

# Economic limitations hampering broadband development - IIC conference

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Delegates from various parts of South Africa and the rest of the world are currently meeting at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Sandton, Johannesburg, for the 42nd International Institute of Communications (IIC) conference, which aims at discussing, among others, issues of broadband development and digital services.

In his opening remarks, SA minister of communications Roy Padayachie said globalisation has become a reality over the years, and there is no turning back from it. "An interconnected world brings more advantages than disadvantages, and the challenge lies in creating a conducive environment for all to reap the benefits of innovation and change," he said.

SA, a country where the Internet seems to be costing an arm and a leg compared to less developed economies on the continent, has embarked on an aggressive campaign to achieve universal broadband access by 2020. This, the minister said, will be done through the combination of fibre and wireless technologies as the main drivers.

## Issue of cybersecurity

For the second time in two weeks, the minister evoked the issue of cybersecurity, which he said was no longer a heresy, but a real challenge. He said the growth of the ICT sector also provides a platform for criminal elements to manipulate individuals, institutions and even nations themselves.

"All of us, as individuals, organisations and nations, have a role to play and it is only through active collaboration that we will win the war against cybercrime, which has to be won sooner before it gets too late."

SA is ranked seventh in terms of cybercrime by the FBI Internet Complaints Centre.

As the question of universal broadband access becomes the magic word in many aspects of the industry, Linus Gitahi, CEO of the Nation Media Group, said marketing needs to adapt to communicating across multiple dimensions - one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and many-to-many.

## "Must know their customers"

"Companies must know their customers in order to sell them their content in a direct-to-consumer model."

It is believed that the world has currently some 1.6 billion online consumers, while over four billion people are accessing the Internet via their mobile phones.

While half of Africa's population is expected to live in cities by 2015, creating a 'republic' of over 500 million middle-class citizens, the question that arises is affordability - whether these middle-class men and women will be able to afford the services provided by the digital migration, which includes digital TV and IPTV.

## Everyone to buy a set-top box

Padayachie said his country will launch a digital signal by April 2012 and begin broadcasting digitally by 2013. The SA government says everyone will have to purchase an STB (set-top box) in order to be able to view any digital content.

"There is [a] hunger for content, as more activities are being crammed into every diminishing time frames, paving the way for convenience to become king in this new space," Gitahi, who is in charge of Kenya's biggest media group, said. "The challenge is now how to sustain consumer interest in this world full of choices."

It is only through platforms such as these that we will learn from each other and seek partnerships, Padayachie said, adding that countries need to make the right choices regarding the licensing of high-demand spectrum, including the [digital dividend](#).

"Frequencies are going to become commodities in this new digital world," Gitahi said, adding that opportunities in a digital society include open-source content, content that is functional and easy to use and redefining content.

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## ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA: @SIKITIMEDIA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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