

SPEECH BY CLR MPHO PARKS TAU, EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF
JOHANNESBURG, AT THE GO DIGITAL SUMMIT, SOWETO, 14 April 2015

Kasi to Kasi Officials

Senior Government Officials

The Business Community

Academics

Ladies and Gentlemen

I greet you all

The former WTO President Pascal Lamy, considers internet to be the most rapidly and comprehensively and transformative innovation in human history. On reading the Commission's Report, titled, *Now for the Long Term*, the following quotation strikes an important note:

New information technologies are reaching the world's poor much faster than food and toilets. A recent UN report suggested six billion people have access to mobile phones, while only 4.5 billion have access to working toilets....Technology offers great potential to enhance education opportunities, dramatically improve health outcomes, promote free speech and democracy, and offer greater access to global markets. The Internet is the key driver of global connectivity and opportunity, but different bandwidth speeds, limited access, and contrasting levels of openness can mean that the Internet exacerbates rather than offsets inequality.

Thus gatherings like this remind us that digital technology determines how we conduct our daily business in the 21st century. This is of great significance. Digital

technology is vital; it enables us to conduct teaching and research. Distance education institutions in particular like the University of South Africa (Unisa), largely rely on digital innovation for teaching and research.

Clearly, this is the century of online shopping, online news, cellphone and internet banking, social media and of course in the context of today's gathering, digitization. Let me give the example of historical records which will illustrate the importance of digitization. Archives in different parts of the world are now being digitized, to preserve them but also to enable researchers to access them online. In South Africa we talk, for instance, of institutions and projects that are involved in the digitization and preservation of struggle records. This includes Wits Historical Papers Digital Centre, Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, History Online and the digitization of liberation movement archives material at the University of Fort Hare.

Cellphone technology has eased the burden associated with banking especially for the poor, who need virtually every cent to survive. Cellphone technology has transformed life here in South Africa and in other developing countries in Africa where there were few fixed-line telephones. The new technology has rapidly made telephonic communication between ordinary people simple and widespread. Even business transactions are now done through cellphone technology, saving businesspeople from the queues and delays associated with face-to-face banking. As we all know, Facebook and Twitter have become world phenomena, enabling the establishment of social networks and the exchange of ideas, spreading the latest news and political debates almost as they happen. Thus today's economic growth

falls squarely in the lap of digital technology and gatherings like this contribute to digitization and to our country's socio-economic development.

As the City of Johannesburg, we have wholeheartedly embraced the digital world as demonstrated through many of our projects. We have invested in projects designed to technologically empower citizens, not least our own City employees. By doing so, we are bridging the digital divide whilst ensuring service delivery and bringing about the Smart City to which we are committed. For example:

- We are working closely with Wits University in setting up the Tshimolong Precinct. This project is aimed at developing a creative space for the development of ICT software and skills, as well as innovation and job creation. On September 5, 2014, we were invited by Wits to the launch of Fak'ugesi Africa Festival, a project also aimed at promoting digital technology. At that launch, we urged that Fak'ugesi should find synergy with some of our digital programmes around the City.
- On September 19, 2014, we launched the electronic health information system (HIS) digitization pilot project at Slovo Clinic here in Soweto. This project is being carried out in partnership with Anglo-American and its aim is to bring about a single, complete body of records about patients, accessible to all health practitioners in both the public and private sector. Digitization projects like HIS ensure, in many ways, that citizens are given the opportunity of a long and healthy life. For instance, the fact that a patient's file can be digitized and accessed by a range of health experts in the public and private sector strengthens our turnaround strategy in saving

lives. We intend, by 2016, to bring about an E-health service to ensure that records of patients in the City's hospitals and clinics are digitized and centralized.

- As the City we are also involved in the establishment of Techno Hubs, in partnership with the Gauteng Provincial government. These are multipurpose community centres where citizens interact with technology, accessing free Wi-Fi connection and internet services.
- Furthermore we envisage that by 2016 we should have established an integrated E-service that includes an integrated billing system.
- As the City of Joburg we are directly confronting the digital divide with 900km of high speed fibre and a commitment to a 1000 free wi-fi hotspots prioritizing 50% of the City's citizens who, historically, have had no access to internet. This will enable our City to be the 21st century metropolis, allowing even those from marginalized communities to seek livelihoods in the digital space. The 900 km of fibre we've laid can turn the internet into a genuine public good in this City – first through the 1000 free wifi hotspots we are enabling (prioritizing internet deprived areas) and progressively through universal, free basic access to a certain level.
- The broadband network as an asset allows us to reindustrialize Joburg in a way that builds the city to compete both in the old industries that are rapidly digitizing and in the new weightless economy of digital services. We want

to see thousands of new digital entrepreneurs rise from our townships and informal settlements – unlocking value, opening new markets, and building broad based prosperity. Over the coming months, as we roll out the first 500 of our free public hotspots, we will also deploy 3000 digital ambassadors – micro-companies, made up of young people who will provide digital literacy training to bring the 50 % of Joburg households who don't have internet access up to speed with the 21st century's most critical enabling innovation.

- Just recently, on March 26, we were able to whittle down over 144 applications to 50 teams in The #Hack.Jozi Challenge. This is a competition for the best digital solution ideas to turn Jozi into the city we all want to live in. The aim of the initiative is to accelerate visionary entrepreneurs in the ICT sector. They include ideas that range from mobile banking applications and social interactive applications to online game applications promoting South African culture. The #Hack.Jozi Challenge is an initiative between the City of Johannesburg and the Joburg Centre for Software Engineering (JCSE) at Wits University.

In closing, we would like to thank *Kasi to Kasi* for inviting the City of Johannesburg to this important ceremony. These ladies and gentlemen, are some of the City's digital related programmes aimed at bringing about the 21st century metropolis. I will further elaborate on these issues and other issues during the roundtable discussion, following after this.

Thank you

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