



05 November 2020

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Dear «Title» «Surname»

## **PROPOSED MARINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLE SYSTEM (2AFRICA/GERA (EAST) CABLE SYSTEM) TO BE LANDED AT PORT ELIZABETH, EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION PROCESS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)**

Alcatel Submarine Networks (ASN) has been contracted to supply and install the proposed 2AFRICA/GERA (East) Cable System linking the east coast of Africa with Europe and parts of the Middle East, with one South African landing at Port Elizabeth, South Africa. This is to be operated by Vodacom (Pty) Limited (hereafter referred to as Vodacom), the South African landing partner. In support of this initiative, ASN has appointed ACER (Africa) Environmental Consultants (ACER) as the independent Environmental Impact Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to apply for the required environmental authorisation and associated permits, inclusive of public participation.

#### **Project Need and Desirability**

Submarine telecommunications cables are important for international telecommunications networks, transporting almost 100% of transoceanic internet traffic throughout the world ([www.iscpc.org](http://www.iscpc.org)). This is significant because it is widely recognised that access to affordable international bandwidth is key to economic development in every country.

The purpose of this project is to install a fibre optical submarine cable to provide international high-speed connectivity and reliability. Businesses and consumers will benefit from enhanced capacity and reliability for services such as telecommuting, HD TV broadcasting, internet services, video conferencing, advanced multimedia and mobile video applications. Internet traffic is growing exponentially as the appetite for new applications like cloud computing and on-demand video, where consumer appetites are becoming limitless. Furthermore, the demand for new connectivity reflects an end-user and business environment in which high capacity data transmission is essential for sustainable growth and development.

Communication via submarine telecommunications cables generally allows for lower cost, better performance, and greater capacity (throughput) than that available via satellite. Improvement in Africa's information technology infrastructure via telecommunications cables will help strengthen development in Africa and support economic growth and opportunities on the continent. In an African and local context, the proposed cable will support the objectives set out by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and provide a means for the South African Government to fulfil requirements for digital television broadcasting.

### Environmental Legislation

The current Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 (as amended 2017) published under Section 24(5) read with Sections 24, 24D and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (as amended) apply to this project.

Based on these regulations, EAP must complete Scoping and an Impact Assessment within 300 days of acceptance of the Application for Authorisation by the competent authority, viz. the national Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF). DEFF is the competent authority because the 2AFRICA/GERA (East) Cable System traverses' international boundaries. In addition, apart from operating licenses which are the responsibility of Vodacom, the following licenses/permits may be required:

- Beach Driving Permit from DEFF (Oceans and Coasts) to allow vehicles to drive on the beach.
- Permit to construct infrastructure in the coastal public property from the Department of Public Works. The acquisition of this permit is the responsibility of the Landing Partner.
- Sea Shore Lease Permit from the Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT).
- Heritage Permit (offshore and onshore heritage resources) from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) and the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (ECPHRA), respectively.
- Water Use License from the Department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation (DHSWS).
- Permits to remove/destroy Protected Plants and Protected Trees from DEDEAT and DEFF (Forestry Section), respectively.
- A Section 53 License from the Department of Mineral Resources to undertake a different land-use on the seafloor (other than prospecting or mining) (relevant to oil and gas concessions). The acquisition of this license is the responsibility of Vodacom.
- Municipal approvals and the registration of servitudes may be required by the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality prior to construction commencing. These relate to the front haul alignment and registering the relevant front haul servitudes. The acquisition of these approvals and servitudes are the responsibility of Vodacom.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you, as a potentially Interested & Affected Party to participate in the Environmental Impact Assessment. A Background Information Document (Appendix 1) and Comment Sheet (Separate Attachment) have been compiled and are provided herewith to facilitate your participation (these documents are also available at [www.acerafrica.co.za](http://www.acerafrica.co.za) under the "Current Projects" link (2AFRICA/GERA (East) – Port Elizabeth)). Please note that the closing date for initial comments<sup>1</sup> during public announcement is;

**05 December 2020.**

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that consistent with GNR 326, 42(a), 44 (1) and 19(1)(a) (7 April 2017) all comments received will be captured in a Comments and Responses Report which will be made available to the competent authority and which will be placed in the public domain as part of the public review process of the EIA reports.



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Please contact the Public Participation Office to obtain further information:

Date

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Your participation is valued and will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to be "Giles Churchill", written over a light blue horizontal line.

**ACER (Africa) Environmental Consultants**

Mr. G Churchill

Environmental Assessment Practitioner