

COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF NAMIBIA

Notice to stakeholders on implementation of Proposed Policy Directive to increase the minimum Broadband Speed in Namibia.

In accordance with section 7 of the Communications Act, 2009 (Act No.8 of 2009), the Minister of Information and Communications Technology has expressed intention to issue a policy directive to increase the minimum broadband speed in Namibia. The scope of the policy directive is captured in the Annexure to this notice, as an outcome of the consultations held on 21 May 2025 by the Ministry of Information and Technology and on 11 July 2025 by the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia as directed by the Ministry.

Stakeholders are invited to submit written submissions to inform the finalisation of the Policy Directive by the Minister on or before **29 August 2025**. These can be sent to legal@cran.na

1. INTRODUCTION

Broadband encompasses a range of high-capacity technologies that connect users to faster and more reliable internet access compared to traditional telephone line dial-up connections. These technologies are essential for supporting the consumption and creation of rich online content enabling seamless video streaming, real-time communication, cloud computing, and other bandwidth-intensive applications. In today's increasingly digital society, where education, commerce, governance, and social interaction are progressively moving online, access to high-speed internet has become a fundamental requirement rather than a luxury.

Reliable broadband connectivity is now widely recognized as critical infrastructure, on par with electricity and water which are necessary for universal meaningful connectivity and participation in the digital economy. It serves as a catalyst for economic development, innovation, job creation, global competitiveness, and enhanced quality of life, particularly by bridging the digital divide and empowering communities with access to information, services, and opportunities.

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU's) Connect 2030 Agenda aims to achieve universal broadband coverage and ensure broadband services are affordable, inclusive and accessible to all; objectives that are equally relevant to Namibia. Namibia currently ranks 186th globally and 28th in Sub-Saharan Africa for mean download speeds, with an average speed of 11.48 Mbps (Ookla Speedtest Global Index, 2024). Additionally, only 15% of households have access to fixed internet, with a stark disparity in rural areas (5.1%). These indicators underscore the urgency to reform broadband standards and close the digital divide. The successful deployment of broadband thus requires a responsive framework that provides clear guidance to all stakeholders and safeguard the elements of accessibility, quality and affordability of broadband.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Ministers for ICT adopted ten regional broadband targets that are to be achieved by 2025. These targets serve as a benchmark framework to guide member states in achieving universal, affordable and inclusive broadband access. Specifically, these targets require members states, inter alia, to –

- (a) achieve broadband coverage connecting for majority of their populations;
- (b) connect at least 50 % of the households to broadband service;

- (c) reduce the cost of entry level broadband services to less than 2 % of Gross National Income per capita; and
- (d) ensure that the cost of entry-level terminals and household installation for fixed or mobile broadband is less than US\$50.

Namibia has recorded progress in meeting the SADC Broadband Targets 2025. As of 2022 indicators, Namibia has achieved 93% of households connected to mobile data. This policy directive reaffirms the Government's commitment to regional harmonization and adopt the SADC Broadband Targets positions these targets as baseline standards for national implementation.

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology has developed the National Broadband Policy to deploy broadband in Namibia. The objective of the National Broadband Policy is to ensure universal access to broadband infrastructure and services, foster the development of locally relevant content, applications and innovation and support efforts aimed at capacity building and digital divide. In alignment with the national objectives under section 2 of the Communications Act, 2009 particularly those that promote the availability of high quality, reliability, affordability of telecommunication services, and facilitate access to communication systems and services for all Namibians. These Policy Guideline are issued in furtherance of the objectives of the National Broad Band Policy to define minimum broadband speed thresholds and provide a structured implementation.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

To establish a digitally inclusive Namibia in which all citizens, communities, and enterprises benefit from equitable, reliable, and high-speed broadband services, thereby fostering innovation, competitiveness, and inclusive socio-economic growth.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Broadband speed policy directive is to:

- a) Provide a framework that outlines the minimum broadband download and upload speeds necessary to meet Namibia's digital connectivity goals.

- b) To encourage investment in broadband infrastructure by both the public and private sector stakeholders, thereafter, fostering the expansion and enhancement of network capacity.
- c) To promote affordability of services and digital equity ensuring that both urban and rural communities have fair access to reliable services.
- d) To facilitate digital transformation across critical sectors such as public service education, healthcare, and commerce.
- e) Provide regulatory clarity to ensure coherent and effective implementation by all stakeholders in accordance with national development objectives.

