



**MINISTRY  
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES,  
HON. KHUMBUDZO NTSHAVHENI, AT THE 2<sup>ND</sup> FREE STATE PROVINCIAL INDUSTRY 4.0  
SUMMIT**

**DATE: 21 – 22 JULY 2022,**

**VENUE: BOET TROSKIE HALL, CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, BLOEMFONTEIN  
CAMPUS, FREE STATE.**

Premier of the Free State Province, Honourable Sefora Ntombela

Members of the Executive Council of the Free State,

Prof. Seeram Ramakrishna of the National University of Singapore

Acting Vice-Chancellor of CUT, Prof. A Ngowi,

Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Prof Mashele

Members of the academia from far and wide,

Leadership of the MICT SETA and other state entities,

Director-General and senior officials of the Free State,

Distinguished Guests,

Programme Director,

Ladies and gentlemen



Good morning

To the Free State Provincial Government, thank you for the invitation. It is my singular privilege and honour to address this august gathering. On Monday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of July the whole world paused as it does annually, to remember the founding father of our democracy, the late President Nelson Mandela on his birthday, a day declared by the UN General Assembly in 2009 as the Nelson Mandela International Day. Writing in his weekly letter to the nation on Monday, 18 July 2022, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa says, *“At a time when so much of the world is beset by hardship and strife, we are inspired by Madiba’s words that “it is in our hands to make a difference and to make the world a better place”*, hence we must strive to make everyday a Mandela day.

I am further happy to address this gathering of leaders in society, the ICT sector and the academia in a province that will go down in the annals of history as the very first province in South Africa to successfully switch off analogue television transmitters. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 after reaching the necessary threshold of households that have migrated from analogue to digital television, we switched off the last SABC analogue transmitter in this province. We did this with no television blackout prophesied by naysayers and detractors.

The Broadcast Digital Migration process is critical to our digital transformation agenda. It actually is the first step in redefining our ICT path as a country. It is in its successful completion that we will be able to release the high demand spectrum that will enable mobile telecommunications operators to build robust networks with better penetration and reach as we pursue our goal of 100% access to the internet by 2024.

Despite setbacks and delays, we are committed to conclude analogue switch-off in the remaining four provinces of our country, and ultimately migrate South Africa and her people from analogue to digital television. It is in this spirit that we continue ramping up installations and calling upon indigent members of our society to register for free government set-top boxes by no later than 30 September 2022.

Our commitment is to bridge the digital divide that exist in our society, bring down costs to communicate and leave no one behind. We all accept that data has become a new utility like water and electricity and is a critical enabler of innovation and wealth creation. As a country, we cannot afford to be spectators and consumers of digital products and content generated elsewhere.



Emerging technologies as applied within the framework of Industry 4.0, provide an opportunity to leapfrog South African society and economy to where it rightfully belongs amongst the leaders of nations. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, cloud computing, drone technology, robotics, 3D printing and the Internet Of Things just to name a few, are critical enablers to position South Africa as a growth economy with infinite potential. The DCDT has embarked on several projects to create an enabling environment through projects, policies and regulations to position South Africa as a leader both on the African continent and internationally. I hope that you can indulge me to reflect on some of these initiatives that the Department has embarked on as the custodian of emerging technologies and digital transformation in South Africa.

Following the work of the Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution and their report, the Department was tasked with developing an implementation strategy or country plan for realising the recommendations flowing from the report of this commission. Consequently, the Department developed the PC4IR Strategic Implementation Plan or PC4IR SIP and this process has been successfully completed. This country's strategy recognises and addresses the historic challenges of our nation in terms of digital transformation and focuses our attention on providing for digital infrastructure development, digital skills development, the digitisation and digitalisation of the public sector, the creation of an enabling environment for industry 4.0 and moving all of that towards local technological innovation and the internationalisation of such technologies.

The DCDT is currently aligning its operations with the PC4IR Report recommendations through the rollout of digital infrastructure and providing for the availability of spectrum through digital migration.

Inclusive digital transformation in South Africa will be observed in the following key areas: - Digital Government, Digital Economy, Digital Industry and Data Sovereignty. Critical in this transformation path is access to connectivity networks by all irrespective of geographic location and economic status.

In pursuit of this goal, last year we submitted to Cabinet a revised model and implementation plan for SA Connect Phase 2. Among other initiatives in the revised plan is the rollout of 33 539 community Wi-Fi hotspots to cater for 5 830 208 households over a period of three years working with SMMEs in the sector. The SA Connect project is estimated to provide opportunities to approximately 120 SMMEs for core network build, and create employment opportunities of more than 3 700 people, both skilled professionals and semi-skilled labour force.

