



Eastern Cape Regional

Office:

510 ABSA BANK BLD,
510 5th floor
60 Sutherland street, Umthatha

HEAD OFFICE:

P. O. Box 89, Fontainebleau,
2032
122 Annie Road, Fontainebleau,
2032 Johannesburg
Tel 0+2711 791 7270; Fax:
+27865066644

29 November 2013

Mr G Maulana

ICASA Manager ECS/ECNS

164 Katherine street

Pinmill Farm

Sandton

gmaulana@icasa.org.za

Dear Mr G Maulana

Draft Amendment to Universal service and Access Obligations (USOs)

I take this opportunity to thank ICASA for the opportunity to submit comments and representation on the proposed amendments to the universal service obligations imposed on the licensees mentioned in government gazette 3707 notice 1173 .

I noted that the obligations are reduced substantially from what they were initially at the time of granting of licences to the operators mentioned in the Notice. The ICASA document gives no reasons why the obligations are reduced except the table showing non-performance of the operators in delivering on the USOs. The non-delivery by these operators clearly indicate how they have ignored their promised performance in terms of the USOs. It would be logical to impose penalty for such non-performance. As we do research on connectivity in the country, we find that the needy and the underserved remain unconnected and have no ICT services despite the fact that the Authority imposed licence obligations in return for the spectrum usage privilege extended to operators through their licences. Based on the Department of Education information,

there are more than 26000 public schools and more than 480 schools for people with disabilities. The majority of these schools remain unconnected.

Its important to remember that the process of granting the licenses to these operators was a competitive process with the exception of Sentech. I find it completely unacceptable that the Authority can decide to reduce the USOs which in our view should actually be increased in order to facilitate closing Access gaps to ICTs which remain as wide as they were more than 10 years ago with the exception of voice communications services.

It is not justifiable for the Authority to reduce these USOs because the rural schools remain disadvantaged by lack of internet connectivity and some have no communications services. The digital divide is widening between the haves and have not. I believe that it is not in the public interest in terms of section 2 of the ECA to consider reducing USOs.

I urge the Authority to reconsider the proposed amendments and increase the USOs instead of reducing them. I request the Authority to give reasons for the proposed action. The non-delivery of USOs by the operators cant be rewarded by reducing them. In fact, the Authority should impose penalties for such non-performance.

As a person who still lives in a rural village and having done research on the need in these areas I have personal first hand experience and information on how rural people are ignored by these operators because they live in the so called non-economical areas..

I trust that the representation above will receive your attention and consideration.

Kind regards



Mlamli Boo PR.Eng

cc. Dr S Mncube , ICASA Chairperson

cc. Mr Z Nkosi, USAASA CEO