KWAZULU-NATAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

With All protocol Observed, firstly, greetings to all of you gathered here today, the CEO of Moses Kotane and all our esteemed guests,

As I have been introduced, My Name is Nonkululeko Zondo, I will be briefly presenting the proposal for the KwaZulu-Natal Digital Transformation Strategy

Introduction

> ➢ The KwaZulu-Natal province presents a pool of economic opportunities in virtually every sector and department.

> ➢ Being the country's second largest contributor to the economy after Gauteng, demonstrates that the province plays a significant role in South Africa's economy. This presents an enormous opportunity in this digital era to gravitate towards a digitally enabled socio-economic development in the province.

> ➢ This requires however, improving the standards of service quality and increasing the overall efficiencies of government.

> ➢ Digital transformation presents an opportunity for citizens to participate in governance and public administration reform to ensure good governance.

> ➢ In recognizing Government's current efforts in prioritizing digital transformation tied with building an inclusive information society and knowledge economy that is based on the needs of the citizens, business and public sector, the KZN Digital Transformation Strategy seeks to accelerate and guide a common, coordinated response to reap the benefits of the current digital revolution.

> ➢ BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) Summit 2019 represented by the President Cyril Ramaphosa agreed that the digital economy agenda for BRICS countries should include:

a) Digital Literacy
b) Narrowing the social digital divide
c) Digital Skills Development
d) Digitalisation of small and medium enterprises
e) Expansion in the development of inclusive digital projects within rural communities.
f) Coordination of business activities between the public and private sector.
g) Collaboration on knowledge and best practice sharing as well enhancing digital connectivity.
h) 5G prioritisation

The province of KwaZulu-Natal, as a competitive province in many aspects, therefore aims to fulfil these objectives through the development and implementation of the Digital Transformation Strategy, which is to be developed by government, businesses, academics and civil society.

The Digital Transformation Strategy will build on the existing initiatives and frameworks within the ICT and related sectors such as such as the National Development Plan (NDP), The National Integrated ICT policy white paper, the ICT RDI Roadmap to name a few.

Overall Objective of this strategy is to embrace digital technologies and innovation to transform KZN's society and its economy by promoting integration, generating inclusive economic growth, stimulating job creation, erasing the digital divide through benefiting from the digital revolution for socio-economic development.

Other Objectives include:

- Eradicating the digital illiteracy for government departments;
- Narrowing the digital divide amongst citizens and government;
- Promoting digital skills development;
- Promoting digitisation of small businesses to work efficiently with government and citizens;
- Expanding development and inclusiveness of digital projects within rural communities;
- Coordinating business activities efficiently between public and private sector, lastly,
- To increase connectivity within the province

Moving on to the problem Statement:

- Government in South Africa undoubtedly faces numerous challenges in delivering services such as slow response to service delivery and citizen's needs, poor integration and coordination across sectors and government's departments, the absence of accountability, transparency and efficiency.

- In order to overcome these challenges, a single cohesive National e-Strategy is essential to ensure the diffusion of ICTs in all areas of society and the economy.

- This necessitates government at a provincial level to redirect its efforts in ensuring that this vision is achieved provincially through harnessing opportunities for digital transformation in the public sector and the business sector.

I am sure at this moment, we are all wondering, what exactly is a Digital Transformation Strategy?

The Digital Transformation Strategy refers to Government's use of Information Technologies that can transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government.

These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: **(1)** better delivery of government services to citizens, **(2)** improved interactions with business and industry, **(3)** citizen empowerment through access to information, **lastly**, more efficient government management.

Digital Transformation Strategy sectors

- **The first one is: Government-to-Citizen;**

This entails encouraging citizens to become actively involved in governance and to enable information sharing between government and citizens;

- **This is followed by: Government-to-Business;**

This entails Delivering information and services relevant to specific business needs.

- **And lastly: Government-to-Government.**

    This entails Facilitating communication among government agencies to enhance interrelationships among agencies and Intergovernmental access to government information systems**.**

Pillars of the digital transformation strategy:

Openness, **transparency** and **inclusiveness** are key ingredients to building accountability and trust, which are necessary for the functioning of a democratic government.

An overview of the national to provincial governmental challenges

Digital Divide

The disparity in Access to information and ICT which may result from differences in class, race, gender, age and geographic location can effectively deprive citizens in the provincial economy.

Silos in government departments

The noticeable growing culture of operating in silos appears evident in some areas of government and this subsequently tend to fragment service delivery.

Lack of Innovation

There any barriers for innovation in the public sector Institutions responsible for service delivery that exists, this directly affects the adoption of innovative technologies to improve service delivery in government include:

Skills shortage

One of the key challenges is the shortage of skilled ICT people in the country fueled by the "brain drain" of skilled ICT personnel and other professionals to developed countries, and from public to private sector. Currently the education and training system is unable to produce the essential and technical management skills that most employers seek.

The Potential Benefits of the Digital Transformation Strategy in KZN:

- ➢ Improving Government efficiencies in finance, record keeping and procurement to name a few,
- ➢ It could potentially lead to the development of new economies and new opportunities;
- ➢ It could improve trust, openness and transparency amongst other provinces and regions in the world;
- ➢ It could improve credibility gained from employing technological transformation and advancements;
- ➢ It could create competitive advantage in production and automation;
- ➢ It could lead to advanced data integration and management systems;
- ➢ And advanced tracking of imports and exports

To Conclude:

Digital Transformation Strategy projects are a reality for the African continent. However, even with various strategic plans and policies, the core challenge remains with the minimal successful implementation.

"The real benefit of the Digital Transformation Strategy lies not in the use of technology per se, but in the successful implementation and its application to processes of transformation". (United Nations Secretariat Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2008a)