4. DEFINITIONS

In this directive a word or expression to which a meaning has been attached in the Communications Act or the regulations made thereunder, has that meaning and, unless the context otherwise indicates –

“Broadband speed” means the minimum download speed of 25Mbps download and 5 Mbps upload as a broadband entry level, which shall be reviewed with the aim to increase the download speeds as per country basis in line with targets contained in the broadband plan.

“Broadband coverage” includes geographical and population coverage for telecommunication networks and coverage of the population for broadcasting.

“Download” means the maximum amount of data your device can receive from the Internet in a second.

“effective date” means 1 October 2026.

“National Broadband Policy “means the National Broadband Policy 2019-2029.

“Minister” means the Minister of Information and Communications Technology.

“Service provider” means a telecommunications licensee.

“The Act” means the Communications Act, 2009 (Act No.8 of 2009).

“upload” means the maximum amount of data your device can send to the Internet in a second.

5. APPLICATION OF DIRECTIVE

These directives are of general application to all telecommunication service providers in Namibia.

6. LEGAL BASIS FOR THIS DIRECTIVE

The National Minimum Broadband Speed Policy Directive is issued by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) in accordance with the powers vested in the Minister under section 7 of the Communications Act 8 of 2009. The Directive give operational effect to the National Broadband Policy (2019-2029) and are designed to support the implementation of national and sectoral development objectives as articulated in Vision 2030, the National Development Plan 6 (2025/26–2030/31), and the Overarching ICT Policy (2009).

Accordingly, this Directive serve as a regulatory instrument to guide all stakeholders in the broadband ecosystem toward achieving minimum national broadband speed standards.

7. POLICY ACTIONS FOR BROADBAND SPEED

7.1 MINIMUM AND TARGET BROADBAND DOWNLOAD SPEEDS

- 7.1.1 The broadband speed shall be a minimum download speed of 25 Megabits per second (Mbps) and minimum upload speed of 5 Megabits per second (Mbps).
- 7.1.2 All licensed service providers are required to ensure that all broadband services offered to users comply with the minimum speed provided from the effective date.
- 7.1.3 All applicable service packages must be revised and submitted to CRAN for approval prior to the effective date.

7.2 TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.2.1 The Ministry recognises the need to adopt a technology-neutral regulatory stance in principle however, it recognises that technical limitations inherent in certain broadband delivery platforms necessitate differentiated treatment under this directive. Accordingly, the following technology-specific policy statements shall guide the implementation of the minimum broadband speed thresholds:
- 7.2.2 All broadband services delivered over Fiber-to-the-x (FTTx) infrastructure, including but not limited to fibre to the home, fibre to the business, and fibre to the curb, must comply with the minimum broadband speed requirement. All service providers providing FTTx-based services must undertake a review of their existing service packages and tariff structures to ensure alignment with this requirement and promote affordability and accessibility for all users.
- 7.2.3 In respect of mobile services; both 4G LTE and 5G services must comply with the minimum broadband speed requirement. Despite the minimum requirement, 5G services are recognised as capable of exceeding the minimum broadband threshold and are encouraged for deployment, particularly in areas with high traffic demand and specialised industrial or commercial applications.
- 7.2.4 The Ministry recognises that 2G and 3G technologies do not meet the prescribed broadband standard and must be formally phased out. To ensure that the broadband policy is well enforced, with effect from effective date, these technologies may not be advertised, promoted, or classified as broadband.
- 7.2.5 All xDSL services that rely on copper-based infrastructure and are primarily unable to support the minimum broadband speed threshold due to inherent technological constraints, must be exempted from the minimum speed requirement, provided they are offered exclusively to legacy customers.
- 7.2.6 A service provider may not introduce or market any new xDSL-based services as broadband from date of implementation. Therefore, all service providers are further encouraged to implement migration strategies to transition xDSL users to compliant

broadband technologies in a manner that ensures minimal service disruption and consumer affordability.

