



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY HON. EMMA
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WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Introduction

I rise before this August house to provide an update on policies, key projects and Programmes undertaken by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in our quest to expand ICT services and infrastructure while ensuring access to Government information services.

In June 2024, I provided a status update. It is my pleasure, once again, to appraise Parliament and the nation on the progress made in the ICT space since, given our appropriated **N\$703,000,000.00** (Seven Hundred and Three Million) allocated for the 2024/2025 financial year.

1. Operational and Capital Budgets

- As reported earlier, the Ministry received an allocation of N\$25,000,000 (Twenty-Five Million) towards its capital projects. This will enable the continued construction of our regional offices to bring government services and products closer to the people.
- For the current financial year, the Ministry will continue constructing its Hardap Regional office in Mariental in the Hardap Region. The practical completion of the project was due for completion by May 2025. However, the practical completion dates have changed due to ongoing consultations with the Ministry of Works and Transport on technical aspects of the project. Thus, the practical completion of the project is envisaged to be at the end of July 2025.
- The Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was allocated a budget of N\$80,000,000 million (Eighty Million) to expand its broadcasting network and systems upgrades. Over the past four months, NBC has undertaken several initiatives to enhance the quality of its broadcasting services through investments in infrastructure improvements.
- NBC recently received an exemption from the Ministry of Finance and Public Enterprises, granting relief from Section 8 (a) read with Regulation 2 of the Public Procurement Act, Act Number 15 of 2015. This exemption enables NBC to achieve 100% connectivity for all Namibians through cost-effective broadcasting solutions, aligning with the country's national development priorities.
- The national Broadcaster plans to transition from the existing C-Band to a Ku-Band transponder. This transition will facilitate the integration of satellite networks using advanced satellite technology, eliminating gaps in broadcasting coverage and ensuring service availability in the most remote areas of the country.

- This comprehensive project is supported by a financial commitment of N\$100,000,000 million (One Hundred Million) over the next three financial years from the Treasury. The granted exemption will enable NBC to realise up to seven high-definition (HD) television channels, significantly enhancing its broadcasting capacity.
- Further to this, NBC1 and NBC2 have now been fully upgraded to High Definition (HD), improving the viewing experience and aligning NBC with global broadcasting standards. In addition, Studio 2 has been upgraded to high-definition (HD) and 4K capabilities, significantly enhancing the production quality of NBC's television broadcasts.
- NBC has acquired advanced equipment for digitising its audio-visual materials, preserving its archival content for future use and reference. This transition to a file-based digital system is essential for long-term storage and accessibility. NBC has acquired new radio studio mixers for its headquarters in Windhoek. During the 2024/25 financial year, the Rundu, Oshakati and Katima Mulilo regional studios will receive new mixers in a phased rollout to enhance their broadcasting capacity.
- NBC has completed the construction of a broadcasting tower on Impalila Island, which will soon be commissioned. This new tower provides the community access to NBC television and radio services, delivering essential government information, services, and general entertainment. The community, which previously lacked this access, will now benefit from the enhanced connectivity.
- Furthermore, the Broadcaster has procured ten new Electronic News Gathering (ENG) cameras to improve the quality of its news coverage. These cameras are strategically distributed to its Oshakati, Rundu, Katima Mulilo, Gobabis and Keetmanshoop regional offices. Its recently acquired Final Control Centre (FCC) Playout Automation System allows NBC to scale up program content to four active television channels, with the potential for further expansion as required.
- The recent acquisitions and upgrades are part of NBC's ongoing efforts to improve its broadcasting infrastructure, provide better services to the public, and fulfil its mandate of connecting and informing the nation effectively.

2. ICT Development

- As previously reported, an allocation of N\$115,000,000 (One Hundred and Fifteen Million) has been appropriated during the 2024/25 -2026/27 medium-term expenditure framework period to roll out ICT infrastructure to bridge the digital divide in the unserved and underserved areas.
- So far, a revised Universal Service Report has been published, and the

Regulations Prescribing Universal Levy were gazetted in September 2024. Moreover, the identification and physical confirmation of the 28 earmarked sites are completed. Following this, a bidding process was duly followed and successful bidders for the rollout of 14 sites for the current financial year were selected and awarded.

