



**SPEECH OF Hon. STANLEY M. SIMATAA MINISTER OF
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AT THE 5TH
ICT SUMMIT
SAFARI HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE
15 OCTOBER 2018**

Director of Ceremonies;

Hon Deputy Ministers;

**Hononourable members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee
on ICT and Innovation;**

The Permanent Secretary: Ministry of ICT

Captains of the ICT industry;

Distinguished invited Guests;

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning

I am pleased to address you at the official opening of the 5th National ICT Summit under the theme “*Digital transformation for an ICT smart Namibia*”.

This platform is an ideal conduit for ICT stakeholders to converge and scan the ICT landscape nationally, within the sub-region, continentally and globally. It is through occasions like this that we can collectively consolidate the pivotal role ICT plays in shaping and nourishing the developmental trajectory of our nation.

Some researchers and trend analysts have opined that nations are experiencing the onset of the 4th industrial revolution - a revolution that will fundamentally change the way in which we live, work, and deliver services, even the way we relate to one another. For our country to avoid remaining on

the periphery of this revolution, we must contemplate a host of policy and regulatory interventions that will place us in better stead to harness the benefits of this imminent and unavoidable development. We can achieve this by accelerating digitisation and improve internet connectivity. These are perfect launch pads for the 4th Industrial Revolution! We must fully exploit the benefits offered by cloud computing given its inherent affordability and flexibility. We must embrace big data analysis - a development that calls for improved public and private sector partnerships.

Director of Ceremonies,

I find it imperative to pose some critical questions, which I trust will set the stage for our intensive discussions during the coming three-days.

The questions are:

- What does *Digital Transformation* mean for Namibia?
- What are the benefits we intend to derive from this development?
- What is Namibia's critical pathway to this transformation?
- How will digital transformation contribute to our vision to create an “*ICT Smart Namibia*” and in so doing place our country on an economic growth pathway that would improve the lives of all Namibians?

It is therefore imperative for speakers and delegates alike to be immersed in in-depth discussions on these issues so as to determine how best *digital transformation* could support our country's developmental initiatives,

including how best such transformation can position our country to leverage the onset of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

The just concluded Land Conference is still fresh in our minds. It is thus opportune to pose the question “how can *digital transformation* assist us in our efforts to realize the contemplated agrarian reforms? Agricultural productivity will greatly improve by using advanced analytics on the production value chain. Autonomous functioning is no longer an imagination but will soon become a reality! Machines will soon start to fulfill more and more vital functions in our lives and business operations. Such developments will usher in unparalleled convenience and greater efficiencies - saving us from the vulgarity of existing morphed and decadent systems! *Digital transformation* is therefore a key initiative that should steer our country's efforts to achieve its goals of economic prosperity for all and improve Namibia's competitiveness in an increasingly globalised world. In fact, as a developing nation, Namibia is well positioned to benefit from the agility of this development by addressing specific challenges in a quicker and more cost effective way. We are not overburdened by legacy infrastructural issues. We have the ability to leapfrog some of the developed nations. It is for this reason that the Ministry will soon set in motion the process of developing a National Digital Strategy (NDS). This will be pursued in partnership with you as stakeholders. The NDS will provide a comprehensive road map that will guide the country's digitisation agenda.

Director of Ceremonies

While I have earlier posed a number of questions pertaining to the benefits of the *digital transformation in* Namibia, the following are some of those that come to the fore:

- Improved efficiency and service delivery – digital operations will greatly reduce red tape and generate greater efficiencies and quality service delivery.
- Digital operations will lead to a concomitant decrease in corruption. A study by the Suffolk University in Boston, USA found that as the use of information and communication technology increases, corruption decreases. Although privacy and data security concerns continue to linger, it is an undeniable fact that digitisation reduces the degree of manipulation which is symptomatic of existing traditional systems.
- Increased investment in digital skills which will certainly boost existing levels of digital literacy. Investing in digital skills gives rise to more knowledgeable workers that are digitally literate. Although automation and digitalisation may lead to replacement of lower-skilled jobs or administrative and routine tasks, skilled workers will be released to focus more on productive activities. Equally, digitisation and automation invariably contributes to the creation of new job opportunities.
- Digital transformation can boost youth employment – Like many other countries, Namibia is confronted by a bulging sea of unemployed youths. The digital world offers new employment opportunities.

What needs to be done is to maximize the emergence of new job opportunities by establishing a policy and financial support regime that will inspire young people to fully exploit their entrepreneurial and innovative potential.

- The last benefit is that digital operations have potential to bridge gender gaps and other forms of inequality - Many women often have to choose between career and family. However, the advent of digitally connected “virtual offices” has rendered this choice irrelevant as mothers can work anywhere and at any time. Many of the latest technological advancements are aiding individuals with special needs to become functional and productive members of our society, thus no longer reliant on the benovelence of fellow citizens.

Director of Ceremonies,

Digital transformation is, however, not without challenges.

- The first challenge is to keep pace with increased global competitiveness – the 4th industrial revolution will make various economic activities particularly in the manufacturing sector much more competitive on a global scale. The question is: “*will Namibia continue to make the requisite investments in order not to lag behind?*”
- Secondly, the biggest challenge for Namibia but also for the rest of Africa are the issues of accessibility and connectivity - we need to make substantial investments in infrastructure and new technologies to yield significant developments and encourage the

adoption of the latest applications. We also should also address our nemesis of skewed availability of electricity - one of the greatest obstacles to equitable connectivity and access to information.

- Thirdly, there are cyber risks to privacy, and data security – cyber risks and concerns about privacy continues to persist. Concerted efforts should therefore be made to address these risks so as to instil confidence in the security of our networks and reliability of our ICT ecosystem.
- Fourth, we need to address perpetual human capacity challenges we are faced with – we have a dearth of relevant Information Technology skills. Unless addressed, this will be a huge drag on our ability to navigate the imminent onset of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Director of ceremonies,

Our ability to adapt and drive *digital transformation* across all segments of society, will determine the extent to which Namibia will join the league of prosperous nations - one where there will be equity of opportunities!

We are on the brink of a new era that will forever change how we see and interact with the world. I look forward to fruitful outcomes of our engagements in the coming three days.

I now have the honour to declare the 5th National ICT Summit officially open!

I thank you.