

**ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY, MS  
KHUMBUDZO NTSHAVHENI (MP), ON THE PRESENTATION OF THE  
GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM (GCIS)  
2023/24 BUDGET VOTE**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CAPE TOWN**

**MAY 16 2023**

Honourable House Chairperson

Deputy Ministers in The Presidency, Ms Nomasonto Motaung and Mr Kenny Morolong;

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies,  
The Honourable Boyce Maneli;

Members of the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies;

Management of the GCIS;

Members of the Board and Management of the Media Development and Diversity  
Agency

Chairperson and Members of the Marketing, Advertising and Communications  
Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Council

Members of communities and civil society who are in the public gallery of this House

Ladies and Gentlemen

Honourable House Chairperson

A year from now, our country will most likely be in the throes of a general election that will mark 30 years since we started the journey of freedom and democracy for all South Africans.

When we mark our democratic milestones, we often fail to acknowledge where exactly we were before freedom dawned.

In this month of May 30 years ago, our country was reeling from the assassination a month earlier of our liberation fighter, Chris Hani.

This assassination endangered the negotiations that were underway in Ekurhuleni at the time. Indeed, Ekurhuleni was not known as Ekurhuleni back then because we had not reached freedom and this level of transformation of our society or of our physical landscape.

The South African economy was still isolated from the global economy; workplaces were untransformed; service delivery was uneven; our diplomatic relations were just beginning to integrate a pariah state into the global community; we had no cellphones, internet or WhatsApp and this Parliament had three chambers that excluded the black African majority of our population.

So, House Chairperson, as we engage on this Budget Vote address, let no-one rise to claim that the South Africa of 1993 is better than the South Africa of 2023.

As we reflect on our historical calendar, the month of May enjoys a significant place in our struggle for freedom.

This is a place of pain and sadness as we reflect on the worst impacts of our history, but it also a place that allows to reflect with pride and relief at the road we have travelled in three decades to becoming a society that leaves no-one behind.

In May, we commemorate May Day as an occasion dedicated to honouring the workers of our nation.

Just a few days ago, we marked 29 years since one of the world's great leaders – who tended cattle in a village kraal in Qunu – became the first democratically elected President of an inclusive and free South Africa.

This May also marks 46 years since the apartheid regime, in desperation and in violation of human rights and simple regard for family life, banished Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela to a house with no water or electricity in Brandfort in the Free State.

From the point of view of the apartheid state, Winnie Mandela's confinement served as a warning to anyone who challenged the state.

Today we celebrate the fact that with this action, the apartheid state simply inflamed the fight against apartheid at home and internationally and that apartheid deepened the world's revulsion and outrage at the nation brand the South Africa of 1977 presented to the international community.

As we debate Budget Vote 4 of the GCIS for the 2023/24 financial year, we note it is 31 years to the day when the second Convention for a Democratic South Africa, commonly known as CODESA II ended in a deadlock when the parties could not reach agreement on the shape of the Interim Government, in particular the ANC's rejection of the National Party's proposal for a minority veto within the Interim Government.

Our inability to collectively remember, mark or commemorate these and other important moments in the development of our nation will undermine our ability to effectively inform and mobilise South Africans in our democratic dispensation.

House Chairperson

In 2023 and 2024, the Government Communication and Information System of our democracy is tasked with communicating South Africa's story of transformation and progress to the nation and the world.

We are also tasked with engaging with citizens and the international community on a range of platforms that allow us to listen and respond to people's concerns, complaints, compliments – yes, we get those - and proposals for how we can grow South Africa together.

To us, the provision of information to citizens and stakeholders and our interactive engagement with interested parties is an exercise in service delivery.

This exercise entails understanding the mood of the nation and mobilising South Africans and our global partners to contribute to the building of our society and our economy.

Our nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our reopening of the economy is an impactful example of what we can achieve when we work together as different sectors of society on the basis of understanding the complexities of a challenge to the nation.

Communication plays a fundamental role in bridging the divide between government and citizens, as it allows the public to gain access to relevant information. It also provides channels for citizens to engage with the administration on issues that matter most to them.

In the 2023/24 financial year, the Government Communication and Information System will dedicate its expertise and resources to providing South Africans and our partners with information that can help us achieve progress in those priority areas spelt out by President Cyril Ramaphosa in the 2023 State of the Nation Address.

These areas are:

- Load-shedding.
- Unemployment.
- Poverty and the rising cost of living.
- Crime and corruption
- Service delivery

Our communications will support the tireless and hard work undertaken by government to address the challenges we have listed.

We will sustain the flow of information on these priorities through, among others, the regular briefings we present to the nation on all the priorities.

