Statement on Global Business Summit Virtual by Hon. Dr. Peya Mushelenga, Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Namibia.

Date: **16 December 2020**
Topic: **E-Governance & Cyber Security**
Time: **12:00 GMT**

Namibia like any other country in the world has been negatively affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that poses a global public health challenge of unprecedented proportion. COVID-19 made a history as it has caused a huge shock within the health facilities around the world, government, businesses and people around the world due to lockdowns and restrictions that were imposed by many governments. The measures were important to curb further spread of the disease and minimise the collapse of health facilities in countries, hence, Namibia is no exception to this measures.

Technology has played a major role in various sectors such as education e-governance, health and commerce during the pandemic. A lot of people in the world then relied on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to work, study, and take care of others and their loved ones. We are therefore appreciating digital technology that normalised the situation to the new normal of digital technology. However due to digital divided, not all the communities enjoy the usage of digital technologies as a new alternative to avoid physical contacts. Nevertheless, the traditional mode of communication via radio played a significant role in disseminating timely and correct information about the pandemic. Hence, there is greater desire to provide ICT infrastructures to the rural areas.

From 2005, Namibia has introduced numerous Digitisation and Digitalisation Initiatives geared towards digital transformation across the whole of government. Many of the projects are at the early stages of digitisation or digitalisation. ICT technologies need to be rolled out to update websites and introduce web portals, via which citizens can apply online for government IDs and birth certificates by completing and uploading required documents. Citizens must know how to use those, but must also have access to computers, to do so. Smartphones are what most people use, but they cannot use smart phones to perform the full suite of e-services and related functions.

Again, looking ahead of post COVID-19, the Namibia government needs to prioritise the upgrading or renovation of health facilities to accommodate sufficient patients in cases global pandemic surges to provide basic services to patients and such facilities need to be equipped with internet connectivity. This is also in line with Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals and our National Development Plans.

Coming with the trending developments and advancements in the sector is the growing scourge of cybercrime that has the potential to negatively impact the nation's ability to achieve its developmental objectives. Technology platforms need to be protected and the most vulnerable need to be aware of and educated regarding the perils of the Internet. To that effect the Government of the Republic of Namibia has revisited its emphasis on the combating cybercrime through expediting the process of drafting the relevant legal instruments, policies, and strategies on cybersecurity. All these efforts aim at curbing the country's vulnerability, building cyber resilience, establishing cyber capabilities, building capacity as well as raising awareness through community education.

As a way forward in order to meet the demands brought by digitisation, the Namibian government will focus on
- Implementing economic policies (such as tax-based incentives) that simulates the ICTs development based on integrated development planning;
- Encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI) in ICT;

- Investing in resilient infrastructure and encourage Public -Private Partnership for the ICTs infrastructure to ensure that those lives in rural/remote areas have access to broadband connectivity at an affordable rate;

- Human resources development to provide local solutions and contents;

- Finalising cybercrime Bill and Data protection Bills;

- Enhancing community digital skills to stimulate demand for digital services;

- Raising awareness on the importance of digital services for behavioural change to adopt the digital technologies;

- Drafting a robust digitalization strategies to provide a visionary trajectory on how Namibia should torch digital transformation and reap the benefits presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

I thank you