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IT'S TIME FOR SA TO REVOLUTIONISE

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is one of the latest buzzwords doing the rounds in South Africa and the rest of the world. But beyond tech jargon, 4IR refers to a complex set of societal changes that are often hard to define and even harder to navigate. And it is here to stay.

To get to grips with 4IR, what it means for South Africa and how we move forward as a country to ensure that its benefits are felt across all economic sectors and society, the Fourth Industrial Partnership for SA (4IRSA) initiative has been formed to help guide the process.

"THE 4IRSA PARTNERSHIP MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA RIGHT NOW."

- Telkom Group CEO, Sipho Maseko

4IRSA is an initiative driven by some of the country's leading academic and research institutions. It was founded by the Universities of Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg (UJ), and Fort Hare (UFH), with support from Telkom SA SOC Ltd. It is an open partnership and since its founding, it has incorporated Deloitte as a facilitation and knowledge partner.

As the initiative grows, it will include government, labour, business, civil society and researchers.

"The 4IRSA partnership is really exciting because it is a spontaneous and growing alliance between enthusiastic and concerned partners in industry, academia and government, together with social actors and citizens, who are committed to working together to develop a coherent, inclusive national response to

the 4th Industrial Revolution in South Africa," says Brian Armstrong, who is the 4IRSA Secretary General and Professor of Digital Business at the Wits Business School.

In February, the Cabinet put its stamp of approval on the initiative. Today Minister of Communications Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams officially launched the 4IRSA Partnership and unveiled its plans towards the country's first Digital Economy Summit at a media briefing. The summit is scheduled to be held on 27-28 June 2019.

On show at the launch were some of the technologies associated with 4IR, such as a 3D printer printing the 4IRSA logo, a robot crane made from drone recycled material, and a hydroponic garden.

The launch took place at Johannesburg's Tshimologong Precinct. Run by Wits University, Tshimologong, which means new beginnings in Setswana, is an incubation hub for digital entrepreneurs, the commercialisation of research, and the development of high-level digital skills for students, working professionals and unemployed youth.

"We need to work across sectors to develop the technology required for us to leapfrog across eons of poverty, unemployment and inequality, and in so doing create a new world order that prioritises humanity before profits and power," says Wits Vice-Chancellor Adam Habib.

"Whilst it is important to address the challenges of our past, it is equally important that we prepare for a collective and common digital and technological future so that we can determine how it will impact on us as a society."

UJ and UFH are also focusing a lot of research attention on 4IR, with a number of different projects and courses.

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UJ Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Tshilidzi Marwala.

now perform tasks that were traditionally performed by human beings. "The consequence of this change is that the world of work is shrinking. Economic inequality will also increase, which will result in social instability. This will in turn undermine democracy," says UJ Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Tshilidzi Marwala.

"We need to educate our people so that they are able to understand 4.0 developments. We need to offer education that is multidisciplinary, meaning that those who are studying technological subjects must understand human and social sciences, and vice versa."

UFH believes that the 4IRSA collaboration is central to the way we reimagine higher education and its purpose.

"Our staff and our students have a critical role to play in shaping as well as in responding to the significant and sweeping changes to the current order and the way we work. Our research-based engagement with our partners on the possibilities and implications of 4IR, therefore, is at the core of realising our vision to be a vibrant, equitable and sustainable African university, committed to teaching and research excellence at the service of its students, scholars and the wider community," says UFH Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sakhela Buhlungu.

Deloitte, which has played a pivotal role in workshops with different sectors of the economy in the lead up to the summit, says it is proud to be a part of the initiative.

Deloitte is proud to be a part of the 4IRSA Partnership - working towards a national response to the Fourth Industrial Revolution for South Africa. As a global business with a purpose to "make an impact that matters", we see the shared prosperity opportunity for all South Africans, business and the public sector in the

fourth industrial revolution. We need to harness our spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship as a country to challenge the status quo and embrace the new technologies now available. This will open the door to new jobs, greater competitiveness and social progress. says Deloitte Consulting Africa Managing Director, Thiru Pillay.

Telkom Group CEO Siphon Maseko hailed 4IRSA as a potential economic and developmental game-changer for the country.

"The 4IRSA Partnership may be the most important collaboration between the government, public institutions and the private sector in South Africa right now.

Its potential impacts are transformative both economically and politically. As a leading ICT player with significant public ownership, and as a committed corporate citizen, Telkom is passionate about addressing today's challenges to ensure tomorrow's prosperity. We therefore have to be a participant and a full partner in 4IRSA. We encourage everyone else to do the same," he said.

Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams emphasised the need to put people at the centre of the 4IR conversation.

"As we unpack the critical components of 4IR, it is important that people are placed at the centre of the conversation. As government, this is woven into all our 4IR interventions, and as such, we have been deliberate in seeking collaborative efforts that build a capable 4IR army. In the same breadth, we must ensure that we create and own solutions that respond to our unique requirements as a country. Lastly, it is imperative that all sectors find expression in the 4IR conversation."

For more information on the launch please contact Shirona Patel on 083-362-1995 or at shirona.patel@wits.ac.za

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What is 4IRSA?

The 4IRSA Partnership (derived from a “Partnership for the 4th Industrial Revolution in South Africa”) is a spontaneous and growing alliance between partners in industry, academia and government, together with social actors and citizens, who are committed to working together to develop a coherent, inclusive national response to the 4th Industrial Revolution in South Africa.

4IRSA’s approach is:



Human-centered
(not tech-centered)



Inclusive and diverse



Fact-based



Strives for progressive
coherence and convergence



Open



Supported



Facilitated and curated



Structured

4IRSA

