Minister Khumbudzo Nthavheni's Remarks on the Launch of the Africa DataCentres

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Programme Director

Africa Data Centres CEO, Mr. Stephane Duproz

Cassava Technologies CEO & President, Mr. Hardy Pemhiwa

Executive Public Sector at Liquid Intelligent Technologies, Mr. Reginald Jooste

Africa Data Centres team

Ladies and Gentlemen

Ndi Madekwana

Good evening

I thought it does not get better than to be invited to the launch of one of the largest hyperscale Data Centre in the country. Mr. Stephane and Mr. Hardy thank you very much for the invitation.

In his weekly newsletter of Monday, 08 November 2021, the President of the Republic of South Africa, HE Cyril Ramaphosa remarked that, *"Several new investments in datacentres and undersea cables will not only bring in new investment but will provide the infrastructure needed for the growth of technology and telecommunications industries."* Today's momentousoccasion underscores the President's observation and foresight.

My key point is President's foresight, and I say his observation fall short of reality because data has become the new gold, and the ability to mine data or to process data has become the new capability to mine for the digital economy, therefore any country that does not have the ability to protect its own data and have sovereignty over its own data will not have a meaningful share in the digital economy and that digital economy is not coming but it is here.

Data Centres are going to grow the economy because, if internet connectivity is the superhighway for the economy, nowadays we don't have to worry about congestion on the roads because we work from home. The only worry is the processing speed of our machines so that we do not drop calls, and that we can upload and send our documents through quicker, thatwe can share when we are on a virtual platform quicker without any disruption, that we do nothave to switch off videos for us to continue in a meeting while sharing documents,

therefore, if internet connectivity is the new superhighway, then data centres, they are the new distribution centres or the mega warehouses of the economy.

Way back we use to talk about telecommuting, now you call it virtual meetings, who would have thought that our ability to move to into telecommuting would have been made possible orfaster by a pandemic that has devastated the whole world.

South Africa is 10 years behind; we have a data policy that was out for public consultation, and we are not even setting a target for the data packages we are going to deliver to the communities. Europe is saying 1 terabyte to the home by 2025 and for us to deliver 1 terabyte we need hyperscale data centres. They say in 2025 if the processes fit and the size of the data centres allow, they will deliver 163 zettabytes, 2025 is just 3 years from today. Imagine if we have a data centre that can give us 163 zettabytes, because with the 8 data centres that we willtotally have in 2025, my interest therefore is how are you going to orchestrate them to give us163 ZB in South Africa, because we cannot be left behind when the Head Offices of Africa's Data Centre in in our shores.

I am here today because I want to say to Africa Data Centre, thank you for the investment, however, can you please give me 163 ZB by 2025. I have made that ask easy because I have committed that we will not only have the high demand spectrum of 4G, but I have committed that we will have a full imbedded 5G spectrum in this country and by 2025 we are going to have every South African irrespective of where they reside having access to internet and commit to have 1Meg per home. If we cannot build the highway we want, who are we? It will not be politics, it will not be government, but it will be all of us, it is Africa Datacentres, it is Cassava Technologies, it is Liquid Telecom because we all need to build that highway, we need to build those mega warehouses and distribution centres.

I am glad I am part of this launch; I am here today because I have another ask, 5 weeks ago I stood on a podium and said "what if South Africa has its own Mxit? And did not have to ask Mark Zuckerberg on when are they shutting down Facebook, WhatsApp, and everything else, we could have our own sovereignty, and people said why should we reinvent the will? And we are not reinventing the will, in South Africa there are Apps, digital products done by South Africans, young and old but they do not have the capability. I have been negotiating with Competition, Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Microsoft to provision for young entrepreneurs but also start up entrepreneurs who are very innovative with their digital productsto provision for them at affordable rates but also in respect of our POPI Act, the protection of information.

This Data Centre must give us an assurance that they are going to provision for South African made digital products and provision for SMMEs and provision for any other service that is herein

full compliance with the laws of our country in relation to protecting our own data and our own sovereignty.

I want to challenge all of us as South Africans to say we have got facilities like Africa Datacentres and many others, have we thought about how we can use them effectively becausewe tend to use other people's services than our own. How do we commit to use them to grow our vision, our country, and our continent? I want to challenge each one of us that when we gohome and use technology, we need to ask ourselves, who is hosting our data? If the answer is not Africa Datacentres, then we have not started to think about building the economy of this country and the African continent.

I also want you to partner with us as the government, as we deliver South Africa to the next Industrial Revolution (IR), the next revolution is not the 4IR, because 4IR is here and already passing, the next one has not been determined yet. We need to plot a journey and say: what dowe want to have? We need to start saying that by 2027 we are going to have 6 at a minimum of 7G technologies operating in this country because in 2027 we are not going to send any single mine worker underground to threaten their lives when Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can do that.

In 2027, Agricultural workers are not going to be exposed to elements when the internet of things is going to do that. By 2027, we are not going to have young children in Ha-Tshikunda-Malima where I come from and Mhlaba-uyalingana in Kwazulu-Natal or any other part of the country excluded from learning because they do not have access to devices and connectivity. By 2027, a child born in urban areas and the one born in rural areas will have equalopportunities because digital technologies would have created a platform for them to operate as equals.

All these ladies and gentlemen will only happen if all of us work together and deliver. I am glad that I have found partnership in Africa DataCentres and Cassava Technologies to deliver on all this.

I thank you.