



## THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY

#### QUESTION NO. 5953

**Mr F Essack (DA) to ask the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition:**

- (1) With reference to the increasing importance of digital industries to the Republic's trade competitiveness and economic development and the adoption of the new Digital Trade Protocol under the African Continental Free Trade Area, what is his department's plan to accelerate digital industrial development in areas such as information and communication technology (ICT), software and data services, in order for the Republic to capitalise on digital trade opportunities;
- (2) how will his department build on successful initiatives such as the Global Business Services Incentive Programme which has supported over 31,700 jobs since introduction;
- (3) what steps have been taken to develop the skilled workforce needed for ICT and digital services growth, so that increased digital trade translates into jobs for South Africans? NW6653E

#### REPLY:

- (1) Through incentives such as the Support Programme for Industrial Innovation (SPII), Technology and Human Resource for Industry Programme (THRIP) and the Critical Infrastructure Programme (CIP), the incentives branch has contributed over R100 million over the last 5 financial years to fund projects constructing data centres, developing various software prototypes and conducting research to develop software with commercial uses. The amended Black Industrialists Scheme (BIS) also provides financial support to black-owned businesses in strategic sectors, including ICT and digital services, to scale operations and participate in global value chains. Khoebo

Innovation Promotion Programme (KIPP), administered through the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) aim to support early-stage commercialisation of innovative products and services, including those in ICT and digital sectors. KIPP provides capital and business support to small businesses developing new technologies. In addition to this, the IDC provides value chain approach support prioritising catalytic projects in sectors such as digital services.

Over 50% of SA services exports are digital, enhancing this digital servicification, through the SADC and AfCFTA Trade in Services Protocols, targets improving market access conditions for SA services exports in telecommunications, audio-visual, ICT, software and data services including creating new opportunities for other digital services (professional services, financial services, distribution/retail). We are participating in a WEF initiative for SA services economy focusing on improving the regulatory environment to improve SA (digital) services competitiveness and exports.

- (2) The Global Business Services Incentive Programme (GBS) is being prioritised as part of the Department's focus on digitalisation. For the 2025/26 Annual Performance Plan (APP), a new indicator was developed to measure digital jobs created through this programme. From April to September 2025, funded GBS beneficiaries reported creating over 5 800 digital jobs.
- (3) Beneficiaries of the GBS reported providing training to all employees, including the youth, in areas such as software proficiency to use project management, digital communications and data analysis and visualisation software. Employees also attend training to improve their ability to work with big data, data science and artificial intelligence. This allows employees to adapt to new technology and prepare them for future technology advancements such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation.

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