

R27bn to be spent on 5G fibre technologies in South Africa

Communications and digital technologies minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams announced in her annual budget speech yesterday, 18 May, that R27bn has been pledged by operators and vendors to introduce 5G fibre technologies in South Africa.



Minister of communications and digital technologies Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams

“We believe that partnerships and collaborations are key to taking our sector to greater heights. I am therefore pleased to announce that R27bn is being pledged collectively by the operators and vendors to expand the 4G network, and to deploy the 5G and fibre technologies in South Africa, which has been tested by some operators,” said Ndabeni-Abrahams.

The minister said the network expansion is also extending to rural and underserved areas, which will benefit communities and create jobs.

“As such, I hope that the licensing of the Wholesale Open Access Network and the High-Demand Spectrum will complement these rollout plans. In line with the government’s vision of connecting 80% of public buildings by 2024, our entities will connect 6,687 sites across the country.”

Sourcing of locally manufactured products

Ndabeni-Abrahams also mentioned that the sourcing of locally manufactured products remains a priority. A number of these products were identified:

- Phones and accessories;
- Manufacturing of components for infrastructure/5G network expansion;
- Sensors and telematics – which includes lidar;

- Smart metres for water and electricity and other tracking applications;
- Satellites and drone components.

Ndabeni-Abrahams said: As part of the implementation of these programmes, the department is working with the department of trade, industry and competition to facilitate the establishment and operationalisation of an ICT Special Economic Zone (SEZ).”

“To date, a suitable land has been identified where this SEZ will be situated. The two departments are working towards the digital products I mentioned for local manufacturing, with government procurement capacity being utilised as a lever to enable the sector.”

The minister said that the technology sector was seen as a key factor in helping South Africa’s post-covid-19 recovery and as a job creator. She added that her department has now finalised a ‘digital economy master plan’ and is currently engaging various stakeholders in the development of the implementation plan.

“It is envisaged that the implementation of the digital economy masterplan will see the achievement of economic contribution upwards to 4.5% of GDP per annum, creation of one million jobs over the next 10 years, create massive opportunities for SMMEs.”

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