



**OPENING ADDRESS**

**BY**

**HON. TJEKERO TWEYA**

**MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

**AT SATA QUALITY OF SERVICES & CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE  
CONFERENCE 2017**

**AVANI HOTEL & CASINO,**

**WINDHOEK,**

**14 JUNE 2017**

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- Mr. Theo Klein, Acting Managing Director of Telecom Namibia and Host,
- Mr. Petros Dlamini, MD of Swaziland Posts and Telecommunication Corporation and current Chair of SATA,
- Mr. Jacob Munodawafa, SATA Executive Secretary,
- Distinguished speakers,
- Distinguished representatives of ICT Service Providers,
- Ladies and gentlemen

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Allow me to recognise the presence and welcome our international visitors to the *Land of the Brave* on this fourteenth day of June, coinciding with the Day of the African Child, two days from now, on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

I also recognise the presence of my fellow countrymen and women attending this auspicious SATA Quality of Services & Customer Experience Conference here in Namibia. I intentionally refer to this conference as auspicious because I am guided by its theme "**Quality of Service & Customer Experience**" and I would like to believe, call upon and even hold SATA accountable to your theme for this Conference and challenge you to passionately live the theme in form and in substance. This should not just be a theme with no consequential meaning on the ground for ICT development; but this theme must add value to society.

Earlier in my salutation, I drew your attention to the Day of the African Child taking place two days from now. And I intentionally reminded you about the Day of the African Child that we ALL appreciate that we are children: sons and daughters of this great Continent called: **AFRICA**.

The 16<sup>th</sup> June is our day and Africa is our Continent and the expectation is that we, the dynamic sons and daughters build this Continent of epic and ambitious proportions, to take its rightfully place in the community of Nations, in particular in the area of ICT development, nationally, regionally, continentally and globally.

Telecom Namibia played host to the 35<sup>th</sup> SATA Annual Conference at this same venue in April 2015; and the theme was: **“ICT’s for the Benefit of All: Transforming our Society through Broadband and ICT’s Developments”**. This theme is a mouthful. The 35<sup>th</sup> SATA Conference took place about a month after I assumed the assignment to lead this vibrant ICT sector as its political head.

More than 24 months following the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference; what can SATA claim having achieved as a milestone flowing from the theme: **“ICT’s for the Benefit of All: Transforming our Society through Broadband and ICT’s Developments”** and this theme speaks directly to the one of today: SATA Quality of Service & Customer Experience. The only difference is semantics, but in meaning, I see no difference.

Be that as it may, let’s focus and zoom into the quality of service and customer experience. This is a topic that lies close to my heart and I get agitated when the sector I am responsible for does not comply to the minimum standards of quality, service delivery and breakthrough customer experience.

And I am glad that SATA decided on a much clearer strategy to enhance and improve quality services and, by the same token, guaranteeing consumers of ICT products and services a breakthrough experience.

The industry has failed the Nation in this regard; 27 years post-independence, we still have Namibians who have no access to ICT, we have Namibians who do not have access to the NBC signal for TV services, let alone mobile telecommunications and internet services.

And if Namibia experience the kind of ICT experiences so long after Independence, which are not inclusive enough to make most, if not all Namibians, appreciating ICT, I would like to challenge the Southern Africa Telecommunications Association to place special emphasis on your members to ensure that the citizenry of our great SADC region enjoy quality services and great customer experiences as you attest in the theme of the 2017 SATA Conference.

Once we can achieve these milestones, we will influence other regional blocks on the Continent to follow the shining example of SATA; and this will give true meaning to concepts such as the Day of the African Child, I alluded about earlier in my statement. We have a moral obligation to make our countries shine, to make our region in SADC shine, to make Africa shine; Africa expects from us to do just that, nothing more, nothing less.

Director of ceremonies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

The SATA Conference comes at a robust and exciting time when funds are increasingly becoming a scarce commodity for all sectors of the economy. However, this should not be flagged as an excuse to further deprive the people of Southern Africa from quality telecommunication services and breakthrough customer experiences in ICT.

As a matter of fact, ICT consumers demand industry expansion, change of technologies and growth in SADC and I would like to congratulate SATA and its Secretariat for your effort to fast-track interconnection regionally with breakthrough linkages with the world.

This requires ICT service providers in the region to adopt new ways of out-of-the-box and breakthrough thinking to give velocity to the potential ICT can deliver to economic development in today's digital world and be adept in meeting and matching the heightened expectations of your digital-savvy customers.

