



MINISTRY
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**WELCOME ADDRESS BY DEPUTY MINISTER PHILLY MAPULANE (MP)
AT THE AFRICAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION MINISTERIAL FORUM
ON BUILDING A FUTURE-ORIENTED, INTELLIGENT DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR AFRICA
HELD AT THE CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE
ON TUESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2023**

Your Excellencies,

Minister of information and Communication Technology from Zimbabwe, minister Dr Tatenda Mavetera

Minister of Communication, Knowledge and Technology from Botswana, Minister Thulagano Segokgo

Minister of Information, Communications and Technology from the United Republic of Tanzania, Minister Nape Nnauye

Our host, the Secretary-General of the African Telecommunications Union, Mr John Omo

Mr Leo Chen, President of Huawei Sub Sahara Africa

The Director-General of DCDT, Ms Nonkqubela Jordan-Dyani

All executives from Huawei

Ambassadors Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning, and welcome to the beautiful city of Cape Town, where the skies are as vast as the opportunities that lie ahead in the digital realm. Cradled between the majestic embrace of Table Mountain and the turquoise expanse of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, this city whispers tales of both history and natural splendour.

Its streets echo with the rhythm of diverse cultures converging against the backdrop of vibrant markets and kaleidoscopic street art. Each corner of Cape Town narrates a story — a story of resilience, of unity, a story of both colonialism and resistance to colonial conquest, a story of District Six, and the captivating beauty that defines this coastal gem at the tip of Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am honoured to stand before you today as we convene for this "Ministerial Forum on Building a Future-Oriented, Intelligent Digital Infrastructure for Africa," hosted by the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) in partnership with Huawei.

I'd like to extend my sincere gratitude to the ATU for entrusting South Africa with the privilege of hosting this significant gathering. The collaboration with Huawei, a global technology leader, underscores the importance of international partnerships in shaping Africa's digital future.

Purpose and significance

This gathering marks a significant milestone in our collective pursuit of a digitally empowered Africa. We are here not merely as representatives of our respective nations and organisations, but we are here as architects of a shared vision — one that envisions an Africa propelled into a future where the possibilities of connectivity are boundless.

Today, we are not just building a digital infrastructure; we are laying the foundation for the socio-economic emancipation of our continent.

As we convene under the banner of "one cloud, one network, one platform," we embark on a collective journey toward establishing a future-oriented intelligent digital infrastructure for Africa.

The Importance of Future-Oriented Digital Infrastructure

This forum is not merely a meeting of minds; it is a pivotal moment to align our efforts, share insights, and catalyse transformative change in the digital communications sector across our continent.

As we embark on this transformative journey, let us reflect on the profound impact that digital infrastructure can have on the trajectory of a nation.

In South Africa, we've witnessed how connectivity has become the catalyst for innovation, economic growth, and empowerment.

I recall stories of entrepreneurs in remote villages, armed with nothing but a smartphone and a dream, creating businesses that not only sustain their families but contribute to the broader economic landscape.

I recall the story of Yamkela Mgugudo, an entrepreneur in Mount Ayliff in the Alfred Nzo District, a district declared the poorest district in South Africa, located in the Eastern Cape province, who experienced significant growth in his business after being connected to the internet by Lockshin WiFi, a local ISP participating in the rollout of SA Connect project, a national broadband project where, through our State-Owned Entities of Broadband Infraco and Sentech, we are providing core access network and last mile infrastructure to enable broadband connectivity for the community WiFi hotspots that will connect approximately 5,6 million households across the country. This is the story that I did not read about in the reports from the officials, but it's the story I experienced and felt when, together with Minister Gungubele we visited Mount Ayliff to launch SA Connect phase 2 last Saturday the 04th of November 2023.

Digital infrastructure is not just about connecting cities and people; it's about connecting dreams and aspirations. It is about empowering our youth to access education and information at their fingertips, transcending the barriers of geography. In the tapestry of our shared history, digital infrastructure is the thread that weaves together stories of progress, resilience, and empowerment.

Today, as we focus on the theme of "one cloud, one network, one platform," let us envision a future where our digital infrastructure is seamless, intelligent, and accessible to all. This forum provides us with a unique opportunity to develop a shared understanding of the importance and benefits of such a future-oriented approach.

Collaboration and Policy Alignment

By collaborating and aligning our policies, we can harness the transformative power of digital infrastructure to foster innovation, drive economic development, and pave the way for a more inclusive and connected Africa.

Together, we can shape the digital landscape of our continent and propel Africa to new heights of progress and prosperity.

In fostering the development of a future-oriented, intelligent digital infrastructure for Africa, let us heed the wisdom of the African proverb: *“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”*

Our journey towards a digitally advanced future is not a sprint but a marathon. Through collaboration and partnership, we can forge a path that transcends individual strides, ensuring that the benefits reach far and wide across our continent.

I look forward to fruitful discussions, shared insights, and collaborative initiatives that will undoubtedly emerge from this Forum. Let us work together to lay the foundation for a future where a digitally connected Africa is synonymous with progress, empowerment, and limitless possibilities.

Thank you, and may our collective efforts forge a path toward a brighter and more connected future for Africa.