THE INVITATIONS TO APPLY FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S HIGH DEMAND SPECTRUM AUCTION AND WIRELESS OPEN ACCESS NETWORKS ARE IMMINENT

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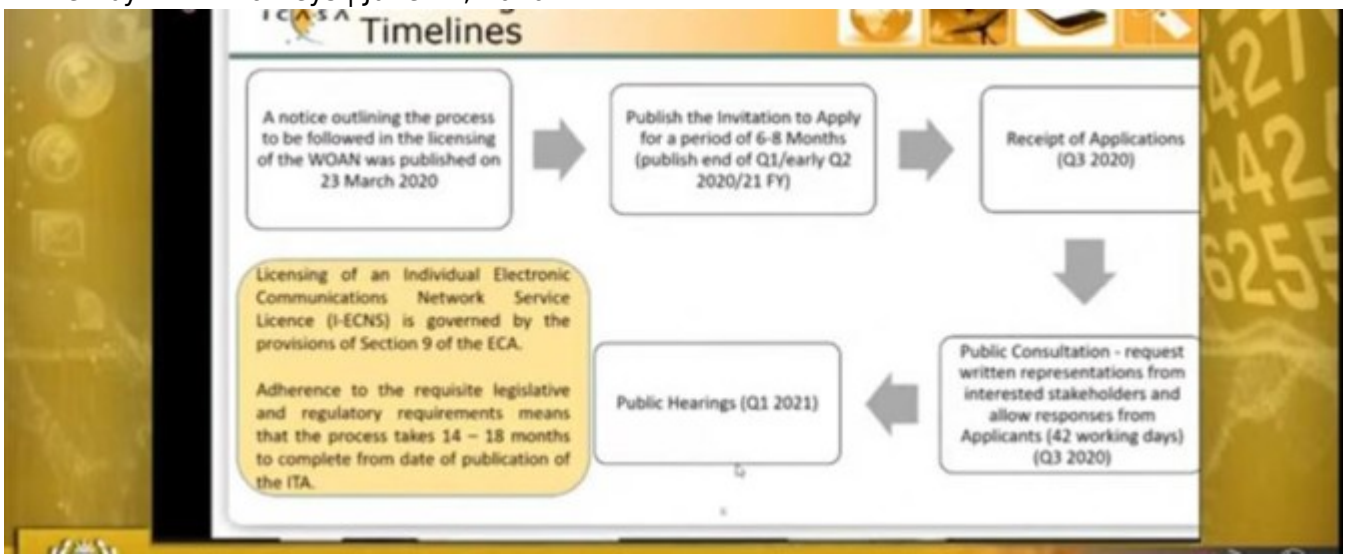

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa ("ICASA"), the country's communications regulator, last night, briefed Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Communications on progress regarding the licensing of the long awaited high-demand frequency spectrum ("the IMT Spectrum"), the licensing of the Wireless Open Access Network ("the WOAN") and the regulation of TV White Spaces.

ICASA Councillor, Nomonde Gongxeka-Seopa, who spoke on behalf of ICASA's Council's IMT Committee, said that the Invitation to Apply ("the IMT Spectrum ITA), which will launch the IMT Spectrum Auction process, will shortly be tabled with ICASA's Council for finalisation. ICASA's Council has given itself until the end of this fiscal quarter (essentially, the end of June 2020) to publish the IMT Spectrum ITA and that its publication is "very close". This means that the IMT Spectrum ITA could potentially be published within the next week.

If the IMT Spectrum ITA is indeed published before the end of June, ICASA expects that all applications by prospective bidders, in response to the IMT Spectrum ITA, are expected to be received during the second quarter (i.e. by end of September 2020). Councillor Gongxeka-Seopa says that that prequalification of successful applicants will be completed before the end of quarter 3 of the fiscal year, most likely by November 2020. After that, ICASA intends achieving its target of auctioning the IMT Spectrum by December 2020.

ICASA Councillor Thembeka Semane, who spoke on behalf of ICASA's Council's WOAN Licensing Committee, said that the WOAN Licensing ITA ("the WOAN ITA") was finalised last week and is awaiting finalisation by ICASA's Council. The WOAN ITA could possibly be published by the end of quarter 1 or early quarter 2 of the fiscal year i.e. possibly as early as the end of June 2020, but before end of September 2020.

Councillor Semane's presentation shows that applications, in response to the WOAN ITA, are likely to be received during quarter 3 of 2020 i.e. between July and September 2020. There is then likely to be a public consultation process and then public hearings during quarter 1 of 2021 i.e. between April and

June 2021. She estimates that the entire licensing process will take 14 to 18 months from the date the WOAN ITA is published. Councillor Semane mentioned a number of risks that could arise during the process, one of which is the possibility of litigation related to the processes.

Councillor Dimakatso Qocha provided on update on regulatory developments as far as the licensing of TV White Spaces are concerned.

It is evident that ICASA intends keeping to the timelines it outlined earlier this year. You can view a recording of **ICASA's presentation here.**