



**STATEMENT BY HON. DR PEYA MUSHELENGA, MP
MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)
ON THE OCCASSION OF
THE INAUGURATION OF THE PARATUS ARMADA DATA CENTER**

**4 August 2022
Dobra, Windhoek**

Distinguished guests;
Captains of industry;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am glad to officiate at this prestigious event of inaugurating the Armada Data Center. At the outset, I would like to advance a hypothesis that to thrive in the next five years, Namibia must become an ICT destination of choice. We all know that Namibia was and is again becoming a massive tourist attraction. We have figures close to the entire Namibian population visiting places like Sossusvlei or Zambezi region in a season. That industry has served Namibia well, but it is also becoming digital. Tourists want to make and upload videos of their tour immediately, and they want to access health services online and order their souvenirs online and have them delivered at the airport before they board. That is why I say Namibia must become an ICT destination of choice. How do we do that? Paratus has shown us how - “build it and they will come”, as the ancient Romans said. What else do we need to make my theory a reality? We need collaboration between the commerce sector and the ICT sector.

I congratulate Paratus on opening this facility. I am confident that this investment will benefit our development in ICT and boost Namibia’s economic growth. The ICT industry has made tremendous progress since the Communications Act was introduced in 2009 and embraced a new era for ICT in Namibia. The industry has seen incredible successes over the past 13 years.

We are fortunate to have a robust business environment in Namibia, which is now strengthened by the increase in digital infrastructure. Data centres play an essential role in enabling business continuity and growth. This need for digital infrastructure and services has been spurred from various angles. Namibia’s most recent experience with the Covid-19 pandemic, which is, thankfully, coming under control, has forced our nation to adopt a more innovative approach to digitisation. We were forced to disengage socially and embrace and adopt new technologies for interacting whilst attempting to place Namibia back onto a path of economic growth.

In 2016 the UN General Assembly passed a non-binding Resolution that “declared internet access a human right. The demand for access to information has been increasing as more and more people,

businesses and governments turn to the internet for their daily requirements. We should therefore work together to bridge the wider digital gap with the focus on unserved and underserved areas for all to reap the ICT benefits.

The Government's policy direction on ICT is quite clear, as stipulated in our national documents and we would like to take a brief moment to reiterate these:

- Vision 2030 stipulates that ICT must be the most critical sector in the country's economic development
- The 5th National Development Plan is aimed at universal access to information, affordable communications, technology infrastructure, and digital services
- Finally, the Harambee Prosperity Plan aims to accelerate ICT development through Infrastructure Development and the Accessibility and Affordability of Broadband services.

I cannot reiterate enough the importance of a shared vision to succeed between Government and the private sector. This alignment takes place through effective governance, providing an open playing field for developing ICT. The Ministry of ICT and CRAN have gone to great lengths to support a technology-neutral environment where operators have the freedom to invest in next-generation digital services.

ICT has become a fundamental part of how we interact, communicate, conduct business or manage our affairs. It will play a major role in realising our Vision for Namibia, one of being a prosperous and industrialised nation developed by her human resources, enjoying peace, harmony and political stability. Through reliable infrastructure like the Armada Data Center and the Google Equiano Cable landing station, it is evident that Paratus is stepping up to the obligations set by Government, which is to bring foreign investment to Namibia, whereby the ICT industry can support opportunities to foster new economic growth. Not only does the Data Center provide a safe environment for critical data storage, it will also be connected to the Trans-Kalahari Fiber backbone, stretching from Swakopmund to the rest of Africa. There is a new digital highway to our neighbouring countries, especially landlocked ones. We can now focus on exporting more than just tangible goods. In the long run, services will be placed on a platform to export digital services across the SADC region and beyond.

I have noted from the technical teams on the Data Center, which we will hear about later, that the architecture promotes the use of renewable energy, which is highly commendable. Solar power generating enough capacity to carry the data centre shows that Namibia is more than just a beautiful destination. It offers much through its ample natural resources such as the sun.

Growth in the ICT sector and data services will continue to impact Namibia's economic growth positively. The Armada Data Center will be able to play a role in this growth by providing high-quality co-location services, which in turn will enable much more business development. Considering the developments that Paratus has made, Namibia can be elevated to an ICT destination of choice not only for the region but also for international technology companies looking for a stable ICT environment.

We look forward to seeing the impact of this investment as it will help businesses continue to grow, helping us achieve our economic goals and support our vision for modernising our country for greater economic prosperity. Paratus' vision of transforming Africa through exceptional digital infrastructure and customer service aligns perfectly with our Vision of Namibia in Vision 2030. We thank Paratus for its continued investment in Namibia and its dedication to the development of the ICT sector.

Thank you.

