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Department:
Communications
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Closing Ceremony Remarks
delivered on behalf of
Dr Harold Wesso
Acting Director-General of Communications
& CEO OF eSkills Institute
by Ms Mameetse Mphahlele

at the

e-Skills Summit, 26-28 July 2010, Cape Town

It is my pleasure and an honour to deliver these closing ceremony remarks on behalf of Dr Harold Wesso, the Acting DG of Communications and CEO of the e-Skills Institute.

There is no doubt that everyone in the country requires e-Skills in order for them to participate meaningfully within the information society and knowledge economy. There is an unquestionable need to build a strong base for e-Skills development in South Africa.

The opportunity to engage all citizens in this regard is huge. Whilst there has been a plethora of service delivery efforts in respect of building an e-skills base within the broader educational and training context, we have not yet succeeded, particularly from government's side, to harness and rally all these efforts from all relevant stakeholders towards a common vision.

Our journey started with the decision by the former President of the Republic of South Africa in 2001 who, through his State of the Nation Address informed the country that an Advanced African ICT University will be established.

In August 2007, the Presidential International Advisory Council on Information Society and Development (PIAC on ISAD) propelled government into action by announcing that dedicated capacity must be established to ensure that each individual is able to actively participate in the world in which ICT is a requirement for advancement.

This decision has been confirmed by the current Administration, which has re-established and re-confirmed the platforms of engagement to enable us as a country to achieve the vision of building an inclusive Information Society. The Ministers e-Skills Council and its corresponding e-Skills Working Group are structures that bring all relevant stakeholders for effective implementation of current and future e-Skills initiatives.

In preparing for this Summit, the e-Skills Institute started its work 18 months ago. Our mandate is essentially to coordinate existing effort and build a national consensus in terms of e-Skills priorities, based on a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach.

We began work on 8 projects which were intended to coordinate existing e-Skills capacity and resources to maximize impact. One of these projects was to hold this e-Skills Summit. We acknowledged and realized that no one part of society, be it government, civil society or business etc can achieve this goal on their own. We further needed a mechanism that will build cohesion and do away with duplication and ensure that there is buy-in and ownership from all stakeholders.

In this regard, we adopted a 4x4 model, working with four categories of stakeholders and focusing on four types of skills. We worked with educational institutions, business, organized labour and in particular COSATU as well as government. Our four types of skills include traditional IT & IS skills; skills for managing in a modern environment; ICT user skills as well as eSkills for citizens.

We have prioritized the following 3 pillars:

1. Defining what e-Skills mean within a South African context
2. Research, evaluation and policy development
3. Aligning this work with government's MTSF

The path to the convening of this e-Skills Summit has been complex and has been time-consuming given the broad agenda and the individual stakeholder interests in this area.

However, all this effort has culminated in us having local and international experts serving in panel discussions and ready to share their experiences related to the three pillars.

Our objective, ladies and gentleman, was for us to get to an agreed Plan of Action in respect of the draft Nespa document. All the work that has come through during deliberations from the Working Groups and issues identified by yourselves will be used to enrich the next version of the Nespa document.

Its been a tough 3 days, but through your enthusiasm, diligence and robust engagements, we have sufficient information to revise the document and take it through the government processes.

The Action Plan on the Nespa document remains a living document and it is there for us to input. We will revise the report and the next version will be circulated to all participants of the summit and those registered stakeholders on our mailing list.

Under the leadership and guidance of Dr Harold Wesso, clearly this is an opportune time, as the acting DG of Communications to further galvanise key role players within government to deliver and take the document through relevant processes until it is approved for implementation by Cabinet.

In conclusion, we want to be able to sing from the same hymn book when we talk about e-Skills initiatives, existing and future capacity and resources required to

drive these initiatives and developing measurable e-Skills competencies in the country. The DOC through the e-Skills Institute will continue to engage you, the work has just begun. The successful hosting of this Summit is but the first milestone that we, together with all stakeholders, have achieved.

I would like to, on behalf of Dr Wesso, thank the The Information Society Institute under Prof Wallace Taylor's and Ms Mymoena Sahrif's leadership and guidance, Paul and Miriam Cunningham of the IIMC for the sterling organisation of the summit, the sponsors of the Summit, departmental officials and of course you as the participants and all our stakeholders for ensuring that this occasion is truly a momentous occasion.

Ladies and gentleman, have a safe journey.

I thank you.
