

MEDIA RELEASE

CRAN CONCLUDES ASSESSMENT OF STARLINK LICENCE APPLICATION

24 MARCH 2026 – WINDHOEK

The Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) remains committed to promoting universal access to telecommunications services and enabling investments that support Namibia's digital transformation, particularly in rural and underserved areas. The Authority continues to work closely with industry stakeholders to foster innovation, competition, and the development of reliable and secure communications infrastructure.

In this context, CRAN evaluated an application by Starlink Internet Services Namibia (Pty) Ltd (Starlink) for a Class Comprehensive Telecommunications Service Licence (ECS & ECNS) and a Spectrum Licence for fixed satellite services. The applications, submitted on 1 June 2024, were assessed in accordance with the Communications Act (No. 8 of 2009), as well as the applicable licensing and spectrum regulations.

The comprehensive and detailed assessment of the application, was guided by the principles of administrative law, including legality, rationality, proportionality, and procedural fairness. This process included consideration of public submissions, as well as an evaluation of competition, national defence and public security, technical and financial capacity, frequency availability, ownership and control structures, and compliance history.

The following is the Authority's final consideration of each criterion:

Criterion	Final Consideration	Met/Not Met
Competition	Starlink's business case is expected to enhance competition in Namibia's telecommunications sector by addressing coverage gaps, especially in areas where terrestrial infrastructure is costly and challenging. However, the Authority was concerned about the Applicant's lack of physical presence and direct economic investment in Namibia, which the Authority considered to mitigate by the imposition of licence conditions. Overall, the Applicant meets the competition criterion, subject to licence conditions, relating to establishment of a physical presence, direct economic	Criteria met

	investment, and digital infrastructure in the country.	
Technical and Financial Capacity	Starlink has demonstrated both financial capacity and technical expertise necessary to successfully execute its business case. The Authority was satisfied that Starlink met the required criteria on financial and technical capabilities.	Criteria met
Frequency Availability	No technical constraints arose from limited availability of frequencies, as sufficient spectrum exists within the designated frequency band for use by Starlink. Accordingly, the Authority concluded that Starlink satisfied the criterion relating to the availability of radio frequencies.	Criteria met
Ownership and Control	Starlink does not comply with the ownership requirements prescribed under section 46 of the Communications Act, as the entity is wholly foreign owned. Starlink also did not obtain an exemption from the statutory obligation mandating a minimum of 51% Namibian ownership.	Criteria Not met
National defence and public security	Data sovereignty and national control are central to the regulation of telecommunications services in Namibia, as envisaged under the Communications Act and the national policy framework governing the communications sector. The Act mandates that all licensees operate in a manner that promotes the public interest, safeguards national security, and ensures compliance with applicable legal and regulatory obligations, including provisions relating to lawful interception, consumer protection, and effective regulatory oversight. In this regard, the requirement for Namibian ownership and control serves to ensure that telecommunications service providers remain subject to domestic jurisdiction and are fully accountable to national authorities. Starlink's proposed business model - based on satellite-delivered services with 100% foreign ownership - raises material regulatory considerations concerning jurisdiction, enforceability of compliance obligations, and the ability of the Authority to exercise effective oversight as required under the Act.	Criteria Not met

	In light of the above, and in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Communications Act, the application does not, at this stage, adequately satisfy the requirements relating to national defence, public safety, and regulatory compliance.	
Compliance history	Starlink contravened the Communications Act Section 39(3)d, by operating a network and offering a telecommunications service without a valid service licence. Starlink's contravention of the Communications Act and failure to respond to the Authority's summons shows a total disregard for the governance framework of the sector and raised doubt on Starlink's ability to honour license conditions in future. Accordingly, the Authority concluded that Starlink did not meet the criteria due to penalties imposed for illegal transmission.	Criteria Not met.

Upon evaluation of the applications, CRAN found that the Applicant only met 3 of the 6 criteria required by law. Since each criterion is a ground for refusal, the Authority resolved to decline the application for a Class Comprehensive Telecommunications Service Licence (ECS & ECNS) by Applicant.

Having found that the applicant has failed to satisfy the mandatory requirements for the issuance of a Class Comprehensive Telecommunications Service Licence (ECS & ECNS), and further noting that a spectrum license cannot in law be held without a Class Comprehensive Telecommunications Service Licence (ECS & ECNS), the Authority accordingly also resolved to decline the application for spectrum licence, in terms of section 101(6) of the Act.

CRAN is legally bound to act within the powers conferred by the Communications Act. Approving the application in the absence of compliance would be inconsistent with the Act. In accordance with the Communications Act, the Applicant or any person aggrieved by this decision may request reconsideration of this decision within thirty (30) days, from 23 March 2026.

Furthermore, CRAN recognises the transformative potential of low earth orbit (LEO) satellites in expanding connectivity, particularly in rural and underserved areas. The Authority will thus continue to champion the deployment of LEO

satellite technology and investment into other emerging technologies as critical pillars to achieve universal connectivity in Namibia.

ENDS

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