In addition, we need to realise that differentiation is now increasingly defined by a Network Operator and Service Provider's ability to enable the customers to interact with them with minimised effort. However, consumers of ICT services and products do not get value for money; it is certainly not the case at this point in time. The industry must connect customers wherever they are, in SADC and beyond at affordable rates.

What we are experiencing right now, service costs are way too expensive and this price often comes with lack of quality, e.g. roaming costs in SADC. Your SME's entrepreneurs whose offices and work places are the mobile phones are suffering because of the exorbitant roaming charges.

For example, Namibia is rated as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most expensive in the region, if you compare value adds such as Media SMS', while some even demand for the abolishment of these entities, why?

Customer expectations in today's modern day and age, is not static; these customer demands change daily; and it is, therefore, imperative for ICT Network Operators and Service Providers to stay ahead and on top of their game. Positioning your business into a customer-centric organisation in every aspect of business is the winning formula for business success and increasing market share promising greater prospects for a competitive economy, especially during these difficult times regional economies are subjected to.

Director of ceremonies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

We are all aligned that there is a strong similarity between Quality of Service and Customer Experience on the one hand and business sustainability, on the other. It is heartening to note that the ICT industry has been placing more emphasis on customer experience and quality of experience.

The traditional service quality management which mainly focused on quality of services no longer appeals to Network Operators and service providers' demand for taking the quality perceived by the customer into consideration. And it is in such conditions that customer experience management is advanced as a solution.

I trust this SATA Conference interrogates the key concepts of customer experience management as it relates to the ICT industry, as well as the best-

in class approaches for quality customer experience. A few questions come to mind.

Who are your customers? Are your customers only those living in urban areas? What about those living in remote rural areas? Are you convinced and guaranteed of business sustainability if your target is aimed at the few customers living in urban areas? My advice to you is the buying power lies in the hands of the vast majority living in the remote rural areas and these are the people who can guarantee you business sustainability; So kindly re-align your business models that it talks to the realities of today , inclusive customers for a real business sustainability.

I am confident that with your proven spirit of collaborative engagement, this Conference will successfully interrogate the challenges in customer experience management and design concrete and practical approaches that will help Network Operators and Service Providers to achieve the following:

- Optimize the customer experience across every touchpoint.
- Better deliver your customers' human needs, wants and interests through new services and offerings. Refrain from sending inaccurate invoices to your customers, thus quarreling with them instead of providing quality services. Outstanding service orders lead to low revenue generation and these are amongst the issues this SATA Conference must address.
- Create personalized marketing campaigns based on the way customers use your services. Customer surveys should determine how many complaints are recorded; business must dedicate positions to

passionately attend to customer complaints and give customer feedback. You need to take the “customer-is-always-right” philosophy to heart in order to survive in these difficult economic times, however, this philosophy has changed in business today.

- Make your processes customer centric by integrating customer experience management with core operations tools. In this regard, focus on what we are good at, for example, the WACS system in Namibia, which is highly under-utilized, i.e., Nampower, Ministry of Agriculture, Transnamib etc., are entities that can all benefit from the WACS system.
- Analogue managers have not migrated to digital managers; and they are thus struggling to respond to current digital customers for quality services and satisfying customer experiences and demands.
- Enhance the billing experience by supporting real-time rating, charging and mediation capabilities.
- Use network and device data to support intelligent automation, and actions that optimize customer satisfaction. All businesses place young and inexperienced junior staff in the frontline of the company, while the focus should be different to place more senior officials in the frontline to manage the company’s brand and image much better and give customers the respect they so rightfully deserve.

In concluding, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I know SATA has a lot to deliberate. And I encourage you to interrogate each other’s intellectual capacities to extract the financial value that was invested in this organisation. I further trust that this Conference will deliver breakthrough outcomes which

are strategic of nature to transform telecommunications and the ICT Regional Organisation to facilitate the building of a prosperous information society for the SADC Region.

I encourage delegates to participate actively and constructively over the next three days. I wish each of our visiting delegates coming from outside the borders of the Republic of Namibia a pleasant stay and it is my wish that you return to the Land of the Brave in your personal capacities with your families as tourists to explore the breath-taking landscape of Namibia and really see and experience the beautiful contracts Namibia is so popular for.

I wish you all a fruitful and successful 2017 SATA Conference.

This having said, I now have the distinct and singular honour and great pleasure to officially declare this 2017 Southern Africa Telecommunications Association with Quality of Services and Customer Experience Conference as your core theme officially opened.

I thank you for your kind attention.