

Address by the Honourable Minister of Communications, Faith Muthambi, at the presentation of the GCIS Budget Vote 2014/15 in the National Assembly

15 Jul 2014

Honourable Chairperson

Honourable Members

Honoured guests

Chairpersons and board members of SABC, Brand SA, MDDA and ICASA

Councillors ICASA and management of all entities present

Members of the media

It is a very special honour for me to present my first Budget Vote as Minister of Communications in the Fifth Administration of a democratic South Africa.

In the year in which we are celebrating 20 Years of Freedom, we must all pause – in this esteemed Parliament of the People and in every corner of our country – to reflect with pride and a sense of accomplishment on the road we have travelled as a nation.

This is a road we have travelled on our own since December 2013 when we paid farewell to our beloved founding President and leader of our Struggle, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

In two days' time, South Africa and the world over will be celebrating Mandela Day.

When we observe the birthday of our departed leader, we have a special opportunity to reflect once again on the life and influence of Madiba and to recommit ourselves to keeping his legacy of humanity, humility, generosity of spirit and firmness of principle alive. Let us dedicate the 67 minutes informed by these values and keep the legacy alive.

This very democratic Parliament is where the vision and principles of Nelson Mandela found expression in the policies that were developed here to formally consign apartheid to its deserved grave.

Honourable Chairperson

As we introduce the GCIS Budget Vote for 2014/15, it is worth noting that this is the last Budget Vote of the department. As you will be aware, the President of the Republic of South Africa, the Honourable Jacob Zuma, has signed a proclamation to de-establish the GCIS and establish the Department of Communications.

This new department combines what we can call the “old” GCIS with Brand South Africa, the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) under our ministry. Our mandate is that of overarching communication policy and strategy, information dissemination and publicity as well as the branding of the country abroad.

New Department of Communications: New possibilities

This House will also be aware that the new Department of Communications additionally forms part of the new Inter-Ministerial Committee on Information and Publicity established by President Jacob Zuma to provide multi-disciplinary guidance and support to this important portfolio of government.

As we approach this reconfiguration, we are excited by the new possibilities this opens up for more effective and meaningful communication with citizens and with our partners and stakeholders internationally.

We wish to pay tribute to our predecessors, Minister Collins Chabane and Deputy Minister Obed Bapela, for the sound legacy they have entrusted to us.

We also look forward to a productive and constructive relationship with the Portfolio Committee on Communications as led by the passionate and vigorous Honourable Joyce Molo-Moropa.

## Entering a new era in government communications

Honourable Members

In South Africa, lives are being changed for the better every single day, thanks to the work of this government and its partnership with all sectors of society.

Every day, we are building new homes for people who need them. Every day, we are feeding children at school who may have no food at home. Every day, we are helping mothers give birth in safe and dignified facilities. Every day, we are apprehending criminals and abusers, and dismantling large-scale criminal networks.

The communication programme of government must keep pace with our underlying programme of delivery. There are many times we do not communicate as much as we implement and this creates a lag in public awareness or sentiment about the extensive work we are doing to realise Vision 2030 of our National Development Plan.

The GCIS Budget Vote for 2014/15 is the first phase of a new communication vision for government in which our point of departure will be the overwhelming mandate given to this government by the people of South Africa.

Our communications approach will balance our respect for this clear public mandate, as well as our confidence that South Africans overwhelmingly support our vision of the future. Our communications practice will also be rooted in our understanding that we are engaged in dissemination of Information for Empowerment of Citizens, nothing more and nothing less.

Our mission is to give effect to President Jacob Zuma's expectation that – and I quote – “Improved communication and marketing will promote an informed citizenry and also assist the country to promote investments, economic growth and job creation.”

I wish to give you the assurance and comfort that GCIS will leverage its budget allocation of R437.2 million for this financial year to achieve continuous

engagement, consultation and partnership-building with citizens and stakeholders, and sustained sharing of information.

As we do so during this year, our aim is not just to inform South Africans about what is happening around them, but to involve our people in adding to the Good Story our country is able to tell.

At the same time, we know that the fight against poverty, unemployment demands intensive communication of socio-economic opportunities created by government, for vulnerable citizens and communities, in terms of the key priorities of government.

Building on our achievements: Addressing our challenges

Honourable Chairperson

The work we will do during this financial year builds on the proud record GCIS has established in the course of a number of years, of working creatively and energetically with its limited resources, to achieve the desired outcomes.