Programme Director,

The Department has already commenced the work of establishing the AI Institute to drive innovation and technological development that serves local challenges through technology. Further, the National and Future Skills strategy is already being implemented through the rollout of upskilling, reskilling and skilling projects which will lead to greater employability of the citizens of our country. In terms of the firm establishment of Industry 4.0, the DCDT is also focusing on stimulating local manufacturing and promoting innovation through the strengthening and development of our local digital economy.

The digital era has brought a fundamental shift in the global economy, pushing the parameters of innovation, and redefining the boundaries of global trade. To accelerate the development of local innovations through local technology SMMEs, the South African government has prioritised the development of a Digital Economy Strategy. The strategy will ensure coordination and the pervasiveness of integrated innovation and a start-up ecosystem that will stimulate digital transformation in all sectors of the economy, thereby ensuring sustained global competitiveness and socio-economic inclusion. Together with collaborations and partnerships in skills development, innovation and investment particularly within BRICS partners will enhance the South African government's priorities.

The DCDT has identified five (5) key drivers which will enable South Africa to boost its ICT capacity, and these are:

- i. Next-Generation Technology Pioneer: No.1 in Africa and all the developing world in terms of 5G/6G/7G network and application scale
- ii. Best National Broadband Network: No.1 in Africa and all the developing world in terms of government broadband speed and experience
- iii. Data and Cloud Hub: No.1 in Africa and all the developing world in terms of government cloud and public cloud scale
- iv. Content Hub: No.1 in Africa and all the developing world in terms of software, applications and systems development
- v. Talent Hub: No.1 in Africa and all the developing world in terms of ICT employment promotion scale.

A further successful initiative from the Department is the digital portal called DigiTech. DigiTech is a South African developed digital products portal for ICT SMMEs. The purpose of this is to centralise data collection on digital products being developed locally to promote, support, and expand market participation and reach for local tech entrepreneurs as well as their products and services.

The intent with Digitech is threefold. Firstly, to promote locally developed digital products and services. Secondly, to encourage South African developed digital products both locally and in other African and international markets. And finally, to facilitate meaningful economic partnerships between local and international stakeholders. Concurrently, DigiTech needs to be a platform that creates opportunities for youth development. Personally, Digitech should deliver digital transformation in South Africa there is also focused on greater participation of women in the technology space to reap tangible economic rewards from which the broader community can benefit.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As part of the process to facilitate digital transformation, the development and investment in digital infrastructure can also not be overlooked. The DCDT in its drive to create an enabling environment for digital infrastructure development has produced appropriately aligned projects and policies. Amongst them are the SA Connect Project which will ensure 80% broadband access to South African citizens by 2024. The Policy Direction for 5G deployment - to support digital transformation and re-industrialisation of the economy.

Note, that according to the State of the ICT Sector report from ICASA in March 2022, South Africa's 5G population coverage has rapidly grown from 0.7% in 2020 to 7.5% in 2021. This emphasises the need for policy certainty in this area and the Department has been equal to the challenge.

Further, the DCDT has championed the development of the National Cloud Computing Policy. Through the use of cloud computing analytics, the government will be able to deliver public services to citizens by optimising and redirecting scarce resources in order and reach as many citizens with much more diverse needs. Not to be overlooked, the Rapid deployment of digital infrastructure policy, dismantles historic barriers to the rapid deployment of digital infrastructure and provides for ease of access to relevant critical infrastructure and servitudes. Finally, with a drive towards digital transformation, the security of our people is paramount to the ethos underpinning the work that the Department undertakes and promotes. Accordingly, our National Cybersecurity programmes are constantly monitored and updated to enable the safe participation of citizens online, as well as safeguard critical ICT infrastructure.

Honourable Premier,

As a country we have led the Artificial Intelligence Blueprint for Africa through the Smart Africa Alliance. We have done this working with the academia, research institutions and leading sector players. As part of our work of implementing the recommendations of the Presidential Commission on 4IR, we are on course to launch the SA Artificial Intelligence Hub/Institute in partnership with academic institutions and the ICT sector. The AI Hub/Institute will be key in guiding research and development in ICT for emerging technologies. Critically it should be noted that advanced conversations on the establishment of the South African AI Institute have already been initiated with stakeholders such as the University of Johannesburg and Tshwane University of Technology. Other nodes are to follow soon in provinces such as the Free State in forming AI research and development cluster nodes.

Mr programme Director,

As indicated earlier, the work we do of transforming the sector and ensuring that it is inclusive and truly leads economic development of our country is often met with resistance and setbacks. But we draw strength from the words of President Mandela, *"It always seems impossible until it's done."* We encourage engagement and cross-pollination of idea in fora such as this Provincial Summit.

I wish this gathering success and fruitful deliberations.

*Ke a leboha!*

