



communications
& digital technologies

Department:
Communications & Digital Technologies
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Africom 2022,
Welcome Address by Mr Philly Mapulane,
Deputy Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies**

On 08th November 2022

Your Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to express my appreciation to the organizers of this historical event, the milestone 25th anniversary of AfricaCom happening right here on our shores. Beyond doubt, AfricaCom remains the largest and most established tech event bringing together thousands of stakeholders across Africa's telecommunication, technology and innovation sectors.

Regardless of the core theme of this great event which is championing the transformative power of technology to build a more connected, efficient and inclusive Africa, more than 450 million people still live out of reach of a fixed or mobile connection, and two thirds of the developing world are still offline.

It is common knowledge that the Digital economy one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy. Globally it is worth more than \$14.6 trillion. Africa cannot be left out of this. We cannot continue to be bystanders and net consumers of digital products that scarcely address our unique African challenges. We need to step forward and take charge of our journey in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Universal connectivity is very important for us as government because we are constantly working towards ensuring that our services reach even the poorest of the poor as we advance towards building an inclusive information society.

The benefits and potential of being connected are not in doubt, yet too many are still digitally excluded. Our common goal is to create an increasingly intelligent and convenient lifestyle and workplace towards building a better-connected Africa in a better and just world.

This platform is an opportunity for leaders from regional government agencies, top carriers and industry stakeholders to come together and exchange points of view on innovation, best practices and models for sustainable growth.

While the Broadband networks rolled out and technologies evolve there is a need to ensure that universal service regimes are reviewed so that they continue to fulfil their role.

As you are all aware, the notion of universal service and access was introduced in the then telecommunications sector as a means to guarantee affordable access to a minimum set of pre-determined services for all in order to prevent digital exclusion and to maximise socio-economic benefits.

As a country we have set ourselves targets to rollout digital infrastructure to ensure that all South Africans are connected by 2025. Digital infrastructure needs to be supported by digital applications and digital services. Judging from the participation at this 25th session- there are many who can respond to the call to partner with government in this rollout effort.

We have put in place several programmes geared towards optimising digital skilling for an efficient and future proof society that is SMART. As a country arising from a painful past of exclusion, we remain careful in ensuring that the digital divide is narrowed. In the words of our president, HE Cyril Ramaphosa, *"We leave no one behind."*

We are committed to fast-tracking digital migration for a modern society that takes full advantage of the plethora of opportunities inherent in the digital economy. This gives us an opportunity to build the electronic manufacturing sector, particularly focusing on niche markets such as the semiconductor market.

As a custodian of policy, government is set on creating an enabling environment to support digital landscape in South Africa which promotes re-industrialisation, provides a variety of services and increases South African competitiveness. In all these priorities, we are focused also on harnessing innovation and stimulate uptake of our own digital products. Africa needs to harness the pool of talent it has and maximise on economies of scale. For this, we invite each manufacturer, tech entrepreneur and supplier to invest in South Africa and in other African markets, partner with local businesses/ SMMEs for more productive Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a digital society, universal access to communications services is not just a tool to address inequality across society but also a precondition for equality.

I am encouraged by the growing awareness and participation of South Africa in the implementation of the Digital SADC 2027 and Agenda 2063 Programmes and Projects. I do

hope this will gradually move the region towards achieving the goals for which SADC and AU established to reduce the levels of poverty and improve the standard of living of the people in the Region.

The necessity and impotency of industrializing the SADC region cannot be over-emphasized and this calls for fast action in ensuring that SADC macroeconomic policy environment is improved, developing capabilities and capacities to underpin transformation and strengthening competitive production, the need to remove infrastructural impediments to industrialization and identifying key value chains for the global markets.

It is therefore my singular pleasure to declare this 25th session of the AfricaCom open.

I thank you!

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