

# World Telecommunication Day heightens the importance of ICT to transform SA

By [Cecil Mashawana](#)

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As South Africa places a spotlight on the urgency to ramp up access to connectivity and the benefits the internet and ICT can bring to our people and economy this World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD), more can be done to unlock the potential of digital solutions in transforming our country and economy.



Cecil Mashawana | image supplied

Events of the past several months have highlighted the increasing digital divide between those with access to information and technologies and those without. Even though the lockdown has exacerbated this divide, it has also put the spotlight on it, serving as a timely reminder that we as South Africans must collectively do more to change our society.

ICT is the cornerstone of empowering all citizens with the skills required to become active participants in the economy.

We are well-known as a country of entrepreneurs and people who are committed to overcoming the challenges typically associated with developing economies. Whether it is in the primary economy or in the township economy, there is a drive to succeed despite the circumstances. Having access to reliable and affordable internet connectivity is a key enabler in this regard. It helps give our citizens the capacity to realise their potential and that this connectivity, in fact, is as vital to our competitiveness as a country as having access to running water and electricity is.

## A digitally connected world

Globally WTISD highlights how access has become a commodity on our collective path to a digitally connected world. As bandwidth becomes more readily available and data pricing more affordable, access to technology will become

democratised. This will help give more people the ability to equip themselves with the digital platforms needed to become successful.

ICT must now centre on combining our know-how and innovative way of thinking with powerful tools that can transform the economy of the country and help spark change across the continent. Of course, this is an ongoing battle that requires the private and public sectors to join hands to overcome. The government needs the assistance of trusted and experienced ICT partners to help achieve their mandate to creating a digitally-driven 'smart' society. And the private sector needs policies and regulations that can help facilitate this in the most effective ways possible.

With innovations such as 5G, IoT, artificial intelligence, and machine learning becoming part of the fabric of our society, now is the time for South Africa to embrace the opportunities these provide. Whether it is hardware or software-based infrastructure, skills development initiatives, or just systems and processes that enable meaningful change, there is no turning back.

South Africa is well-positioned to change and embrace ICT. Now is the time to do so and empower all our citizens.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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