



WELCOMING REMARKS BY

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AT THE

**COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF NAMIBIA (CRAN)
PUBLIC CONSULTATIVE AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS LICENSEE
ENGAGEMENT MEETING**

Date: Friday, 26 April 2024

Venue: Mercure Hotel, Windhoek

Time: 08h30 to 13h00

- Esteemed Captains of Industry,
- CRAN Executive Management and Team,
- Members of the Media,
- Invited Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Director of Ceremonies,

PART 1: PUBLIC HEARING ON DETERMINATION OF DOMINANT POSITION IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS MARKET

Good morning, I am honored to stand before you today at the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia's (CRAN) Public Hearing on the Draft Dominance Determination in terms of Section 78 of the Communications Act (No. 8 of 2009) and Consultative Meeting with the telecommunications licensees.

At the heart of this meeting is the issue of market dominance, a concept that has far-reaching implications for competition, innovation, and consumer choice. Section 78 of the Act empowers the Authority to make determinations on market dominance and act appropriately to promote competition and protect consumers.

The draft dominance determination that we are here to discuss today aims to identify players in the telecommunications market who have significant market power. This is a complex and nuanced issue that

requires careful analysis and consideration of all relevant factors. The decisions we make here will have a lasting impact on the industry and the economy as a whole.

Moreover, competition in any market economy, drives innovation, efficiency, and consumer welfare. When one player dominates the market, it can stifle competition, limit choices for consumers, and lead to higher prices and lower quality of service. It is essential for the Authority to intervene in such cases to level the playing field and ensure that all market participants have equal opportunities to compete and thrive.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Furthermore, we are also here to provide information and engage all telecommunication licensees on new and current matters as we are in an ever-evolving sector. It is important for stakeholders to engage in a constructive and collaborative manner. This is an opportunity for all parties, the Authority, industry players, consumer groups, and the public, to share their perspectives, raise concerns, and propose solutions.

PART 2: TELECOMMUNICATIONS LICENSEE ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Part two (2) of our meeting today pertains to Telecommunications Service Licensees, where the Authority will provide an update on Universal Access Service Levy and Regulatory Levy; Telecommunications Spectrum Audit and Utilisation Report; Emergency Telecommunications Plan; World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 (WRC-27) Outcomes and Outlook of New Spectrum Assignment Strategy; and Exemption of Affordable Telecommunications Devices from Tax Implications.

The Universal Access Service Levy is a fee charged to all telecommunications service providers in Namibia by the Authority. The funds raised through this levy are used to subsidize the provision of providing telecommunication services in remote and underserved areas. By levying a fee on all operators, CRAN can ensure that rural and isolated communities have access to basic telecommunication services.

The Universal Access Service Levy also helps to bridge the digital divide in Namibia. In a country where many people live in remote areas with limited infrastructure, access to telecommunication services is essential for economic development and social inclusion.

The Authority has developed a spectrum assignment strategy for the period 2022 to 2024 setting out the Authority's objectives for spectrum management and providing clarity with respect to the Authority's approach to the control, planning, administration, and licensing of radio frequency spectrum. The spectrum assignment strategy was developed with the objective to:

- i. Facilitate the availability of spectrum to be used as a tool to develop communication services and access to ICT infrastructure as a basis for social and economic development to benefit from the digital transformation and opportunities presented by the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR),
- ii. Promote the effective and efficient use of spectrum within the digital divide, and to address gaps in communications services and access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) networks and utilisation of these services, and
- iii. Set conditions for spectrum use to ensure efficient use of a scarce resources and prevent anti-competitive practices such as hoarding of spectrum.

Mobile technologies classified as International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) are being used to provide broadband services, aligning with goals outlined in the National Broadband Policy from 2018 to 2023, and the National 5G Strategy. This is made possible by making spectrum resources available for mobile broadband

technologies by the Authority. This overview aims to cover the spectrum resources allocated to the industry for IMT services, how much spectrum remains available, and how much of it has been used by license holders.

This engagement will also provide input into the forthcoming review of the Authority's spectrum assignment strategy for the period 2025 to 2027.

The risk posed by the potential disruption of telecommunications networks in the event of a natural or man-made disasters necessitates the development and implementation of a national emergency telecommunications plan for the ICT sector. The Emergency Telecommunications Plan is intended to set out the actions to be undertaken by the Authority and licensees to ensure telecommunications availability during a disaster for the effective coordination and response to such an event to minimise economic loss and mitigate the impact on social wellbeing and loss of life. Furthermore, the plan is aimed at ensuring coordination between Authority and licensees and within the communities at risk.

It is foreseen that preparation and implementation of the Emergency Telecommunications Plan will provide a forum for stakeholders to consider what actions are to be taken throughout the lifecycle of a disaster, to determine the required capabilities to respond during an

emergency and to establish a governance framework setting out roles and responsibilities.

Although today's engagement will focus on the telecommunications sector, this work will also feed into the national emergency communications plan spanning across all economic sectors in Namibia.

Member States of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) agreed on revisions to the global treaty governing the use of the radio frequency spectrum, both on earth and in space, at the close of the WRC-23 in December 2023, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The agreement on updates to the Radio Regulations identifies new spectrum resources to support technological innovation, deepen global connectivity, increase access to and equitable use of spectrum.

A total of 151 Member States signed the WRC-23 Final Acts. The Final Acts constitute a record of the decisions taken at the conference including both the new and revised provisions of the Radio Regulations, all Appendices, and the new and revised Resolutions and ITU-R Recommendations incorporated by reference into the treaty by the conference.

Among the decisions, WRC-23 identified spectrum for IMT, which are crucial for expanding broadband connectivity and developing IMT mobile services, also known as 4G, 5G and, in the future, 6G.

Ladies and Gentlemen

You will agree with me that, over the years, one of the main arguments in favour of exempting affordable telecommunications devices from taxes is the impact it can have on bridging the digital divide. By making telecommunications devices more affordable, government can help ensure that everyone has access to these essential tools, regardless of their income level or socio-economic status.

Furthermore, exempting smart telecommunications devices from taxes can also stimulate economic growth and innovation. By making these devices more affordable, government can encourage demand stimulation for the use of telecommunication services and ultimately socio-economic development. By ensuring that everyone has access to affordable telecommunications devices, government can help ensure that all citizens can benefit from these services and participate fully in the digital economy.

In conclusion, the exemption of affordable telecommunications devices from tax implications is a complex issue that requires careful consideration. The MICT and CRAN already engaged the Ministry of

Finance on this matter to see how these devices can be exempted and we are awaiting their decision.

By finding a balance between promoting affordability and ensuring sustainable government finances, policymakers can help create a more equitable and inclusive society where everyone has access to the tools they need to thrive in the digital age.

I thank you!