



## Working together to address SA challenges.



The knowledge economy provides South Africa with an opportunity to overcome structural barriers to economic transformation, says Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams.

“We are facing an economic and a social crisis. It is our collective responsibility as leaders in Government, Business and Communities to invest our collective expertise to address the challenges of our society; key among them is economic and equitable distribution of wealth,” the Minister said.

Addressing the Black Business Council last Thursday, she said there are basic building blocks to maximizing key policy objectives and unlock innovative entrepreneurship.

“The release of spectrum; investment in digital skills for our general population; increasing access to digital service (at affordable rates); ensure that broader infrastructure investments will be key to improving outcomes from our programs. We welcome stakeholder partnerships to achieve these objectives. We also challenge partners to come up with innovative responses to our national challenges,” the Minister said.

In September, government will convene a digital economy conference wherein potential investors can identify opportunities for investment. Ndabeni-Abrahams has called on leaders to work together to address the social and economic challenges in the country.

“Our assessment is that digital transformation and 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) can help to augment South Africa’s global competitiveness. While we have seen the country’s World Economic Forum (WEF) global competitiveness ranking improve overall in the past three years, the country improved its overall ranking to 60 out of 141 countries in 2020 compared with 67 the previous year – the country’s ranking in human capital development remains disappointing.

“This means that the opportunities available to our population to participate in the mainstream economy remain limited,” the Minister said.

Ndabeni-Abrahams said the 4IR can affect progress in education, health and other key

human capital areas, which would contribute to improving labour absorption rates.

“Not only that, but we also believe that by fostering diffusion of knowledge and skills development – the 4IR provides opportunity for industries to be more innovative and competitive. The first practical measure is the establishment of a Digital Skills Forum by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies,” the Minister said.

The forum will serve as a coordinating structure throughout government, business and civil society in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all 4IR related skills training programme.

“This bird’s eye view will enable all participating stakeholders in the Digital Skills Forum to agree on the areas of priority with the training interventions and also the mobilisation together of the much-needed financial resources to upskill and reskill South Africans to a standard par with the international community.

“The Digital Skills Forum in pursuing its agenda will align its work and mandate to the outputs and outcomes envisaged in the activities of the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC), by ensuring a consistent reconceptualization and structuring of the digital skills development ecosystem and the capacity support needed thereof,” the Minister said.

The department’s implementation programme targets and focuses on innovation and entrepreneurship as the hallmarks of economic development and growth.

It focuses on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and STEAMIE, which adds Arts, Innovation and Entrepreneurship as other critical components to achieve a 4IR ready country.

“The industry is therefore very crucial in ensuring that there is the scaling up of digital skills development to meet the industry needs through expanding workplace-based digital skills learning opportunities for young people to ensure competitiveness,” the Minister said. –