- Following the Government's allocation of N\$20,000,000 (Twenty Million) towards the establishment of the Namibia Cybersecurity Incidence Response Team (Nam-CSIRT) under the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN), notable progress has been made in this regard. The Authority developed the Nam-CSIRT Governance and Operational Framework, pending board approval. Appropriate hardware and software were received and installed to allow for the automation of core operations. Furthermore, there are concerted efforts to continue to develop international and local partnerships to enhance the Nam-CSIRT cyber security network. Locally, the Authority is conducting engagements to build and formalise the Nam-CSIRT constituency through engaging State-Owned Enterprises, Offices, Ministries and Agencies to obtain cyber security contacts to create a constituency database. This collaboration will be followed by the setting up a Cyber Working Group to foster further cooperation between the Nam-CSIRT and its constituency in building the Namibia cyber ecosystem. To raise awareness of the state of cybersecurity in Namibia, the Nam-CSIRT plans to draft its first report, which will be made available to all stakeholders.
- The implementation of the 5G Strategy has commenced and drafting of the regulations on e-signature and accreditation is on course.
- The Data Protection Bill has been finalised and submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Legislation (CCL) for discussion and determination of the next course of action. The Ministry awaits CCL's communication of the date for the bill to be discussed.
- The Ministry prepared the Terms of Reference for a Consultant to finalise the Cybercrime Bill this financial year. Following Cabinet's directives, the Ministry prepared a joint memo on the status of the Cybercrime Bill, which was sent to the Ministry of Justice for their input before submission to the Cabinet.
- I would like to take this opportunity to encourage Namibians to pursue careers or enhance their skills in the cybersecurity legal field as Namibia lacks expertise in this area, which will be required even more after the enactment of this law.
- The Ministry has made progress on the amendments to the Communications Act of 2009. An advert sourcing for an expert to finalise these amendments was concluded. The tender process for this role has been evaluated and is pending the final report.

- The Electronic Information Systems Management Advisory Council (EISMAC) has been appointed and inaugurated to exercise the powers and perform the functions conferred on and assigned to it under the Electronic Transactions Act 4 of 2019. Additionally, the electronic signature Regulations have been drafted and stakeholders have been consulted on 31 January 2025.
- The draft National Digital Strategy has undergone stakeholders' consultations for the institutions that are implementing activities listed in the Implementation Action Plan. Thereafter, it will be submitted to the National Planning Commission for appraisal before its submission to the Cabinet for approval and implementation.
- Namibia, as a Member State of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), benefits from the reform of her legislative and policy framework. ITU is currently assisting Namibia with the consolidation of the National ICT Policy, which has been validated by stakeholders and is at an assessment level by the National Planning Commission before it is presented to the Cabinet for approval and implementation.
- Additionally, ITU is assisting Namibia in transposing the SADC Model National Emergency Telecommunications Plan (NETP) following its adoption by the SADC Ministers responsible for ICT in 2023. The NETP aims to set out a strategy to enable and ensure the availability of communications during all phases of disaster management by promoting coordination across all sectors. The stakeholders' validation workshop was held on 30 October 2024.
- The National Cybersecurity Strategy and Awareness Raising Plan is being implemented. In addition to the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Salt Essential IT, the Ministry signed another MoU with LifeLine/ChildLine Namibia to promote safer online behaviours and instil a culture of cyber hygiene among different age groups. Equally, the National Reporting Portal for Child Sexual Abuse Material will be popularised. The portal allows anyone to anonymously report digitally abusive materials affecting children with the view of combating cybercrimes towards them.
- The 8th National ICT Summit was successfully hosted and brought together various stakeholders who delve into the "Building resilience to "Adapt or die" in the era of digital transformation & Artificial Intelligence (AI)" theme.

