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Attention: Boaz Fletcher  
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Dear Mr. Fletcher

**RE: NEPAD'S ENDORSEMENT OF EQUATEL PRODUCT**

I am writing this letter in response to your presentation at the Digital Summit that was held in Cape Town recently.

NEPAD explicitly recognises that scientific advances and technological change are the main drivers of economic growth and development. The ability of countries and companies to create and utilise science and technology is now a major determinant of their competitiveness in the global knowledge economy.

The role of the private sector, both domestic and international, in Africa's development is critical. In this context, one of the primary objectives of NEPAD is the creation of an environment conducive to increased private sector investment, which includes, amongst other things, reducing risk profile and costs of doing business on the continent.

To this end, NEPAD aims to foster partnerships between government and the private sector to promote developmental dynamics in which the private sector will be the veritable engine of economic growth, while governments concentrate on the infrastructure development and the creation of an enabling environment.

The growing information divide between rich and poor, north and south, undermines development. Information and communication are essential elements of many aspects of development - health and social development, education and skills, production and trading, political engagement and participation in democracy. Without the capacity to seek information, to debate issues, and to make their voices heard, poor and rural people risk becoming more and more marginalised from their nation's and the world's economies.

A new report questions whether mobile services can become cheap enough to meet rural needs.

In most of rural Africa, there is still only one telephone for every thousand people. While it is true that the number of phones in Africa has risen enormously in the past decade, especially since liberalisation, most of the new telephones are mobiles, and they are mostly in cities. For rural people, buying and using a mobile phone can be a very expensive business.

The majority of the world's population, who live in developing countries, and especially the poor in those countries, have not been part of the information revolution. For many rural people, even simple telephone connections are rare and expensive.

At NEPAD we believe that telecommunication is an indispensable component of development throughout Africa.

The SIM Public Phone from Equatel is a unique product that clearly addresses the problem of rural communication. The product provides the communities with the ability to call anyone anytime and receive SMS and voice messages when away from the phone. This will create a dramatic increase in Africans' ability to stay in touch with friends and family, participate in governance issues and conduct business.

I believe that Equatel is a company that has come up with a solution for Africa's rural telecoms problem.

While the benefits of this product is clearly in communication, other outcomes are increased revenues for the state, incremental and sustainable jobs created and improved quality of life.

To this end, NEPAD fully supports and endorses this initiative by Equatel to provide affordable telecommunications to rural communities.

Victor Wilfred Mathale  
Head: Private Sector