



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY,
HONOURABLE EMMA THEOFELUS, MP
AT THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY OF THE POWERCOM HOWEBEES
TOWER
THURSDAY, 15 AUGUST 2024**

Director of Ceremonies: Mr. Diergaardt;
Honourable Aletha Frederick, Regional Governor of //Karas region;
Honourable Willem P. Labuschagne, Keetmanshoop Rural Constituency Councillor and member of the National Council;
Mr. Beatus Amadhila, PowerCom CEO;
Deputy Director at the Kharas Regional Council,
PowerCom Management and Staff;
Telecom Namibia Senior Management;
Mr. and Mrs Erasmus on whose farm this tower is going to be erected;
Distinguished Invited Guests;
Members of the Media.

I take this opportunity to Wish H.E. the President, Dr. Nangolo Mbumba a Happy 83rd Birthday and Oom Moses Kooper who turned 70 who welcomed us with a dance and is still moving like a 35 year old young man. Oud maar nie koud nie as the saying goes. May the almighty bless them with many more years.

I am honoured to be in the //Kharas as we witness yet another ground-breaking ceremony by PowerCom, which you might have witnessed over the past two months.

I received such a warm welcome amidst the cold and wind and I wish I brought my Nama rok to coincide with the Nama stap that we did at the beginning of the ceremony.

Additionally, when the cultural group was dancing the network was misbehaving and in my mind I thought, that is exactly why we are here! To solve this network problems once and for all!

Ladies and gentlemen, the 20 network tower development projects that PowerCom undertook and committed to complete by the end of September 2024 (at the tune of about N\$32 million) are not small initiatives and they represent far more than just the construction of the physical tower structures. We can deduce then that the average network tower was constructed at an amount of about N\$1.8 million each. The cost of course varies depending on the type of tower.

Just as I echoed in my previous keynote addresses, this is indeed a giant leap forward in Namibia's digital journey, opening up a world of opportunity for the people of the great //Karas Region. The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) is driven by a clear and unwavering vision: to transform Namibia into a digitally inclusive nation, where technology empowers all citizens and acts as a cornerstone for progress. This vision underpins every aspect of our work, from crafting national policy to spearheading critical infrastructure development initiatives. We are actively pursuing several initiatives that weave the fabric of this digital future. Our "Smart Namibia" strategy focuses on leveraging technology as a powerful tool to propel economic growth, enhance service delivery across sectors, and empower citizens to actively participate in shaping their destinies.

The "Access for All" program is a cornerstone initiative, dedicated to expanding broadband connectivity across the nation, particularly in underserved rural areas like the Keetmanshoop rural and others. These initiatives are not mere pronouncements; they are concrete steps, meticulously planned and diligently executed, to ensure all Namibians have the opportunity to thrive in the digital age.

We are aware we are competing with other government priorities such as education, health, housing, sanitation, water availability, electricity expansion and food security. [If you were government, what would the hierarchy of addressing these priorities look like?]

The Governor and Councillor here are already petitioning for more areas to be connected. Today, as we conclude the PowerCom mini ground-breaking series, let us celebrate a shining example of this vision translated into tangible action. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to PowerCom and Telecom Namibia for their unwavering commitment to building this critical telecommunication tower, a testimony that they are not just catering for the urban communities but equally so, they are indeed investing in rural communities as well. I am fully aware of the heavy investments that the two entities are forking out to ensure that our inclusive approach is not a mere talk but tangible actions, in alignment with the MICT's mission and government objectives.

As I have stated previously, allow me to reiterate this once more: PowerCom is not simply constructing infrastructure; they are building bridges. They are bridging the digital divide, connecting people to a world of information and opportunities, and empowering the people from //Karas region and other communities in various Regions to actively participate in the digital age. It is for this same reason I call upon all key stakeholders to continue collaborating and responding to PowerCom calls, be it in terms of availing land (for lease at reasonable amounts) for tower construction in a timely fashion or responding timely to the Environmental Impact Assessment process as these are the key enablers in us realising these kind of infrastructure across the country. This in return shall ensure equitable access to technology across the nation, and in the same vein empowering all Namibians to contribute to, and benefit from, a thriving digital economy.

The ground-breaking here at Howobees also marks the site hand over today with an estimated completion time of 60 days. It further concludes PowerCom's ground-breaking series which started in Zambezi region to Kavango East and Kavango west regions, and finally in the //Karas Region. This is a powerful testament to the transformative power of partnership. The combined efforts of PowerCom, Telecom Namibia, MTC, other players in the digital space, the Government of the Republic of Namibia, Mr and Mrs Erasmus and all key stakeholders have made this project a reality. This collaborative spirit is crucial as we strive to build a truly connected Namibia, ensuring no one is left behind in the digital age. Therefore, let us work together—government, industry, and citizens alike—to ensure that every Namibian has the opportunity to thrive in the digital age.

The telecommunications industry is a strategic and we should ensure that the //Karas region benefits maximally through telecommunications as we tap into the new and emerging industries powered by innovative technologies such green hydrogen, new oil discoveries.

Together, let us continue building a Namibia where technology empowers, connects, and propels us all towards a more prosperous future.

Thank you!