



communications
& digital technologies

Department:
Communications & Digital Technologies
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

2022 BUDGET VOTE SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, HON PHILLY MAPULANE (MP)

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Minister Khumbudzo Ntshavheni

Honourable Members of our Portfolio Committee as led by Chairperson Maneli and all the Honourable Members of Parliament

The Acting Director General, and other senior departmental officials

Esteemed Guests

Fellow South Africans

INTRODUCTION

On this day 90 years ago, a towering giant of South Africa's National Democratic Revolution was born. Born into a working-class family in a village in Engcobo in the then Transkei, Walter Sisulu, Isithwalandwe/Seaparankwe grew up to be one of the outstanding leaders of the ANC in the struggle against apartheid-colonialism. The nation owes this gallant hero of our liberation struggle, and indeed his generation of freedom fighters, a great debt of gratitude for the indelible contribution he and others have made towards our political liberation.

We in the glorious movement for which Walter Sisulu belonged, the ANC, vow never to betray the course for which he sacrificed his life. We shall continue with the fundamental programme of socio-economic transformation to bring about changes to the majority of our people, blacks in general and Africans in particular.

It is therefore in keeping to this commitment that our Department is committed to transforming the ICT sector and to building a digital economy in a manner that no one is left behind. In this regard, I'm happy to report that as a caring government, we have:

- migrated indigent households in five of the nine provinces from analogue to digital broadcasting; and we are well on course to complete this process in the remaining 4 provinces by the end of June this year
- we have connected 970 government facilities under the SA Connect phase one and we are well underway to roll-out phase two of the SA Connect project;
- we have trained over 91 211 citizens in digital skills and provided over 7 700 courses; among some of the achievements of the Department

We remain committed to ensuring that the opportunities presented by the digital economy are not the preserve of a privileged few but are indeed enjoyed by all the people of our country. We owe this to the memory of Walter Sisulu.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that the spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectivity has great potential to accelerate human development and bridging the digital divide.

According to the recent General Household Survey from Stats SA, the proportion of households who use only cellular phones as a means of communication increased by 1.6% from 87.8% in 2019 to 89.40% in 2020. Households using both cellular phones and fixed (or landlines) increased from 7.1% in 2018 to 8.3% in 2019.

The above statistical information abundantly illustrates the point that ours is a fast-growing sector with a huge impact to make in the socio-economic development of our country.

SOUTH AFRICAN POST OFFICE

The South African Post Office (SAPO), since its establishment on the 02 March 1792 in a small room next to the pantry of a Cape Town Castle by the colonial settlers, has evolved and grown over the years to being the vehicle for service delivery and connecting the unconnected through its wide footprint of over 2 400 points of presence in the country and international network reaching over 187 countries.

Over the years this important national asset has experienced significant revenue decline as a result mainly of the changing market conditions exacerbated by the rapid technological advancements, leading to the declining volumes of letter post which was the core of the business of the Post Office. Since then, SAPO has been struggling to reposition itself in line with the changed market conditions.

Since assuming office in August last year, myself and the Minister has been seized with helping SAPO to reposition itself, which efforts culminated in the adoption of the “Post Office of Tomorrow” strategy. Through this strategy, we are committed to repositioning SAPO to provide a diversified and expanded services, to positioning it as a logistics platform for e-commerce.

We will digitise the Post Office to be a dedicated and designated authentication authority that fulfils its role as a national trust centre in the age of digital identity and services.

Through its expansive infrastructure and postal network, we will transform the Post Offices especially in the rural areas to become digital hubs so to serve communities as well as be a platform for unemployed youth and potential entrepreneurs.

Government remains committed to the turnaround of SAPO to be financially sustainable as well as to re-engineering its products and service portfolio. We are engaged with Treasury on the required recapitalisation of the entity.

As we reposition SAPO to be the leading logistic service provider for South Africa and the region, we will forge strategic partnerships that are crucial enablers for SAPO’s e-commerce and logistics strategy.

In this regard the department has finalized the South African Post Office Amendment Bill in line with the Post Office of Tomorrow strategy, the Bill is out for public comment after being approved by Cabinet recently. We we hope to submit it to Parliament before the end of this year. We will soon be finalizing the filling of the vacancies in the board and capacitate the entity at executive management levels.

