

THE DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND POSTAL SERVICES RELEASES THE NATIONAL INTEGRATED ICT POLICY REVIEW PROCESS' OPTIONS PAPER

For immediate release

14 November 2014

The Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services Siyabonga Cwele today gazetted a Discussion Paper containing Options Paper on various aspects of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) policies that are being reviewed as part of the process to modernise the sector.

The gazetting of the National Integrated ICT Policy Options Paper is the latest milestone in the Department's implementation of the National Development Plan, which envisages that a "new policy framework will be needed to realize the vision of a fully connected society".

"We are making steady progress in ensuring that we develop progressive policies that will ensure that we are on par with the world's best practices in the deployment, use and regulation of this fast changing sector. We need to ensure that the ICT sector contributes in the radical transformation of our country by contributing to the achievement of the 5% economic growth and modernising the way government delivers services and how citizens access these services," said Minister Cwele.

He thanked the members of the public, the sector stakeholders and government departments that have participated in the process so far. He urged them to engage with the current document to strengthen proposals that will form the basis of the new policy on ICTs in the country.

The gazetting of the Options Paper also marks the last consultative stage before the submission of final recommendations to government and the tabling of the draft White Paper, a policy position statement of government.

The Policy Review Process started in 2012. Milestones that have been reached include the issuing of a Framing Paper in April 2013 and the Green Paper in January 2014 following public consultations. The Discussion Paper discusses inputs from the Green Paper responses received from the individuals, companies, sector organizations, advocacy groups and government departments. Consultations were done in all nine provinces. Meetings were held with industry stakeholders and four intergovernmental meetings were convened.

The Options Paper discusses the adoption of the integrated approach to the roll-out and use of ICTs to benefit the South African society, economy and to create an integrated society. It discusses the effects of the convergence of technologies and its practical impact on the entry of new services to better meet the needs of South Africans. Principles of regulatory parity, technological neutrality and an open internet are discussed.

The Options Paper on infrastructure and services discusses universal access to affordable communications services, competition issues, opening up the ICT market to new entrants, spectrum policy, rapid deployment of infrastructure, the postal infrastructure and the possible role of the Post Office in the converged environment.

The Options Paper on the digital economy discusses the development of a national e-strategy to build the envisaged digital society including considerations around issues of e-government and e-commerce. This paper discusses also the necessary policy environment to ensure trust and confidence in the new services. Issues of cybercrime and cyber-security are also considered.

The Options Paper on audio and audio-visuals looks at the multi-channels, multi-screen and multi-platform environment brought about the convergence of technologies and the emergence of the internet as a dominant medium of communication. It looks at how to create a transparent regulatory regime that will ensure parity between the traditional broadcasting services and the new multimedia and internet based services.

The Options Paper on industry growth discusses strategies that are necessary to promote growth in the sector, the transformation of the sector, the expansion of the national system of ICT research, skills development and policies to help South Africa establish herself as a manufacturing base for electronic goods.

The Options Paper on institutional arrangements looks at the institutions that govern the sector and what needs to be done to empower these institutions to better fulfill their roles. Funding the regulator is one of the key policy issues that are discussed in this Paper.

Although various issues are discussed in specific options papers a need for a cross-cutting and holistic perspective is required.

The Discussion Paper can be accessed on the following link;
<http://www.dtps.gov.za/ictpolicyreview/discussion-paper>

Written responses to the Discussion Paper must reach the Department by no later than 15 January 2015.

The responses can be sent to; tmooketsi@dtps.gov.za

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