3. New Roaming Charges Agreement between Namibia and Botswana

- In September 2024, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology officially announced the reduced roaming charges between the Republic of Namibia and the Republic of Botswana.
- The new roaming tariffs are expected to boost cross-border communication and strengthen ties between the two countries, effective since August 2024.
- CRAN and the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (BOCRA) directed the two countries' Mobile Network Operators, namely, Telecom Namibia and Mobile Telecommunications Company (MTC) and Botswana Telecommunications Corporation Limited (BTC), Mascom Wireless Botswana and Orange Botswana, to reduce roaming prices.
- This collaboration is a testament to our efforts to deliver affordable communication services to all Namibians, which will ultimately have a positive snowball effect on other sectors such as trade, tourism and general cross-border connectivity.

4. Improved Communication

- To enhance improved communication and align Government Communications Officers to implementing the Government Communication Strategy and its implementation plan, the Ministry hosted the Government Communications Officers capacity building engagement in Opuwo in June 2024, in the Kunene Region. This session focused on improving service delivery in the Public Sector through Communication. This engagement was in line with the Government Communications Strategy and also modelled along the operationalisation of the Access to Information Law.
- Furthermore, the Ministry conducted a Government information-sharing session with the community of Opuwo, aimed at bringing government services closer to the people and increasing the interaction of government officials with their constituencies. This program is premised on the ethos of the Access to Information Act that obligates public entities to provide for the right of access to information and the promotion, creation, keeping, organisation and management of information in a form and manner that facilitates transparency, accountability and good governance.
- The Ministry submitted the draft Access to Information Regulations to the National Assembly for tabling and discussions during the first quarter of this financial year. These Regulations were approved and submitted to the Ministry of Justice for gazetting before the Access to Information legislation implementation commences. I am happy to announce that these regulations have been gazetted successfully. Currently, the Ministry is in consultation with the

National Assembly and Ministry of Justice to facilitate the recruitment process for the Information Commissioner and Deputy Information Commissioner.

- With support from UNESCO, the Ministry hosted the Community Media Policy Framework validation workshop in August 2024. Once approved, this framework will act as a tool for the operation of Community Media houses in Namibia. The policy framework fosters inclusivity, community engagement, and ethical practices within community media houses.
- In addition, it will provide a structured approach to conflict resolution, risk management and compliance with legal and ethical requirements, ultimately safeguarding the reputation and impact of community media outlets in serving their audiences and communities effectively.
- In line with the Access to Information legislation and the Windhoek+30 Declaration, this Framework is the backbone for guiding the operations and content creation for community media organisations. It ensures transparency, accountability and adherence to quality standards, promoting diverse voices and perspectives while upholding freedom of expression.
- In October 2024, the Ministry held the second edition of the Public Entities Communication Officers (PECO) Awards 2024 in Luderitz in the //Kharas Region. The Awards recognise exceptional officials and communication champions across Offices, Ministries, Agencies (OMAs), Regional Councils, Local Authorities, and Public Enterprises who have demonstrated innovative approaches that enhance Government functioning and service delivery.
- Last year's Awards' theme was "Innovative Communication for Enhanced Public Service Delivery," which supports the implementation of the Government Communication Strategy by encouraging innovation and creative thinking within the public sector. Since its launch in 2023, we have seen commendable progress from Public Communication Officers who now proactively share information with the public.
- These Awards also act as a catalyst for innovation within the Government communication ecosystem. With the Government Communication Strategy and the Access to Information (ATI) Act, Act 8 of 2022, in place, the Government, through the Ministry of ICT, aims to improve performance and enhance service delivery, ultimately increasing citizen satisfaction through accessible information.
- To enhance our unity in diversity and advance the values for social cohesion and progression, the Ministry activated the National Symbols campaign in the Khomas Region in June 2024. Following the activation, the Ministry embarked

on awareness-creation activities to educate citizens on the importance of National Symbols, their meanings and correct usage. This includes observance of correct protocols during the singing or playing of the national anthem or hoisting of the national flag. By doing so, we aim to enhance national identity, patriotism and pride amongst Namibians.

