



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

**OFFICIAL OPENING ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY,**

HONOURABLE EMMA THEOFELUS, MP

**AT THE 12TH ANNUAL SAPOA POSTAL FORUM THEME: “THE ROLE OF POST &
LOGISTICS IN E-COMMERCE AND DIGITAL TRADE”**

WEDNESDAY, 05 MARCH 2025

WINDHOEK NAMIBIA

Thank you Mr. Gladwin Groenewaldt, Master of Ceremonies,

Dr. Simeon Amukete, NAMPOST Board Chair, & NAMPOST Board Members present,

Mr. Festus Hangula, CEO of NamPost, Management and staff of NAMPOST,

Mr. Kalin Radev, CEO of Software Group, our esteemed Platinum Sponsor,

Ms. Emilia Nghikembua, CEO of CRAN,

Mr. Nathan Mkandawire, representing the PAPU Secretary General,

Mr. Marjan Osvald, UPU Deputy Director General,

Mr. Maxwell Chitendeni, Chairperson of the SAPOA Management Board,

Esteemed representatives from SADC countries, (I am informed that only 3 countries have not joined this forum therefore I am pleased that majority have joined us in Windhoek)

Captains of industry,

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am privileged to join you today at the 12th Annual SAPOA Postal Forum, an event that serves as a critical platform to reflect on the role of post and logistics in e-commerce and digital trade. As Namibia and the rest of Africa embrace digital transformation, we must recognize the crucial role that postal services and logistics play in facilitating e-commerce and enabling economic growth.

Namibia's e-commerce sector is undergoing rapid transformation, spurred by increased internet penetration and mobile connectivity. As of 2021, we had 1.3 million internet users, accounting for 51% of our population. While still in its early stages, e-commerce holds immense potential for our economy. Platforms like Buy Online Namibia and Zaleka are gaining traction, and pan-African platforms like Jumia are making their mark. These developments reflect a growing digital marketplace that requires a strong logistical backbone to function effectively.

Key drivers of this e-commerce growth include government efforts to expand internet access and make data more affordable. Legislation has been used to ensure mobile network providers extend their services to sparsely populated areas, reducing the digital divide. The Bank of Namibia's upcoming instant payment solution is a game-changer, demonstrating our commitment to digital transactions and progress towards a cashless society. Moreover, the Electronic Transactions Act, along with the Data Protection and Cybercrime Bills, is creating a secure and enabling environment for e-commerce. The newly appointed Electronic Information Management Advisory Council is already working on finalizing electronic signature regulations, a key milestone in our journey toward a fully digital economy.

While the potential for e-commerce is vast, challenges remain. Infrastructure development is crucial for efficient e-commerce operations, particularly in logistics and transportation. Many mobile network providers hesitate to invest in areas they consider commercially unviable, leaving parts of our society disconnected. To bridge this gap, the government has allocated over N\$100 million over the medium term expenditure framework to roll out open-access network infrastructure, ensuring that every citizen has access to digital services. Our focus must also extend to digital literacy. It is not enough to provide access; we must equip our people with the skills and confidence to navigate digital platforms safely and effectively. Digital literacy should be measured by the trust and confidence citizens have in digital systems, not merely by their level of education.

Regional trade presents another opportunity. Namibia's active participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can unlock new markets and foster intra-Africa trade. I have long been a proponent of regional trade, believing that Africa's economies can only thrive when we trade with one another. Postal service providers must facilitate seamless cross-border transactions. Imagine a Namibia

where youth entrepreneurs can import fresh mangoes from Zambia overnight for processing; technology can make this a reality. To achieve this, we must develop cost-effective, efficient systems that benefit both businesses and consumers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As e-commerce continues to grow, the importance of reliable postal and logistics services cannot be overstated. The backbone of any thriving digital economy is its ability to deliver goods efficiently and affordably. Namibia boasts a road network of over 49,000 kilometers, the best in Africa for your information; and we continue to invest in expanding this network to ensure accessibility for all. The final leg of delivery, or last-mile delivery, is critical in ensuring that packages reach their destinations in a timely manner. Innovation must focus on enhancing service speed and affordability. If a technological advancement does not lead to faster or cheaper deliveries, then it is of little value.

Postal and logistics services also play a significant role in bridging the urban-rural divide. Rural communities must have equal access to e-commerce opportunities, fostering economic empowerment and financial inclusion. To achieve this, investment in infrastructure is essential. We must also embrace technology, from digital tracking systems to automation, to enhance efficiency and reliability. Strategic partnerships between postal operators, e-commerce platforms, and technology providers will be instrumental in overcoming challenges and unlocking the full potential of digital trade.

Speaking of digital trade, its benefits are undeniable. It streamlines operations, reduces costs, and expands market reach. However, for digital trade to thrive, our postal and logistics sectors must adapt to the changing landscape. Data analytics,

artificial intelligence, and automation must be leveraged to optimize delivery services. This is not just about keeping up with global trend; it is about positioning Namibia and SADC as a competitive player in the digital economy.

Africa by the year 2050 will have the youngest citizens in the world. The Digital Nomads will know nothing before computers and mobile phones, automation and convenience. (google adsense, paypal, apple pay amongst others).

I urge all stakeholders present today to collaborate and invest in strengthening our postal and logistics infrastructure. The government remains committed to creating an enabling environment through sound policies and regulatory frameworks. However, the private sector must also play its part by identifying challenges and proposing solutions. You have the right to engage with government on policies that affect your sector. Let's engage. If legislative constraints hinder progress, bring them to our attention. Laws are not set in stone; if changes align with our constitutional ethos and contribute to economic growth, we will embrace them.

As we deliberate in this forum, I challenge you to produce tangible outcomes. I want to see new partnerships formed and concrete plans on how we will strengthen the postal industry. Most importantly, I want to also know how this industry will create more jobs. The SWAPO Party-led government will be guided by its election manifesto and implementation plan (in fact, in less than 2 weeks we will be swearing in our first female president in the republic of Namibia and only the second female elected president in Africa), we have made a promise to address unemployment. This industry has the potential to provide opportunities for our youth, and I encourage you to explore innovative ways to generate employment.

Let us seize this moment to drive the postal and logistics sector toward a future of innovation, inclusion, and economic prosperity. With the right investments, policies, and partnerships, we can transform the industry into a pillar of e-commerce and digital trade.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and officially declare this Forum Open!

Thank you.