2013/14 was no exception in this regard.

The GCIS complied with all legislative requirements prescribed by the PFMA and other Treasury regulations. It tabled the 2012/13 annual report in Parliament, as well as quarterly performance reports and corrective action plans.

Ninety Four (94) per cent of GCIS staff signed performance agreements in 2013/14, exceeding the 90 per cent target for the year. In addition, 97 per cent of the department's bi-annual assessments were signed within the legislated timeframe. GCIS has maintained a vacancy rate below the Department of Public Service and Administration's 8 per cent standard.

In terms of Finance, Supply Chain Management and Auxiliary Services, GCIS received an unqualified audit report for its 2012/13 annual financial statements and it adhered to all budget cycle deadlines. During 2013/14, GCIS implemented cost-containment measures in line with National Treasury's instructions.

During 2013/14, GCIS implemented 2 961 development communication projects reaching more than 36 million people and conducted 3 876 community and stakeholder liaison visits.

These visits have intensified platforms and opportunities where the public can access government information and have been implemented through community and stakeholder engagements, face-to-face activities and community media events. Political principals interacted with communities through 346 public participation events, izimbizo.

GCIS further held 654 marketing events to increase the visibility of the Thusong Service Centres and intensify the use of integrated mobile units. A total of 736 879 copies of government information materials were distributed in communities and 48 copies of the weekly electronic newsletter My District Today.

The media bulk-buying services have also taken shape and assisted government to realise economies of scale. In the financial year 2013/14, GCIS conducted 150 media bulk-buying campaigns, with a total value of over R220 million and realized R28, 6 million in savings. We intend to grow this work and ensure that government's limited budget is used effectively.

It is not practical to list all our achievements or challenges in this format or in this forum but I hope the overview I have provided demonstrates how seriously we take our task and how diligently and responsibly we work with the public funds entrusted to us.

Looking ahead

In this financial year 2014/15, GCIS has been allocated R413.1 million which represents less than R10 per citizen for the year, even before we take operational costs into account. This illustrates how hard and innovatively we need to work to reach and interact with South Africans on such a tight allocation.

In the 2013/14 Medium Term Expenditure Framework, Cabinet introduced baseline efficiency saving measures which has resulted in baseline being reduced in 2014/15 by R8.3 million and in 2015/16 by R13.1 million.

The national communication strategy tasks the department with working with other departments to align their communication campaigns and programmes with the strategic priorities of government.

In implementing the national communication strategy, the department will focus on ensuring that the strategy's framework is adopted at the provincial and local government levels and that their development communication campaigns and programmes are aligned with the government communication programme.

The department will continue to conduct information campaigns, such as the state of the nation address; develop communication activations aligned with the government communication programme; coordinate the government Imbizo programmes; and produce government publications, such as the Vukuzenzele, over this period.

Almost 63.7 per cent of the department's allocation over the medium term is spent in the Administration and Intergovernmental Coordination and Stakeholder Management programmes. The bulk of the expenses in these two programmes includes governance related costs such as audit fees, Information Technology which is central to the manner in which we communicate and human resources which is central in our provincial and district offices in facilitating the face to face communication.

Spending on goods and services over the medium term is expected to be primarily to the publication of the monthly Vuk'uzenzele newspaper and the South Africa Yearbook. 20.4 million Vuk'uzenzele copies are set to be produced in 11 official languages including braille and distributed monthly over the MTEF period.

In addition, the department plans to issue 42 cluster reports on perceptions of government delivery and performance, conduct 8 250 community and stakeholder liaison visits and align 6 552 development communication projects with the government communication programme over the medium term.

The Imbizo platform is the bedrock of government's face-to-face engagement with citizens, which creates an opportunity for people from all walks of life to

share their ideas, hopes and frustrations with national, provincial or local leadership.

At the apex of this outreach programme is the Presidential Siyahlola programme, which allows the President to monitor and give personal attention to difficulties being experienced in various parts of the country.

With regard to the Media Development and Diversity Agency, R21.8 million has been allocated to enable historically disadvantaged communities and individuals to gain access to the media. The Deputy Minister will provide further details in this regard.

Honourable Members

Our department is new and therefore what we are presenting to you is an interim budget that will be improved once all the ground work to establish a new Department has been concluded. For now we invite you to approve the budget of the Government Communications and Information System.

In this regard, we felt it appropriate to share with you our emerging vision of how we intend tackling the mammoth task that the President has given us to revolutionaries how we use information to empower our people.

