

## **SIM CARD REGISTRATION ENABLES AND PROTECTS DIGITAL IDENTITY**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The mandatory SIM Registration to be implemented by mobile service providers in Namibia is made in preparation for protecting digital identities from cybercrimes, and to ensure the effective regulation of a technological landscape that offers great benefits to society, the economy and Namibia's governance.

*“Following the recent conference and expo regarding Namibia's preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the effective regulation of technologies on par with international best practices and in the interest of national safety, has never been more important. The protection of the individuals from cybercrimes is just as important. SIM Registration is a component of a larger scheme for Namibia's application of digital technology to various matters including defence, finance, agriculture, education, and governance,”* said Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Emilia Nghikembua.

CRAN on 07 June 2022 officially launched the National SIM Registration Awareness Campaign, which aims to educate the public on the importance of registration of SIM cards in Namibia. Received with some hesitance, CRAN is on a mission to have the public and all stakeholders understand the relevance of SIM Registration, debunk misinformation, and encourage compliance.

*“With about 2.2 million mobile network subscribers in Namibia by April 2022, we are part of a global village that brings individuals closer to one another using digital technologies. A person is now more than a physical citizen of a country alone and an individual's digital presence has become more prominent through the integration and application of digital technologies to the way in which we live, work, and relate to one another. Namibia is one of two African countries who have not yet fully implemented SIM Registration, while more than 157 countries around the world have already done so. According to Interpol's African*

*Cyberthreat Assessment Report 2021, Africa has over 500 million Internet users and the fastest growing Internet and telephone networks in the world. This poses great benefits but for Namibia to reap them and be prepared for cyber threats such as scammed text messages, protection of the nation and individual users must be implemented through SIM Registration, amongst other.\*" said Nghikembua.

In his opening speech at the recent 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution (4IR) conference and expo, President Hage Geingob noted the importance of taking technology into the remote areas for particularly the youth and marginalised not to be excluded from the social, economic, and other developmental benefits of technology. Namibia needs to be ready for the radical change in production, management and governance following the exponential growth in the application of digital technology.

*"This makes SIM Registration a big step in the right direction for citizens to access electronic financial services legitimately and safely, social services of governance and other potential platforms of resources. It is a fact that the people of Africa make the widest use of mobile banking services and independent organisations have raised concern of how particularly women and girls are at a great risk of cybercrimes due to a lack of legislation in protection of the individual user,"* added Nghikembua.

In terms of Part 6 of Chapter V of the Communications Act (No. 8 of 2009), the SIM Registration Conditions obligates users to register their SIM cards at the service provider(s) they subscribe to, by providing their **full name, address, and identity number in the form of a copy of an Identity Document (ID) or Passport**. As of 01 January 2023, to 31 December 2023, it is mandatory for mobile operators to register all their customers' SIM cards and obtain all relevant information before the sale and activation of SIM cards. Operators will have a period of 12 months to conclude the registration of existing customers. The information of new customers must be registered within three (3) months from date of sale and unregistered SIM cards will be deactivated.

*“Registering your SIM card is integral to your digital identity, which already exists through other systems such as banking and social media. SIM Registration is complementary to already in-place legislation and enables Law Enforcement and National Security Agencies to verify digital identities and the use of a mobile phone number during investigations that serve to protect users from cybercrimes and have evidence to prosecute culprits. For Namibia to grasp the 4IR safely, SIM Registration must be implemented,”* said Nghikembua. She stressed that the data to be retained by service providers, the information to create an itemised bill, is already in existence and can be obtained by users. This drive of SIM Registration Awareness targets pre-paid users who have had the opportunity to purchase and use a SIM Card without providing any form of identification.

Digital technologies have become integral in the administration of governance, commercial and financial services that are becoming more accessible. Growth in the digital landscape and an increase in the vulnerability of individuals to cybercrimes prompts both the government and the private sector to adopt strategies that are protective of the individual digital identities and more inclusive of all levels of income, business sizes and sectors of the economy.

*“SIM Registration enables the enhancement of some digital services already available and allows technological growth through the development of new services. After SIM Registration, growth in e-commerce will enable users to manage their businesses and lives better within a safe environment, while knowing that the interception of their data will not be allowed without execution of the relevant procedures as per the legislation,”* she added.

*“The implementation of this legislation is in line with Namibia’s Harambee Prosperity Plan II and its pillars of Effective Governance, Economic Advancement, Social Progression, and Infrastructure Development. These pillars respectively complement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) including those of Peace Justice and Strong Institutions; No*

*Poverty; Decent Work and Economic Growth; and Industry Innovation and Infrastructure. For Namibia to progress and achieve development goals, and for users to safely access the technological developments available to them, SIM Registration must be implemented,"* said Nghikembua.

SIM Registration will also make number portability possible. Number portability will give SIM card users the freedom of switching between networks while keeping the same number. *"SIM Registration will create a comprehensive database of information, which will enable CRAN to effectively regulate the industry in a manner that promotes transparency, encourages competition, implements fair pricing regimes, and ensure a quality of service in the interest of the user. It is one step towards harmonising regulations for Namibia to experience regional and international integration. Without the implementation of legislation such as SIM Registration, Namibia's people and the country's FINTECH are vulnerable and at a high risk,"* she concluded.

Namibians are encouraged to comply with the regulations and engage in any components of the 6-month-long SIM Registration Awareness Campaign that is to unfold through panel discussions, a nationwide roadshow and a multimedia campaign on social media, TV, and radio.

Any queries may be forwarded to [communications@cran.na](mailto:communications@cran.na).

**"ENDS"**

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## Fact Sheet:

- The SIM Registration Conditions obligates users to register their SIM cards at the service provider(s) they subscribe to, by providing their **full name, address, and identity number in the form of a copy of an Identity Document (ID) or Passport.**
- These conditions apply to Namibian nationals and foreigners and extend to include new or existing customers.
- The information obtained by the service providers must be sufficient to determine which telephone number or other identification has been issued to a specific customer. This will enable the Law Enforcement or Security Agencies to conduct investigations into cybercrimes that put the nation, persons, or juristic persons such as a business at risk.
- Every service provider is mandated to store the customer data and information on their systems for a minimum of five years, this will ensure an accurate number of subscribers and the lawful use of such data.