



**the doc**

Department:  
Communications  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**



## **Acting Director-General opening ResNes Research Colloquium, Cape Town 26 July 2010**

**Dr Harold M Wesso**

“ Firstly, let me welcome you all here today for what is the first step in building a research capacity around e-Skills, a very significant matter for South Africa that sits as a high priority within the Human Development Resource needs for our country.

“That we have a major e-skills shortage in this country is beyond doubt (with industry alone currently requiring 70,000 people). That this problem is growing is also unquestionable; and we all know that the power and impact of ICT across the full socio-economic spectrum of our country is growing at an exponential rate.

“What is inherently evident is that whatever we have done in the past and what we are doing now is just not enough to deal with a profound matter that will affect our capacity to deal with every single matter of importance that our Nation faces.

“Of necessity this means that not only will we have to deal with the infrastructural issues, the service delivery issues and the training of our citizenry right across the spectrum, we will have to develop well considered research capacity to guide, evaluate and ensure that we can give our people the best life chances in a world dominated by ICT.

“Certainly the way in which ICT capacity impacting on every facet of our lives, the reality that we have a major and serious matter of e-Skilling our nation and the fact that the Department of Communications has been tasked coordinating a response to these matters, simply demands that we must ensure that there is a coordinated research approach to support our efforts.

“The simple fact that e-Skills covers such a broad set of disciplinary bases, provides researchers and our national efforts to address the issues with some challenges. What is needed is a framework that can guide, inform and develop an integrated approach in order to grow a base of highly developed research expertise that understands the needs of stakeholder groups in Government, Education, Business and Civil Society.

“ We know that in dealing with mega issues like e-Skills we need a plan that can help focus efforts and provide the basis to position individual research efforts within a context that leads to sustainable impact.

“ The country has a plan and this is called the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF – 2009-14) that all public service efforts i.e. Government and education need to report against.

“We know that most of our research expertise is located in Universities and that researchers by and large are part time researchers i.e. they have other teaching and administration responsibilities.

“Our best researchers are looking for ways to get out of the bind they are in chasing funding, undertaking ‘doable’ work within their time and resource constraints, seeking peer recognition and in developing research areas or institutes that suit their particular discipline interests .

“So if we are to build our capacity within the country, engage expertise from outside our country and provide a sound basis for an integrated research platform for emerging researchers to build careers , we in government must provide the leadership to establish a network architecture for research, evaluation and policy development for e-Skilling the nation.

“The ResNeS research colloquium today marks a start in this journey.

“In getting us to this point I would like to recognize the sterling efforts of my colleagues in the e-SI, The Information Society Institute, Prof Songc from the Walter Sisulu University who has developed the basis for ReSNeS, the support of the Universities, in particular, the University of the Western Cape, Walter Sisulu University, the University of Pretoria, and the Durban University of technology who have signed MoU's with us to develop an e-Skills effort. We would welcome other Universities represented here today to also join with us in a formal way to address this huge need.

“Today I would also at this time officially launch ResNeS – the South African Research Network for e-Skills. Working with our first four collaborating Universities we have begun the process of bringing together the wide diversity of research relevant to e-Skills and in building a base for new focused effort.

“Professor Phinda Songa of Walter Sisulu University has headed this effort which will be a collaboration across all South African Universities that have an interest in research, evaluation and policy development for e-skilling our nation for equitable prosperity and global competitiveness.

“Some may ask why Walter Sisulu and why the Eastern Cape when there are obviously places with more established research reputations?

“Firstly, we believe that starting this new, exciting and we hope profound journey it is appropriate to start where some of our great leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe started and where the ANCYL was born.

“But further than this, if we are to build new approaches and if we are to strengthen the whole of our research capacity within Universities in our country, we believe that it is important for the well established to demonstrate a commitment to helping the less well established to contribute in meaningful ways and in meaningful places close to the communities that are in very real need.

“With modern communications technologies we can now have effective research networks operating from a wide range of physical localities and if we are about e-Skilling we should ‘walk the talk’ ourselves and provide the base to e-skill our researchers in ways that our communities in need can more easily relate to the research work because it is where they can see it.

“So it is with great pleasure that I now formally launch the start of the journey for ResNeS and what better way to do this than at its first official activity a research colloquium like this. So we are starting with action and not just promises and hopes of action.

“I would encourage all the research leaders here today to support Professor Songca and his coordinating group to become involved in ResNeS.

I would also like to publicly thank our sponsors for this the first e-Skills Summit.

Cisco and their partners Promethean and Dimension Data are the major sponsors of the Summit and will host us all at the e-Skills Summit dinner tomorrow evening.

Our other sponsors are the City of Cape Town, Telkom, the Provincial Government of the Western Cape who have provide the e-Skills Summit tour that will provide the opportunity for delegates to visit some of the e-Community Forums in this area on Thursday and Friday, Oracle and Microsoft.

“We in the Department of Communication, thank you for supporting us in this endeavour. I trust that you will all enjoy the research discussed here today and that the discussions during the week at the e-Skills Summit will stimulate you all to develop new focused research that help address the huge problem that a lack of e-Skills is causing for our country.

Thank you