I wish to reiterate what President Zuma said in the State of the Nation Address, we are indeed a nation at work. There are huge opportunities that this government is making available for our people to partake in the rebuilding of our economy. Such interventions will and must result in the empowerment of our people and a clear victory against the difficult challenges of unemployment, inequality and poverty. Our job therefore is to answer the question - how do we use information to empower our people? How do we use the very same information to enable our people to partake in the radical economic interventions that are already being rolled out by this government.

We have therefore set ourselves a simple goal - that of information revolution. We must put in place an over- arching communications policy that will guide our work. All of us must answer the question: How is our work contributing to the implementation of the National Development Plan.

All civil servants need to understand that every act of service to the people is an act of information that empowers them and improves their lives. Making available information about jobs and opportunities that this government creates is crucial and must be a central part of what all political principals and all civil servants must implement with vigour.

Honourable Chairperson

The realignment is a work in progress, however we can announce the following:

1) This week is National Imbizo Focus week, this is the beginning of a process to strengthen our interaction with our people. The adoption of the Izimbizo as a mechanism for communication between government and its citizens bears testimony to the Democratic Government's commitment to transparent and accountable service delivery, and where challenges are encountered, to listen to these and bring solutions.

As we have said before and committed to our people, we will work with them to take South Africa forward. In moving South Africa forward government can never tackle the triple challenges alone - stakeholders in civil society, business and communities will be taken along to shape how we position this country both domestically and internationally.

2) Given the negative publicity we have received internationally Brand SA has provided us with a comprehensive report on how the world perceives our country. The positive positioning of the country is crucial for job creation through the strengthening of our competitiveness as a nation. As we celebrate 20 Years of Freedom, it is inspiring that Brand South Africa tells us that 91% of the population are proud to be South Africans. It further says more than 85% of the population believe that South Africa is competitive, innovative and capable of achieving greatness as a country, and 95% of citizens express a sense of belonging in the country, with a strong desire to remain here.

3) The stabilisation of the public broadcaster is at the top of our agenda. So much is hinging on this public broadcaster being stable that we are leaving nothing to chance. There is of course already a lot interest, correctly so as this is a public broadcaster which must act in the interest of all people. We do not



intend to be hands off and allow a deterioration of the public broadcaster. We have instructed the board to ensure that a Chief Executive Officer is in place before the expiry of the three months extension on the acting CEO position that we have granted. We expect that the filling of both the COO as well as the CEO and CFO positions subsequently will result in clarity of purpose for the SABC.

We wish to assure the people of South Africa that our intention is to make the SABC play its role in the national project of fighting poverty, inequality and unemployment through total citizen empowerment. A new strategy for the funding of the public broadcaster is one of the urgent tasks that we will be putting forward for the leadership of the corporation.

4) The GCIS in its current form has done a sterling job in holding the fort as we establish the new department. To this end we have presented the national communications strategy to cabinet and this will assist us to improve communications to our people. Various interventions in this regard around the theme of Together We Move South Africa Forward have been adopted and will be implemented with the necessary vigour. We will be improving government's own media by ensuring that more and more information about jobs and opportunities are made accessible more frequently.

Instead of a conclusion

The growth in digital and mobile communications presents government with the opportunity and challenge of engaging interactively with citizens and stakeholders, and to join in social conversations rather than produce one-way communications.

As a government of the people, we will listen closely and share openly but we will also attend vigorously to issues that threaten to undermine the reputation of our government or our country.

We will reach out directly to communities, we will leverage the communication platforms we have created ourselves, we will work with public media, we will create communication partnerships across various sectors and we will project our country with pride internationally.

We will be mindful of our obligations to communicate effectively with people with disability, and to present information in all official languages.

We will further work to make government communications more effective and professional and to secure greater value for government's considerable spend on advertising, so that our messages and information can reach more people in more places, more frequently.

In view of the limited reach of commercial media, we will work closely with community, commercial and international media as conduits for the extensive range of information that government generates through its transformation programme.

The year ahead will see new departures and new practices in government communications as demanded by this new administration.

The 2014/15 fiscal year is therefore one of transition and one that we hope will inspire South Africans that we are a listening, sharing and caring government that places a high premium on daily and continuous communication with people.

Together We Move South Africa Forward.

I now commend the GCIS budget vote to the house.

I thank you.

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Speeches:

Minister's speeches

Year:

2014

Speech date::

Tuesday, July 15, 2014