FILMS AND PUBLICATIONS BOARD

Honourable Speaker, the internet has become an integral part of our everyday life, changing how we live, work, and interact with each other. The age of the internet has not only brought about the convergence of technologies which is continuously blurring traditional market distinctions and boundaries, but also brought with it the rapid proliferation of and ubiquitous online streaming platforms which resulted in connected citizens.

And so therefore the State must, consistent with the injunctions of the Constitution to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the fundamental rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights, regulate the creation, production, possession and distribution of films, games, certain publications and content distributed online that may be deemed harmful or prohibited utilising the Films and Publication Act, of 1996 as amended in 2019.

We are extremely delighted on the coming into operation on the 01 March 2022 of the Films and Publication Amendment Act of 2019 through a proclamation by the President. This Amendment Act has transformed the FPB from a historically narrow classification authority into a fully-fledged regulator with legitimate powers to issue and renew content distribution licences to both local and international distributors and develop regulations to enforce compliance and impose penalties in case of non-compliance.

Given the fact that the scope and mandate of the FPB has increased threefold, we requested the entity to re-imagine its future role through the development of the “Online Content Regulator of the Future” strategy, for which I am delighted to report that it has been finalised and submitted to the Department. The “Online Content Regulator of the Future” proposes a fundamental shift in both the governance and funding model, including looking at the fragmentation and regulatory overlaps among the different regulators in the country and proposes measures to improving regulatory efficiencies. We welcome the proposal in the strategy for a single content regulatory system that is technology and platform neutral.

Efforts are already underway to transform the entity to align it with the new expanded mandate

Giving the youth a voice: online safety youth council and the youth online safety summit

Honourable Speaker, we plan to launch The Online Safety Youth Council during the month of June at a Youth Online Safety Summit as part of the National Youth Month. The main objective being to involve the South African youth in promoting youth online safety as prescribed for in the Act. We are doing so because we recognise that the youth are not only the biggest consumers of content online, they are equally the biggest victims of cyberbullying. According to Global Advisor Cyberbullying study, cyberbullying has significantly increased in SA with 25% of parents saying that their children have been victims of cyberbullying,

MASSIFICATION OF DIGITAL SKILLS: NEMISA

Honourable members, digital technologies such as digital automation, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, augmented reality, 3D printing, and a range of other digital technologies are changing the nature of jobs that were routinely performed by humans. As various sectors of the economy continue to use and depend on these new digital technologies, the legacy skills as well as existing ICT skills are becoming obsolete, and this increases the demand for new digital skills. These changes require humans to be equipped with the relevant and necessary skills to perform the new jobs.

To address the Digital Skills deficit in South Africa, the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy seeks to ensure that the youth of South Africa are provided with the necessary level of basic digital life skills that will enable them to function within a 21st century world that is increasingly pervaded by and dependent upon digital technologies.

The Department in partnership with ILO, UNDP and ITU is concluding the assessment of skills supply and demand in South Africa. In assessing the skills supply and demand, the study took into consideration the geographical location, living conditions, level of education and skills as well as key barriers keeping young people from benefiting from the digital economy. The high number of unemployment amongst young people is a reflection of skills mismatch as some of them are in possession of tertiary qualifications but are unable to get decent employment. As such, the study also seeks to address the employment challenges faced by Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training.

To date, through NEMISA – we have trained 6 000 people on Digital Literacy and a total of 7000 trained on other digital skills; like Data Science, cloud computing and machine learning. The department partnered with GIZ to train 2000 Youth Not in Employment Education and Training on Digital Literacy . NEMISA plans to train 60 000 SMMEs on Digital Entrepreneurship programmes and 14 950 in Broadcasting skills as well as technical skills courses, like repairs, maintenance, and installations.

NEMISA has been directed to also focus more on partnerships with other state entities and government departments. In this regard MOUs have been concluded with, among others:

- The Department of Military Veterans to train military veterans on various digital technology skills to the tune of over R27 million
- BANKSETA to train a number of banking beneficiaries on various digital technologies to the tune of R59 million
- MICTSETA on its discretionary grant award for learnerships in the Western Cape, Mpumalanga, and Gauteng to the tune of R3,7 million

CONCLUSION

In conclusion Honourable Speaker, Walter Sisulu counsels us that “There are no short-cuts. There are no easy answers. There are no complete formulas. Only continuous campaigning among the people, with continuous response to their own activities, taking them a step forward each time, can lead us to our goal”.

This prophetic articulation by our revered freedom fighter is what guides us in our service to the nation

I thank you

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