



MINISTRY
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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ADDRESS BY THE OUTGOING CHAIR OF ITSO

HON KHUMBUDZO NTSHAVHENI

AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE ITSO ASSEMBLY OF PARTIES AP-40

Excellencies the Ministers and Ambassadors

Director-General of ITSO, Mr Patrick Masambu

Distinguished representatives of international organisations

Esteemed delegates to the ITSO AP-40

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

South Africa remained at the Chair of ITSO for a period longer than the normal two-year term. The events that resulted in our extraordinary tenure also reminded us of the importance of universal connectivity. We are all aware of the role satellite communications can play to advance universal connectivity. As South Africa steps down from the Chairmanship of the Assembly of Parties, the implementation of the UN General Assembly resolution 1721 requiring communications by means of satellite to be available to all the nations of the world on a non-discriminatory basis has become more sacrosanct.

The COVID-19 pandemic has re-emphasized the interconnectedness of the global community and demonstrated that no-one country can develop to the exclusion of others and no-one region can prosper alone. Equally COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for the global society to ensure universal connectivity, be it through satellite, broadband or any other means. Satellite technology, if deployed in the best interests of all, can drive universal connectivity in the most efficient and cost effective manner to different types of topographies

and terrains. Therefore, the role of ITSO in forging the advancement of satellite technology and the beneficial use of common heritage resources continues to be of paramount importance.

Unfortunately, during South Africa's tenure as Chair, we were confronted with the challenge of the sustainability of ITSO. Most challenging of all, was Intelsat's decision to drastically reduce funding to ITSO, and at times not even honoring its obligations.

Distinguished delegates

During South Africa's tenure as Chair,

We successfully mediated the impasse between ITSO and Intelsat thus securing ITSO funding for the financial years 2020 and 2021. We are also pleased to report that funding for the period 2022-23 has been secured on a more realistic basis.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Member States to successfully block attempts by Intelsat to declare the Public Services Agreement an 'executory contract' thus preventing Intelsat from excusing itself from continuing to fund ITSO.

We would also like to thank member states for blocking of attempts by Intelsat to amend the license conditions for the use of common heritage and applicable obligations.

These were efforts of not one individual country but the collective Steering Committee and ITSO's Advisory Group.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to give special appreciation to the Members of the Steering Committee and Chair of the ITSO Advisory Committee for their selfless dedication in regrouping weekly to discuss and identify solutions on the ongoing impasse and financial strains faced by the ITSO.

In this regard, allow me to mention the following countries who assisted in navigating through this challenge:

- India as Deputy Chairman of the AP-38,
- Jamaica as regional Vice-Chair representing the Americas,
- Norway as Vice-Chair representing Western Europe,
- Romania as regional vice-chair for Eastern Europe,
- Ghana as the regional vice-chair on behalf of Africa, and
- Japan as the Regional Vice-Chair for Asia.

In addition, we would like to thank Germany and Cameroon as the Chair and Vice Chair of the ITSO Advisory Committee, and Argentina as the Chair of the Frequency Working Party. I would also like to thank the USA and UK for their assistance by participating in our discussions as Notifying Administrations. Most

of all, the Director-General of ITSO, Mr Patrick Masambu for his selfless resilience, commitment and dedication to truly serve even when the most obvious path would have been to abandon ship. The member states are indebted to your service.

More than ever before, member states must be seized with ensuring that the Core Principles of the ITSO Treaty of maintaining global connectivity and coverage; service to its lifeline connectivity customers; and non-discriminatory access to its system are delivered without fail.

Member states must also address the financial sustainability of ITSO with sufficient levels of funding and it has become prudent to stipulate minimum funding thresholds.

It may also be for ITSO to consider a proportional distribution of satellite resources amongst its regions so that others are not left vulnerable to the antics of a company that we collectively created.

As South Africa steps down from the chairmanship, the path travelled was arduous but the long journey still awaits us. To borrow from the founding President of my country, Tata Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela, “it is always a long walk to freedom”, but we are hoping that Intelsat under its new leadership walk side-by-side with us.

Esteemed Delegates,

I will now invite a few words from our Director-General, Mr Patrick Masambu.

Thank you

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