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SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE DCDT, MR MONDLI GUNGUBELE ON THE LAUNCH OF THE SITA CYBERLAB IN MDZABU SECONDARY SCHOOL, MPUMALANGA

Programme Director,

The MEC of Education in Mpumalanga, Ms Landulile Dlamini The Director General of DCDT, Ms Nonkqubela Jordan-Dyani The Chairperson of SITA Board of Directors, Ms Sedzani Mudau The representatives of DCDT Entities,

The traditional leadership available here, Councillors, SGB, Teachers and learners, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen. Molweni!!!

It is an honour and privilege to be with you all on this historic occasion, as we gather to celebrate the launch of the Cyberlab initiative – a transformative step towards building a digitally inclusive future for South Africa. I am happy that I stand before you today exactly 7 days after we commemorated Human Rights Day.

Human Rights Day is a day that honours the sacrifices made for our freedoms and reminds us of the fundamental rights enshrined in our Constitution. The day that gave birth to the right to education that all of us enjoy today. As we reflect on these rights, we must ask ourselves how we, as a society, can ensure that every South African, regardless of their background, has access to the tools and opportunities that empower them to succeed. The Cyberlab initiative is an embodiment of that vision.

Human Rights Day, therefore, is not just about remembering the past but also about committing to the realization of every South African's right to education as a key element of their human dignity and equality.

Honourable MEC

I am delighted to witness the unveiling of this vital project, which promises to unlock new opportunities for both our learners and our communities. This initiative is not just about equipping schools with technology; it is about equipping learners with the digital skills they need to thrive in today's knowledge-based economy. By doing so, we directly contribute to the goals of our Constitution, particularly the right to education as stated in Section 29, and to the broader vision of South Africa's national priorities as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030.

The State Information Technology Agency (SITA) is proud to be part of this initiative. As South Africa's leading ICT agency, their role is to improve public service delivery through technology. It is only fitting that we contribute to the transformation of our education system, as it is the cornerstone of our country's future. SITA's mission aligns perfectly with the goals of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act, which seeks to modernize our education system and ensure that every learner is equipped with the skills to succeed in a fast-changing world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Professor Tshilidzi Marwala says and I agree, "On many occasions, we have lagged behind in our ability to adapt and respond to industrial revolutions. South Africa still grapples with this legacy. Yet, unlike the previous industrial revolutions, in the 4IR we cannot afford to be left behind. Our commitment to the 4IR should not be mere rhetoric but rather tangible if we are to realise our economic fortunes."

The Cyberlab initiative goes beyond simply installing computers and internet connectivity in schools it is one of the tangible steps the Professor speaks about. It is a bold commitment to skills development and digital transformation, empowering our communities by giving learners access to cutting-edge technology, while also equipping educators with the tools needed to excel in a digital classroom environment. This initiative serves as a concrete step towards the realization of the right to education, not just in theory, but in practice. It is a step towards realising our economic fortunes.

Chairperson of SITA, Ms Mudau

I am reliably informed that SITA is doing this cyberlab rollout throughout the country. To date I know that we have been to schools in the North West, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Gauteng, Western Cape, KZN we will be going to the Free State very soon.

This initiative is a testament to the power of collaboration. Just as the BELA Act advocates for greater involvement from stakeholders in the education sector, the Cyberlab initiative has been made possible

by the collective efforts of the Department of Basic Education, SITA, the ICT industry, non-profit organizations, and community leaders. Together, we are paving the way for learners to experience the power of ICT, helping them acquire the skills that will shape their futures.

To the SGB, Teachers and learners,

In an era where technology is at the heart of learning, it is essential that our learners have access to the tools they need to thrive.

With these digital resources, we aim to empower both teachers and learners to explore new ways of learning. These tools will support interactive lessons, encourage collaboration, and foster critical thinking skills that are so crucial in today's rapidly changing world. More than just technology, they represent a bridge to global knowledge, a gateway to endless learning, and a way for learners to better prepare for the future.

In closing, I want to remind all of us that this is just the beginning. The Cyberlab initiative represents a crucial step in South Africa's journey towards a digitally empowered society. As we move forward, we must continue working together – government, communities, educators, the private sector, and every South African citizen – to ensure that the promises of a digital future become a reality for all our children.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to the Constitution of South Africa, especially its foundational principles of equality, human dignity, and the right to education. Through projects like the Cyberlab initiative, we are ensuring that every learner has the tools they need to succeed and contribute meaningfully to our country's growth.

I also call upon this community to take good care of this investment and protect it from vandals and thieves. It is an investment into the future of all our children.

I thank you.