



MINISTER NDABENI-ABRAHAMS CONDEMNS DESTRUCTION OF CELLPHONE NETWORK TOWERS

07 January 2020

Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams has condemned the burning and destruction of cellphone network tower infrastructure and urged the South African Police to arrest those responsible for this anarchy. The burning of the cellphone towers follows a resurgence in conspiracy theories which link the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic to 5G.

So far three telecommunications network infrastructure towers belonging to Vodacom and MTN were burnt and destroyed between Tuesday and Wednesday this week in KwaZulu-Natal.

Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams has described the misinformation campaign as a threat to investments made in telecoms network infrastructure. “It is regrettable that the much-needed network infrastructure is being destroyed. The country is currently needs resilient and high-speed connectivity for every citizen to enable them to participate meaningfully in the digital economy. Furthermore, mobile telephony is crucial in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

“The destruction of network towers compromises multi-pronged efforts and initiatives to stem the spread of the virus. We therefore urge the police to arrest anyone who is threatening of removing infrastructure network stations or towers,” added Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic there have been several social media campaigns linking 5G network to the outbreak of the virus. The World Health Organisation has, however, dispelled such myths. In their recent statement on this matter the WHO said: “To date, and after much research performed, no adverse health effect has been causally linked with exposure to wireless technologies.” The WHO statement on the matter was also echoed by South Africa’s Department of Health, which also described such assertions as unfounded.

“We also need to remind South Africans that spreading fake news or disinformation about Covid-19 is a punishable offence. Those involved in the destruction of infrastructure are not only breaking the law, but also violate people’s right to access information,” added Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams.

There has been an evolution of cellular telephony over years. It all started with the first-generation analogue cellular network (1G), which at that point only used voice. This was followed by an evolution to 2G which included voice and text, then 3G which included the internet, pictures in addition to voice and text. 4G and 5G are upgrades which include faster downloading speeds and more added services.

Currently the department is finalising a draft policy for the rollout of 5G networks. This process will be subjected to public consultation as is required by the Electronic Communications Act of 2005.

Media Enquiries: Mish Molakeng 082 469 3997 spokesperson for the Ministry of Communication and Digital Technologies