



MINISTRY
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Policy Statement for the Plenipotentiary Conference 2022
by Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies of South Africa,
Hon. Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, MP

Date: 27 September 2022

Venue: Romania, Bucharest

Honourable Chairperson of this Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 allow me to congratulate your chairmanship since it is South Africa's first time taking the floor and also express our gratitude for the hospitality extended to us by the government and the people of Romania, in this beautiful city of Bucharest.

We are meeting here as the global collective of ICT leaders in various sectors of society- be it from member states, industry, and multilateral institutions to consider the advancement of technology in a world that was ravaged by COVID-19, which amongst others challenged all of us to fast-track the deployment and advancement of technology, to ensure that all have access.

In South Africa, we have commenced with the implementation of our broadband connectivity programme known as South Africa (SA) Connect to ensure that all South Africans have access to the internet. Through this programme, our mobile telecommunications operators who recently received their spectrum licenses will spend well over US\$1.3 billion on social obligations to connect all outstanding public schools, health facilities, public libraries, government centres and traditional authorities.

Simultaneously, the South African government will invest more than US\$161 million to deploy over 33 000 community Wi-Fi hotspots benefiting more than 5,8 million households.



To enable the community connectivity through wi-fi with some level of network stability, government has published the Draft Next Generations Radio Frequency Spectrum Policy for public consultation. This Policy proposals also proposes timelines to switch-off 2G and 3G networks whilst also proposing timeframes for the conclusion of the roadmap towards the deployment of 4G and 5G networks. The intention is to ensure that all of South Africa is covered by the latest network technologies at worst by 2027. We are also working with sister countries within Africa to foster cooperation on broadband connectivity and we will continue to provide updates to the ITU.

The deployment of next generation networks such as 5G will enable to us to exploit digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IOT) and Blockchain to both advance our economies but also sustainable development. In the month of November 2022, we will launch the AI Hub in partnership with universities in South Africa and this will be expanded to other universities and higher education institutions in Africa to create multiple centres of excellence.

We have launched the Digitech App Store not only for South Africa but working to partner with other countries in Africa to complement our African Continental Free Trade Area as part of creating digital markets.

Our commitment to the collective effort for ICT development and inclusivity is the embodiment of our Candidature for ITU Council and the Radio Regulations Board and we are seeking your support for our re-election.

I thank you.

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