- 7.2.7 In respect to satellite-based services, Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) technologies are limited in terms of speed and affordability. Therefore all existing VSAT services must not be classified as broadband. Service providers are therefore, encouraged to adopt newer satellite technologies, including Low Earth Orbit (LEO) systems, which offer improved capacity, lower latency, and reduced operational costs.
- 7.2.8 Any technology that does not meet the applicable minimum broadband speed threshold prescribed in these from the date of implementation may not be classified, marketed, or advertised as broadband. The continued provision of such services may only be permitted where they are explicitly presented to consumers as non-broadband services, in compliance with consumer protection principles and transparency obligations under applicable regulatory instruments.
- 7.2.9 A service provider must ensure that all consumers are migrated to packages that comply with the applicable policy requirement without imposing punitive penalties. The migration process must be done in a commercially innovative manner that maintains service affordability and does not disadvantage consumers (reduced access, diminished service quality or financial disadvantage).
- 7.2.10 All contracts existing prior effective date must continue until the contract period ends unless the service provider has made provision to upgrade the users to other technologies without prejudicing the user. Upon expiry of such contracts, the service provider must thereafter migrate consumers to packages that comply with the applicable policy requirement and must ensure that such migration is undertaken in a fair and transparent manner.

8 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS

8.1 MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (MICT)

MICT, as the policymaker is responsible for the following:

- a) Provide strategic oversight and ensure alignment of this directive with national policies, including the Broad Band Policy, Vision 2030 and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Strategy.
- b) Monitor the implementation of this policy directive in collaboration with CRAN and provide periodic updates to relevant oversight bodies.
- c) Engage in inter-ministerial coordination (Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, and Ministry of Finance) to facilitate infrastructure roll-out, particularly in underserved and rural areas.
- d) Mobilise development financing and donor support to subsidise rollout costs in priority sectors/areas.
- e) Champion awareness campaigns to educate the public and stakeholders on the benefits of improved broadband access and to promote digital literacy and cyber security.

8.2 COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF NAMIBIA (CRAN)

CRAN, as the sector regulator, is responsible for the following:

- a) Amending the Quality-of-Service Regulations and the license conditions of licensees to align with the revised broadband definition and speed thresholds.
- b) Reviewing and approving tariff adjustments submitted by licensees in a fair and timeous manner (subject to the provisions of Section 53 of the Communications Act) to support transition without unjustified consumer price inflation.
- c) Facilitating spectrum management and re-assignment, especially where current assignments limit the ability of licensees to meet higher speed requirements.
- d) Ensuring that service providers discontinue the use of legacy technologies, that cannot meet the minimum broadband speed requirement set out in this policy guideline, in accordance with sunset principles.
- e) Ensuring fair competition and market access, particularly by promoting infrastructure sharing and open access principles.
- f) Monitoring compliance with the implementation targets and taking enforcement action where licensees fail to meet policy obligations.
- g) Promoting consumer awareness regarding the broadband policy directive which includes informing consumers about the policy objectives, benefits and implications and as well as the impact to increase the usage and demand for broadband services,

ensure effective consumer complaints to build greater trust and confidence among users. Resolving disputes and complaints arising from the implementation of these policy obligations in a timely, fair and transparent manner in accordance with the applicable regulatory requirements.

8.3 TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

All telecommunications service providers operating broadband networks or services must –

- a) Upgrade network infrastructure and technologies to support the revised speed requirements, including fibre, 4G LTE/5G, and satellite technologies.
- b) Discontinue legacy technologies that cannot meet the minimum broadband speed requirement, in accordance with sunset principles.
- c) Submit revised broadband packages and pricing models to CRAN for approval in line with the implementation plan and section 53 of the Communications Act.
- d) Implement consumer-centric transition measures, such as:
 - i. Migrating customers to higher speed packages with minimal disruption or cost.
 - ii. Allowing early contract termination or upgrades without penalties for customers transitioning to newer technologies/packages compliant with this policy directive.
 - iii. Communicating transparently with customers on any changes in service quality, pricing, or technology.
 - iv. Addressing or resolving disputes and complaints arising from the implementation of the policy in a timely and efficient manner and in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.
- e) Submit impact assessments and infrastructure readiness reports to CRAN as required, indicating bottlenecks or challenges affecting rollout and compliance.
- f) Each service provider must publicise the migration of its broadband services in each affected area well in advance before the effective date.

9. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The successful realisation of the revised broadband standard requires a multi-dimensional and time-bound implementation plan involving infrastructure development, regulatory reform, stakeholder mobilisation, and ongoing monitoring.

All service providers are expected to meet the minimum speed of 25Mbps download and 5 Mbps upload by the effective date.

10. COMMENCEMENT DATE

This Policy directive will come into effect on 1 October 2026.