South Africans will see our implementation of service delivery through media briefings of the kind we currently undertake, with growing frequency, such as on our efforts to stabilise the national energy grid and bring new generating power online.

GCIS will develop content for its online accounts and develop streams of information that will empower citizens to access social and economic opportunities.

We will develop content for our own print media and for its audiovisual outlets, as well as through advertising, the purchasing of which we coordinate on behalf of departments and agencies.

This week, residents of the Western Cape, and Paarl in particular, will engage directly with the President and Members of the Executive at our District Development Model Presidential Imbizo in Paarl.

Izimbizo are a critical platform for dialogue between government and citizens and stakeholder groups, as all of us have a responsibility and opportunity to building the South Africa we want.

GCIS will work with departments, provinces, state-owned enterprises and partners in civil society to deepen communication of government's programmes and the nation's promise as a destination and partner for tourism, trade and investment.

In the period ahead, we will redouble our efforts to strengthen coordination of the government communication system; harness partnerships with labour, business and civil society; intensify community engagements; increase the use of digital platforms to reach a wider section of the population; improve communication in all official languages; and empower community radio stakeholders as a local medium of communication with a national footprint.

Amid the challenges we face, we understand the need for our messages to be substantiated by the underlying performance of the administration at the national, provincial and municipal level.

With this in mind, we will consistently involve the implementers of government programmes in our communications rollout, as part of ensuring that communications hold implementers to account.

Our long-term programme of communication will be inspired by and serve as a support mechanism to our realisation of the National Development Plan (NDP), our Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan and the Five-Point Energy Action Plan.

Honourable Members,

As South Africa ventures into the opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and a continental market of more than a billion people, we will communicate programmes that support regional integration and the African Agenda 2063.

GCIS will put its best foot forward later this year in hosting an expected 200 journalists from our continent and elsewhere who will constitute the BRICS Media Forum from 18 to 19 August 2023.

Media organisations and institutions from BRICS countries, developing countries and emerging economies have had in-depth exchanges and initiated practical cooperation that drives the Forum.

The BRICS Forum has played a vital role in strengthening mutual learning among participants and promoting the BRICS spirit of openness, inclusiveness, cooperation and mutual benefit.

Our engagement with the international community will be guided by our understanding that a positive and powerful country brand provides a crucial competitive advantage in this globalised economy.

Our country represents the spirit of resilience, hope and the pursuit of shared prosperity.

Our President put it best in this House in February when he said: “We are, at our most essential, a nation defined by the hope and resilience”.

This is often expressed in our street lingo such as ‘n boere maak ‘n plan” and “indoda ayi pheli mandla”.

During the 2023/ 24 financial year, BrandSA will work to strengthen our country’s brand position and reputation as part of our Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, a Better Africa and Better World and Leaving No One Behind.

House Chairperson,

We live in a rapidly changing world in which technology is evolving at an unprecedented pace. During COVID-19, the GCIS embraced technological platforms to facilitate remote meetings, connectivity and communication.

These technologies have now become the norm and have allowed the GCIS to expand its operational capacity to reach a much larger audience.

However, these technologies are only the tip of the iceberg and game-changing technology such as the new ChatGPT app is now being used by government departments in other countries to streamline their workflow.

We will investigate the ethical legitimacy of such innovations as part of modernising and updating our communications practices.

As a response to the fast-changing communication environment, the GCIS will fast-track the upskilling of its workforce, and this goes hand in hand with upgrading Information and Communications Technology systems to meet new demands.

But we are also a country where many communities still primarily rely more on the traditional methods of communication such as face-to-face engagements. In this regard, the GCIS will continue to play a central role in supporting the Presidential outreach Imbizo programme.

The GCIS is therefore committed to providing communication that not only touches and changes lives, but is also relevant and easily understood by all people.

The department will strive to speak to every audience in a medium or language they understand, and will work to blend its communication approach to reach those with or without access to resources and technology, and also those living in the far-flung areas of the country.

Honourable Chairperson,

We recently observed the 30th Anniversary of World Press Freedom Day. This day reinforced the reality in our democracy that we uphold the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press, as enshrined in Section 16 of the Constitution.

The political freedom media enjoys is, however, severely contrasted by the economic constraints facing this sector.



The National Development Plan acknowledges that access to information through print, broadcasting and electronic media is vital for an informed citizenry and economic development.

However, the decline in advertising revenues and circulation figures is one of the biggest challenges faced by the private sector and the community media alike. The long-term sustainability of any medium is critical for the GCIS as government relies on these platforms to disseminate government information to the citizens.

