

AfricaCom 2015: government perspective on role of ICT in socio-economic development

The burgeoning Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector is shaping the future of socio-economic development across Africa to such an extent that governments across the continent have recognised that access to the 'Internet is a basic necessity for more than just business, education and service delivery, but also for survival and individual self-respect', as Hon. Prof. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Deputy Minister of South Africa's Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services noted in her budget speech in 2015.



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Mkhize will be a keynote speaker at the upcoming [AfricaCom 2015](#) conference and will address delegates on "the role of ICTs for Inclusive Social and Economic Development in Africa" on the morning of 18 November. She will address the role of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in enabling inclusive socio-economic development, whether access to the internet is derived from broadband in homes and offices, or via the mobile telephone, which is growing in popularity as the number one method to getting online.

Still, access and its subsequent impact on overall economic growth is being hampered by the cost and poor quality of ICT-infrastructure. This is where governments have a vital role to play in developing progressive ICT policies and regulatory frameworks that can unlock the real potential that ICT can play in expanding citizen consciousness to realise a thriving information society and knowledge economy.

Mkhize said, "Connectivity has demonstrated its ability to ignite socio-economic development time and again. We need to expand existing infrastructure and introduce new technologies to connect our citizens, especially those in rural areas. Like the cutting-edge satellite technology deployed by Avanti Communications to deliver high-speed broadband across 100% of South Africa today. Connected regions will produce the increased economic growth that a thriving information society drives."

Government has a unique role to play in ICT development

"We are delighted to welcome the Hon. Prof. Hlengiwe Mkhize at AfricaCom this year. Governments have a unique role to play in supporting telecommunications, digital and ICT development. Prof. Mkhize's keynote speech will highlight the economic and social importance of the sector in Africa, a message that is at the heart of AfricaCom" confirmed Julie Rey-Gore, Research Director at Informa Telecoms and Media.

Mkhize's participation at AfricaCom shows the importance of governments and regulators in the development of a healthy communications sector in Africa. The AfricaCom 2015 programme reflects this importance with a new Regulatory Panel, taking place on Tuesday 17 November with the participation of Isaias Barreto da Rosa (Commissioner for Telecommunications and IT, ECOWAS), Thari G. Pheko (Chief Executive, Communications Regulatory Authority) and Pakamile Pongwana (CEO, ICASA).

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