

## **CAPTURING OF BIOMETRIC DATA DURING THE SIM CARD REGISTRATION PROCESS IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Mandatory SIM card registration commenced on 01 January 2023 in line with the provisions of Section 77 of the Communications Act (No. 8 of 2009) and ancillary regulations. Telecommunications service providers have a period of 12 months to conclude the registration of all existing customers and must do so on or before 31 December 2023. The information of new customers must be registered within three (3) months (from the date of sale) as unregistered SIM cards will be deactivated after 31 December 2023.

The Authority consistently received complaints from the public and from members of the media regarding the practice, by some mobile operators for requesting biometric data during the SIM card registration process, in the absence of a data protection legislative framework.

Mrs. Emilia Nghikembua, Chief Executive Officer, CRAN says *“CRAN issued a directive to all concerned operators that the mandatory capturing of biometric data will no longer be required for the purpose of SIM card registration. Operators will only require the information as set out in the regulations, which includes, the name of the customer, his/her address of ordinary residence, and his/her Namibian ID, passport or any other official identity document issued by the government of any other country. Customers who, however, voluntarily choose to provide their biometrics data are welcome to do so.”*

SIM card registration is a national initiative aimed at facilitating the investigation of crimes committed with the aid of telecommunications devices and enhancing e-commerce activities and online trading. There are also benefits and use cases that are directly facilitated by the registration of digital identities. Moreover, there has been an increase in the use of digital and/or online services, providing opportunities for Namibians to embrace virtual teaching and learning, mobile banking, online shopping, just to mention a few.

*“In order to meet the objectives of the SIM registration process, all telecommunications operators will going forward allow customers to register their SIM cards via processes that do not require mandatory collection of biometric data. We are also pleased that the operators have made good progress and encourage all consumers to ensure that their SIM cards are registered before the deadline of 31 December 2023,”* added Nghikembua.

Consumers aggrieved by any aspects of the registration process may submit complaints to the Authority for adjudication and resolution.

**“ENDS”**

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