

CRAN HOSTS PUBLIC CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON SIM REGISTRATION CONDITIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

22 October 2021

The Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN), on Tuesday, 19 October 2021 hosted a public consultative meeting pertaining to **SIM Registration Conditions**, which shall be imposed on Telecommunications Service Providers. The purpose of the conditions is to ensure that all active SIM card owners in Namibia are verified and registered.

The SIM Registration Conditions are as a result of the Regulations in terms of Part 6 of Chapter V of the Communications Act (No. 8 of 2009) as published in the Government Gazette in March 2021.

Speaking at the virtual consultative meeting, Mrs. Emilia Nghikembua, Chief Executive Officer, CRAN said, “the regulations provide that the Authority may after consultation with the Minister of ICT, impose further conditions on services providers, to regulate in more detail anything prescribed in the regulations.” The proposed SIM Registration Conditions are therefore, derived from the Regulations and have expanded on the manner in which SIM registration should be carried out by service providers and specify the information to be stored to enable lawful interception.

Nghikembua added that Part 6 of the Communications Act has not yet been operationalised, and as a result, the Regulations have not yet commenced. Commencement of the Regulations shall be done on a date as determined by the Minister of ICT, once the conditions have been finalised.

“SIM registration is utilised to address antisocial behaviour, to provide age verification and to assist in addressing mobile fraud. It is also a tool that eases and enables digital surveillance and interception for instances such as investigations of offences” added

Nghikembua. The SIM registration process will establish a central database of SIM card subscribers, as an enabler to the overall national SIM identification system.

Nghikembua added that mandated requirements for SIM registration are designed to be practical and reasonable in terms of balancing national security demands, whilst maintaining and protecting citizens' rights as a key priority. While addressing security and criminal activity concerns is important, the overall policy consideration is to ensure that there are appropriate privacy safeguards and effective legal oversight to protect consumers' personal data and privacy.

“SIM registration of new customers is compulsory three (3) months from the date the Regulations commence and all existing customers must be registered within 12 months from the date of commencement of the regulations. However, the Minister may extend the period in respect of a specific service provider or in respect of all service providers, on good cause shown,” added Nghikembua.

The Authority will invoke the provisions of the Communications Act in instances of non-compliance by a service provider. In the event that a conflict arises between the SIM Registration Conditions and the Regulations, the provisions of the Regulations shall override the Conditions.

Public comments for the conditions commenced on 27 September, and will close on 29 October 2021. All telecommunications services licensees are encouraged to provide input in order to finalise the SIM card registration conditions to be imposed on Telecommunications Service Providers.

“Ends”

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