

**Address by Dr Stephen Mncube to the Centre of Small Business Development, University of Johannesburg, 25 May 2011**

First and foremost I would like to thank the management of the Centre of Small Business Development, University of Johannesburg, under the tutelage of Dr Mazwai for extending an invitation to ICASA to share and exchange information about the work and programs of the regulator.

I find this invitation appropriate on this day, the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, better known across the continent as Africa Day.

I use the word appropriate reservedly in this instance because we cannot talk about Africa's renewal as a continent in isolation.

The revival of the spirit of Timbuktu in West Africa as the cradle of literature and philosophy, and that of Monomotapa in Great Zimbabwe as the source of geometry and architecture continue to inspire scores of African young leaders who are coming through the ranks in various fields.

I know of African leaders, not only in politics, but in business, sports and the arts who have carried the torch for Africa's renewal for many years.

It is in this context, that I find this Day appropriate for the Centre of Small Business Development to use it as an opportunity of engagement with a wide range of institutions, including ICASA.

Let me hasten to point out that small business development has a critical role to play in stimulating our country and the continent's economies.

This is particularly true in the wake of the whole world battling to recover from an economic recession second to the great depression of the 1930's.

The clarion call is not to ask for your country and continent to provide jobs and economic opportunities, rather what you can do for your country and continent to create jobs and stimulate economic activity and integration.

This call is an equivalent to an inaugural address by the late US President JF Kennedy that : "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country".

I would like to zoom in to the communications and postal sectors of our economy.

For one, the communications industry is the fastest growing sector of the economy across the world.

Whereas other sectors face challenges, and are required to adjust and mutate, the communications sector is expanding at a rapidly, outpacing public policy and regulation.

One can cite the unfolding digital revolution to appreciate how the horizons of communications are widening.

Communications is no longer constrained by time or spatial limitations.

The frequency spectrum which hitherto had been limited and had to be managed as a scarce resource, is now in abundance.

Digital communications technology allows for the frequency spectrum to be used efficiently.

Digital technology allows signals to be encoded and compressed, thereby allowing for more channels to be created for broadcasting purposes, for example.

In the same way, the additional channels can be created for bulks of data, voice and video over a fibre optic cable.

Digital communications technology has thus allowed for telecommunications, broadcasting and computing technologies to converge.

A whole new world has been created, more opportunities are now available to pursue our country's and continent's socio and economic goals.

Digital communications technologies have afforded us new tools for fighting poverty, disease and ignorance.

The International Telecommunications Union has entrusted each region of the world with a framework for determining its timeframes, and the requisite technologies it will adopt for the transition from an analogue to digital communication technology platform.

The Southern African Development Community has adopted timelines to be met and digital technology standards to be used for the sub-continent for purposes of enhancing harmonisation.

Southern African countries have committed to migrate from analogue to digital technology platform by December 2013.

As neighbours, not only do we need peaceful coexistence, but harmonised policies, regulations and standards that would allow our people as consumers of communications services to benefit when travelling from one country to the other.

Our entrepreneurs, big or small, should be able to invest and conduct business across the sub-continent seamlessly with little or no inconvenience at all.

The introduction of digital communications technology provides for a vista of social and economic opportunities – from content development to manufacturing and retail.

The transition and migration from an analogue to a digital technology platform requires investment in and the replacement of infrastructure, network, switching and receiver equipment.

From an economic viewpoint, opportunities have opened up for the manufacturing and retail entrepreneurs to come to the party.

As for small and emerging entrepreneurs the television receiver market is one such avenue to be pursued.

The migration from an analogue to a digital platform, require analogue television sets to be enabled to receive digital signals.

This is where the Set Top Box comes into picture. There are millions of analogue television sets in our households that are still in good condition and still have a lifespan in them.

Although consumers need to be encouraged to purchase high definition television sets henceforth, there is a huge market for existing analogue sets.

Affordability also comes into picture, that millions of our households are still trapped in poverty, and therefore cannot afford the fashionable flat screen television sets.

I am referring here not only to the South African market, but to Southern Africa as a whole that universal access is still a sore point in as far as development is concerned.

Many retail outlets in Maseru, Mbabane, Lusaka or Maputo will need sources of equipment supply and servicing with regard to the Set Top Boxes.

Like with many other goods and services, Gauteng is the sub-continent's industrial and financial hub, and we should not be found wanting in this respect.

Our small and emerging entrepreneurs should start moving into this space, and explore business opportunities.

If we talk about regional economic integration, we are not talking about big business and multi-national corporations only, we are talking about emerging businesses as well.

The Southern African market is there for the taking, but it should be local regional investors and business people who should move into this space first.

If we fail to do so, we would have failed the dream for the renewal and revival of Africa as a continent of the future.

I thank you