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From: ACER - Public Participation <publicparticipation@acerafrica.co.za>
Sent: 16 September 2016 03:16 PM
To: rsmart@capenature.co.za
Cc: charlene.weber@acerafrica.co.za
Subject: Background Information and Invitation to Participate: Proposed Marine Telecommunications System (ACE Cable System) to be landed at Van Riebeeckstrand on the West Coast of South Africa
Attachments: Background Information Document - MTN ACE Cable.pdf; MTN - ACE Comment Sheet.pdf; MTN ACE IAPs Letter to Participate (Afrikaans) (Rev 0).pdf

Dear Mr. Smart

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

PROPOSED MARINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM (ACE CABLE SYSTEM) TO BE LANDED AT VAN RIEBEECKSTRAND ON THE WEST COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA

Project Background

Submarine telecommunication cables are important for international telecommunication networks, transporting almost 100% of transoceanic internet traffic throughout the world (www.iscpc.org). It is widely recognised that access to affordable international bandwidth is key to economic development of every country.

Today, Africa relies primarily on satellites to provide its international communications. Communication via submarine telecommunication 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 telecommunication cables will remove one of the current key inhibitors to development in Africa, and support economic growth and opportunities on the continent.

Following installation of the proposed ACE cable system, MTN will become the alternative full service provider of international fibre-optic bandwidth to Telkom along the west coast of Africa. In doing so, the company will facilitate more affordable and effective transport of voice, data, internet and television services. Furthermore, the cable will support the objectives set out by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and provide a means of fulfilling the SA Government's requirements in terms of digital television broadcasting for South Africa.

The proposed ACE cable system will have the broadband capacity of transmitting over 10 Terabits per second, which is approximately double the current capacity of the existing telecommunications systems within South Africa.

Current Environmental Legislation

The current Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014, published in Government Notices R 982, 983, 984 and 985 of 4 December 2014 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 the current regulations, the Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) must complete Scoping and the Impact Assessment within 300 days of acceptance of the Application for Authorisation by the national Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). It is also envisaged that a Water Use Licence will be required from the Department of Water and Sanitation in terms of Chapter 4 of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No 36 of 1998), in particular, Section 40(4).

The national Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) is the competent authority for the issuing of environmental authorisation for this proposed development. On behalf of MTN (Pty) Ltd. ACER will fulfil the role and responsibilities of EAP, undertaking the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the associated public participation process, and submitting the required application and supporting documentation to DEA for consideration and decision-making.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you, as a potentially Interested & Affected Party to participate in the EIA. A Background Information Document (Appendix 1) and Comment Sheet (Separate Attachment) have been compiled and attached to provide further information on the proposed development and are also available at

www.acerafrica.co.za under the “Current Projects” link (MTN ACE Cable System). Please note that the closing date for initial comments during public announcement of the project is 7 October 2016.

Please contact the Public Participation Office to obtain further information:

Your participation is valued and will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

ACER (Africa) Environmental Consultants
Mr. G Churchill
Environmental Assessment Practitioner