are no undue delays in the rollout of broadband infrastructure. This is part the commitment to ensure that all South Africans have access to the internet by 2024. The Policy and Policy Direction on Rapid Deployment of Electronic Communications Networks and Facilities was submitted for Cabinet approval.

3.7 Digital and Future Skills: The Implementation Programme of the National Digital and Future Skills identified various interventions to be undertaken through a multi-stakeholder approach. One of these interventions is the provision of training. To this end, the DCDT worked with the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA) in identifying training partners for some digital skills.

1. **MECHANISMS IN PLACE FOR SUSTAINED AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION OF THE MILESTONES OF THE SIXTH DISPENSATION, WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON-LINE DEPARTMENT ACHIEVEMENTS**

4.1 Social Media: This has proven to be an effective way of interacting with the population on social media platforms.

4.2 Website: The Department has an updated website that serves as a repository of programmes of the Department as well as all publications (speeches, legislations, etc). The website is a useful tool to keep the public aware about the work of the Department.

4.3 Collaboration with academia and the ICT Sector: The Department has established collaboration with the academia and the ICT Sector for independent endorsement of its work. A case in point in this regard is the collaboration with the University of Johannesburg and the Tshwane University of Technology as initial hubs of the Artificial Intelligence Institute of South Africa. An independent voice speaking on behalf of the Department and government commands more respect and credibility. The circle of independent endorser will continue to expand as more centres of excellence of the Institute are brought on board.

4.4 Media Engagement: The Department coordinates media briefing sessions from time to time to keep the public abreast on strategic projects of the Department such as the Broadcast Digital Migration, SA Connect and legislation as it gets approved by Cabinet for public consultation.

4.5 Community Outreach programmes: These programmes take the form of launches of programmes intended to benefit the community such as the planned country-wide launch of the more than 33 000 community Wi-Fi hotspots. Various promotional material is shared with the communities for sustained communication and marketing of the Department's work.

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