- The Ministry carried out the first phase of the Monitoring and Evaluation of the implementation of the National Symbols campaign in the Zambezi, Kavango East and West, Ohangwena, Oshana, Oshikoto, Kunene Erongo and Otjozondjupa Region.
 - The monitoring and evaluation exercise aims to track progress, identify challenges and study the campaign's impact on the ground. The exercise will help the Ministry make evidence-based decisions and improve future campaign interventions to achieve desired social behavioural change among the target audience.
 - The Ministry produces the Namibia Review government monthly magazine, which features articles on development and policy in the country. It is free of charge through our regional offices, ensuring inclusive access to vital government information. Namibia Review aligns with the Access to Information Law and the 2022-2027 Government Communications Strategy, empowering communities with the information they need to make informed decisions.
- 5. Information Dissemination through the GIC and 14 MICT Regional Offices**
- Through the Government Information Center (GIC), the Ministry has managed to enhance the free flow of multi-media information to the public. Heads of government ministries, organisations, and agencies have utilised the GIC to communicate fully and provide the public with relevant information about the services they provide to the public. GIC sessions are continuously streamed live through the Ministry's social media pages and broadcast on NBC radio and television services. This is in addition to public engagements and other face-to-face services conducted through the MICT Regional Offices. Through these efforts, the Ministry has reached an audience of 197 228 people in 3 months via multi-media digital information.
 - These are all proactive approaches to enhance digital information service provision and to propel the Government's compliance with the recently enacted Access to Information legislation. In quarter 2 of 2024, through the GIC and 14 regional offices, the Ministry provided 793 multimedia information services to the public.
 - About 86 events were streamed through our social media network channels and rebroadcasted on NBC television and radio services. These include information-sharing sessions, cabinet briefings and outside broadcasts.

- In addition, 160 short videos and documentaries were produced. These include a short documentary on the review of Namibia's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals that the National Planning Commission submitted to the United Nations.
- The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology remains Namibia's preferred information partner. Our live streaming and sound services are becoming popular with Government Offices, Ministries and Agencies and the private sector.
- Meanwhile, the Ministry is busy procuring streaming kits for all our Regional Offices to decentralise the GIC services to the regions. So far, seven out of 14 Regional Offices have received the streaming kits and the remaining seven regions will receive similar kits before the end of this financial year. The regional GIC sessions, known as Regional Development Dialogue, will take place in our regional studios and allow the regional leadership to share and update the public on the developments in their respective regions and constituencies.

6. Namibian Film Promotion

- The creative sector is a significant contributor to economic growth and employment. Therefore, all efforts must be made to guard against piracy. This leads to revenue losses and results in job cuts, reduced salaries and fewer opportunities for career growth within the industry. The Namibia Film Commission, together with Multi-Choice Namibia, BIPA, NBC and One Africa Television, launched Partners Against Piracy in an effort to protect the rights of content creators and providers. This Pan-African coalition, already launched in Kenya, Zambia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, aims to help African creatives earn a living from their talent, freeing them to continue creating relevant, entertaining content that reflects the culture and interests of the continent.
- During the second half of the year (June – October 2024), Namibia attracted 34 foreign films to its soil. This boosted the country's economy in various service sectors to the amount of N\$12 000 000 (Twelve million dollars), creating employment for 243 locals. Efforts continue to present a viable incentive regime for Namibia that could make it more competitive besides its breathtaking locations, infrastructure, peaceful democracy, and growing skill set.
- Namibian films continue to do well beyond its borders. The NFC-funded film "Momeya" won best costume design, make-up, and cinematography at Botswana's recently ended Bantu Film Festival.
- In closing, the Namibia Film Week drew over 200 participants for panel discussions, master classes and film screenings. This event will be elevated to the first Windhoek International Film Festival in 2025.

This concludes my briefing session for today. I wish you all a blessed day ahead.

Thank you.

