



Independent Communications Authority of South Africa

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ICASA Chairperson and Council's message for 2011

A new year is upon us...and as the regulator of the communications and postal sectors, ICASA's leadership extends a hand of engagement, cooperation and collaboration with all stakeholders in the industry.

For the Authority, the year 2011 represents an opportunity to re-commit ourselves to regulate communications and postal services sectors in the public interest, and to do so without fear or favour.

Top of our agenda, is the objective to continue to licence new operators and come up with regulations that would enhance competition within these the regulated sectors in order to provide the South African public with choice as well as value for money.

Consumer protection and universal service and access are central to our mandate, as we strive to ensure that people with disabilities and rural and far-flung areas are not left behind in the country's quest to create a knowledge and information society.

Information and communication technologies and services can, and should play a critical role in service delivery, and enhance access to education, health and welfare, job creation and economic opportunities.

The Authority prides itself in delivering key projects in the past year, and these include Call Termination Regulations that will see the levelling of the playing fields among communications operators.

ICASA's inspectors were on call, around the clock, to monitor the frequencies and ensure that the country delivers a successful FIFA tournament and an incident-free African World Cup.

The Digital Migration Regulations were published on 15 February 2010. In light of Minister Radakrishna Roy Padayachee's announcement of the country adoption of the DVB-T2 standard for digital migration, there might be a need for the Authority to revisit the 2010 Digital Migration Regulations.

The Authority is already hard at work at ensuring that spin-offs that accrue from this technological transition to a digital platform benefit all across the board. The digital dividend

should introduce more competition and choice in the broadcasting and electronic communications sectors, but also universal service and access.

The Authority is currently embarking on a process of reviewing all existing Universal Service and Access Obligations (USAO); the purpose of which is to inform the need for a revised USAO regulatory framework and the development and publication of regulations in terms of the ECA.

As an institution that supports our country's democracy, the Authority has begun the process of coming up with Municipal Election Regulations which we aim to complete in due course before the President's announcement and declaration of the election period. These regulations are aimed at prescribing a framework and guidelines under which Party Election Broadcasts and Political Adverts are carried and conducted by broadcasting service licensees during the local government elections in a fair and equitable manner.

The dawn of a new year is also an opportunity for the Authority to reflect on its mandate and activities. New leadership is on board and in full complement at the level of Council, and a new Chief Executive Officer appointed to steer the ship at the operational level.

The Authority would like to improve stakeholder relations and interaction. The office of the Chairperson will serve as a one-stop shop for this important engagement.

Bilateral meetings with all stakeholders will be streamlined, and indeed all will be afforded a hearing. Site visits by the Authority to view the operations of the licensees will continue. These site visits are an eye-opener to the complex network, exchange infrastructure of electronic communications licensees.

Consumer education outreach programmes for all our communities will remain a priority, and the Authority will continue to partner with government, portfolio organisations and private companies in the communications and postal sectors.

Flagship projects for the new year include developing Local Loop Unbundling regulations, the Licensing of Spectrum in the 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz Bands, monitoring the local government elections as well as monitoring the impact of the Call Termination Regulations on the retail voice market with regard to affordability of services for consumers.

Furthermore, ICASA will develop a regulatory strategy on broadband that will seek to bring a holistic approach to regulatory activities that are relevant to meeting Government's policy goal of achieving universal access to broadband by 2019. Regulatory activities relevant to broadband include infrastructure sharing, local loop unbundling, a ten year plan for identifying and making spectrum available for broadband, the pending auction of the 2.6 and 3.5 GHz frequency spectrum, the allocation of the digital dividend and the removal of barriers to network rollout, particularly at municipal level.

At the international level, the provision and regulation of information and communication technologies and services should play a vital role in regional economic integration. The past

decade or so have seen increased interaction of the people of the SADC in various areas of public life.

It is in this light that ICASA will, towards the end of March 2011, host, among others, the two Annual General Meetings of the Communications Regulators Association of Southern Africa (CRASA) and the Southern African Postal Regulatory Association (SAPRA), which will culminate in the merger of two organizations.

Let us all work jointly to make 2011 a success.