



MINISTRY  
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X860, PRETORIA, 0001 – iParioli Office Park, 1166 Park, Hatfield, PRETORIA

Tel: +27 12 427 8000 – Email: [Media@DCDT.gov.za](mailto:Media@DCDT.gov.za) URL: [www.dcdt.gov.za](http://www.dcdt.gov.za)

**ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, HON. KHUMBUDZO NTSHAVHENI, AT THE 7<sup>th</sup> SUB-SAHARA SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE**

**DATE: 03 NOVEMBER 2022**

**VENUE: CAPE TOWN ICC**

Programme Director

Secretary General of the African Telecommunications Union: Mr John Omo

ICASA Councillors and Executive Management present

ITU leadership present

Members of the regulatory sector from the continent and the diaspora

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good day.

Radio frequency spectrum is a vital element for development of the electronic communications network infrastructure. Due to insufficient allocations, Africa is faced with a shortage and limitations on availability of spectrum. The relegation of Africa to the periphery of meaningful spectrum allocation is not only detrimental to Africa's development but it will compromise global development, world peace and the attainment of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It is therefore heart-warming to know that this 7th Sub-Sahara Spectrum Management Conference is seized with questions of how to deliver a spectrum strategy that works for Africa.

In South Africa, we are finalising our Next Generation Radio Frequency Spectrum Policy for Economic Development ("Spectrum Policy"). Without pre-empting the outcomes of the draft Spectrum Policy consultation processes, I must indicate that this policy will be at the centre of

transformation of the ICT sector. Through this Policy, South Africa intends to aggressively drive our programme of bridging the digital divide through bridging the connectivity divide that is experienced by our rural and peri-urban communities. The Policy aims to advance long-term public interest from the use of spectrum to support the rollout of communications networks for socio-economic development of the country. It further seeks to utilise the spectrum to drive broader and inclusive economic participation and development for all.

Programme director

We cannot, if we want to succeed as Africa, separate policy and regulatory reforms from business. If we want Africa that deals with poverty, address education and health challenges, and create employment and wealth for our people we need to be flexible and quickly respond to technological changes and innovations that are brought to our shores. We need to start being innovative and develop technologies that will sustain our development as Africa.

The availability of spectrum must result in the reduction of the cost of communication. It has become the enabler of innovation and wealth creation for any country. We need to build innovation technology hubs, develop, and manufacture our products which can be shipped globally. We need to choose strategic partners which will aid in skills development in this ICT sector.

South Africa will launch an Artificial Intelligence Hub, in partnership with academic institutions (Tshwane University of Technology and University of Johannesburg) and ICT industry players, to harness the economic and social benefits of AI both in the country and Africa at large.

Distinguished delegates

The draft spectrum policy proposes a sunset for legacy technologies such as 2G and 3G to ensure that all South Africans including in rural and remote areas are not deprived of new technologies such as 4G, 5G and beyond. Therefore, as a country, South Africa is very interested in the outcome of this conference discussions on the goal of a co-ordinated approach to spectrum management given the different pace of technological development that is seen across Africa in areas such as 5G rollout.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am informed that this Spectrum Management conference was preceded by a two-day training workshop on spectrum monitoring hosted by ITU and Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA).

A high-level glance at your agenda reflects a balanced approach and I hope that you will have informed presentation, panel discussions, and debates.

Of concern, as I look across the room, we have not done enough, and we continue not to do enough in upskilling and involving out females (women) in this ICT sector. What is it that should be done to ensure inclusion women in this ICT sector and the field of spectrum management. To you as senior managers and executives, I urge you to go out of your way and appoint females in particular young women. You can work with institutions of higher learning to deliberately target young women and bring them in as intern or on graduate programmes, train them and retain them. It is in the best interest of Africa. I will continue to advocate for women inclusion within the sector even with my counterparts.

Distinguished delegates

As we prepare for WRC-23, the workshop and in particular this 7th Sub-Saharan conference will inform Member States on the commercial and business imperative which to consider as we develop and finalize our positions as countries and develop common African positions for WRC-23.

While this conference is not a decision-making conference, it is important in sharing insight, and informing us on the latest developments, and market needs which are impacted by technology changes and spectrum allocations at the WRC-23. We should as countries and as a Continent consider a balanced approach as we develop and finalize the common Africa positions for WRC-23. However, as Africa we may need to make unpopular decisions in the interest of our continent. The issue of the 600MHz spectrum is an important one that we will have to support if we have to achieve rural broadband connectivity for all.

I am glad that the ITU-R Methods to satisfy the WRC-23 agenda has taken into consideration inclusion for support of 600MHz spectrum of IMT and mobile service for broadband deployment. Allocating or identifying portion of this band at the WRC-23 is important for our broadband deployment.

Programme Director,

It will be remiss of me not to mention that we are still celebrating the conclusion of the ITU plenipotentiary in Bucharest that elected the first African to the position of Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, Dr Cosmas Zavazava.

The development of the ICT sector is a key African policy, regulatory and developmental agenda issue, and it is only fitting that the Director of the ITU Development sector comes from the African continent. I am elated to have borne witness to that, we mean it when we say that Africa will rise and reclaim its centre stage in the world, no one will dictate to us on how we must run our affairs or be caught wanting on issues of global importance.

South Africa was also re-elected to the ITU Council for the 2023 – 2026 period, and we shall continue to advance South Africa and Africa's priorities and relevance in this global space at ITU Council.

As I conclude, I must announce that South Africa is a signatory of the Harmonized Calculation Method Agreement for Africa which will aid Members to have common principles perform cross-border frequency coordination, and address interference amongst neighbouring countries. As a signed Member of this Agreement, we urge other African members states to sign to strengthen our frequency coordination. Given that South Africa is a signatory of the Agreement, and we have the capability, world class and reliable Data Centres, I would like to announce that the Republic of South Africa is raising her hand to host the Harmonized Calculation Software on behalf of Africa.

To organisers, sponsors, delegates and speakers, this conference will not be a success without your participation and attendance. Most importantly, do not forget to enjoy this beautiful city of ours, Cape Town. Go to the ocean, Robben Island, sightseeing, go to restaurants and boost our local economy.

I thank you all.

Enquiries: Tlangelani Manganyi 060 886-4670

[Media@DCDT.gov.za](mailto:Media@DCDT.gov.za)

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