The media remains a key stakeholder, and it is through our relationships with the media that we are able to communicate and reach the majority of our citizens.

During this financial year, we intend to strengthen these relations and as such, we are looking at lessons that we learnt during the COVID-19 period, which yielded very solid relations between the government, particularly the GCIS, and the media.

This partnership is essential to ensure that citizens have access to information, which is the heartbeat to the health of our democracy, the development of our country and an enabler to government to get into every home despite the distance and time.

### **Honourable Members**

To deal with persisting challenges of optional adherence to current communication norms and standards, Cabinet has approved the development of a White Paper Policy, which is the highest form of policy-making.

In summary, the development of the White Paper Policy marks the beginning of promoting compliance with legislative frameworks governing the implementation of the government communication system across all three (3) spheres of government, to enable meaningful coordination and coherence of messages.

The goal of the White Paper Policy framework will provide the institutional arrangement needed to support the dissemination of information to citizens.

To achieve the objective of wide consultation, the GCIS will partner with community media to promote the 30 years of Democracy engagements but to also communicate the achievements. In this regard, the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) will strengthen its support for the community media to become viable and sustainable entities that are adapted to the use of technology in the age of digital media. The MDDA will work with NEMISA on the training and the participation of community media on the NEMISA Streaming Platform.

Honourable Members,

It is also our duty to ensure a transformed marketing, advertising and communications sector.

The recognition that news media are operating on an uneven playing field has prompted the GCIS to work with the industry leaders through a Ministerial-appointed Steering Committee on Print and Digital Media Transformation and Revitalisation to consider proposals that can be implemented by the South African Government.

In March 2022, we appointed and launched the Marketing, Advertising and Communication (MAC) Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Charter Council as our response to a call by Parliament to transform and sustain the advertising sector.

Honourable Members,

As the country commences the countdown towards 30 Years of Democracy, both the GCIS and BrandSA will focus on outlining the gains of the democratic government while creating a bridge between government and citizens to address the challenges confronting us.

The 30 Years of Democracy campaign is not a government-only endeavour but a whole of society matter.

In this regard, the GCIS will coordinate various engagement platforms as the country reflect on its journey and these will include Roundtables and Town-Hall Discussions and dzikhoroni (community meetings at traditional leaders).

The principle is that wherever our people are found, they must reflect and express their views and experiences under a democratic dispensation, for this freedom is never about us (the leadership), it must always be about the people.

At the height of our struggle against apartheid, our forebears pledged “to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes set out [in the Freedom Charter] have been won”.

These engagements are informed by our belief that government communication also includes consultation and dialogue with stakeholders and we are committed to establishing a two-way dialogue with the public as part of enriching our participatory democracy.

Honourable members

This year, we celebrate 30 years since the establishment of the National Community Radio Forum which gives communities access to 200 locally relevant radio stations, which broadcast stories relevant to their needs and broadcast in the languages of their choices.

Honourable Chairperson,

The GCIS has been allocated R750, 746 million for the 2023/24 financial year and R782, 847 million for 2024/25.

The department’s current budget of R750, 746 million for the 2023/24 financial year is allocated as follows:

- Transfers and subsidies to the Entities: R256.6 million (34%) of which R219 526 million is for Brand SA and R37 039 million is for the MDDA;
- Capital budget (1% of GCIS budget) R8,2 million;

- Goods and Services (27%) R201,8 million; and
- Compensation of Employees (38%) R284,1 million.

With greater resources, GCIS would be able to do a lot more to ensure that all citizens and communities have access to information that adequately allows them to take advantage of the opportunities to improve their lives.

To allow us to foster greater social cohesion and nation-building, while ensuring that government speaks with one voice and maintains continuous citizen-focused dialogue, considerations within the bleak economic climate should be explored to increase the budget allocation.

This is based on the fact that, when transferred to the entities are effected, GCIS remains with R494 146 million, which results to R8.2<sup>c</sup> per capita to provide communication to approximately 60 million citizens.

I wish to thank the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies for the valuable insight and support they continue to provide, while ensuring oversight that allows us to move government communications forward. We thank the chair and committee members for their continued support and we look forward to working together in the service of our nation as we approach 30 Years of Freedom and the 2024 National Elections.

I also wish to thank my colleagues at the GCIS, the dedicated leadership and all staff members, for their continued support and invaluable contributions, and I have no doubt they will continue to rise to the challenge as they have done so in the past.

Of all the national anniversaries I have cited today, I dedicate this conclusion to 25 years of GCIS, since its establishment in 1998, in the early days of our democracy.

I am confident our first 25 years will inspire us to another quarter century of growing South Africa together and leaving no-one behind.

I thank you.

