



INFORMATION REGULATOR (SOUTH AFRICA)

*Ensuring protection of your personal information
and effective access to information*

MEDIA STATEMENT

INFORMATION REGULATOR HOSTS INTERNATIONAL DATA PRIVACY DAY

WEBINAR

30 JANUARY 2024

On 29 January 2024, the Information Regulator (Regulator) in partnership with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), co-hosted the International Data Privacy Day Webinar (IDPD), focusing on the theme **Misinformation, Disinformation and Data Protection during the Election Period**. Annually IDPD takes place on 28 January and is an internationally recognised day to empower individuals in asserting their right to privacy and encourage public and private bodies to respect privacy, safeguard data and enable trust.

The year 2024 marks the 7th General National and Provincial Elections in South Africa, and according to the IEC they will be administering votes of millions of eligible voters during the elections. The electoral process by its nature, dictates the processing of personal information of millions of eligible voters by the IEC and other participants such as political parties, more so during their campaigning efforts.

Delivering the opening statement during the webinar, the Chairperson of the Regulator, Adv. Pansy Tlakula said that the Regulator has some concerns regarding the handling of personal information during the election period. “With the forthcoming general elections, the Regulator has two primary concerns which are the handling of personal information of the voters by political parties and other role-players in the electoral process, and the phenomenon of misinformation and disinformation which poisons the well of free flowing, credible, reliable, and accurate information necessary for making an informed choice, especially during the elections,” she said.

To assist political parties with ensuring that personal information is protected during elections, the Regulator, in 2019, issued a Guidance Note on the Processing of Personal Information of a Voter by a Political Party in terms of POPIA. Adv Tshupo Boikanyo an Executive responsible for POPIA emphasised in the session that during the elections political parties as responsible parties must comply with the provisions of POPIA.

The IEC’s CEO, Sy Mamabolo, presented the IEC’s mechanisms to combat disinformation and misinformation. He highlighted that the IEC conducts monitoring of platforms and IEC

central email for reports on of disinformation and misinformation, and they have continuous education programmes for users of social media and digital platform. The IEC also has a Framework of Cooperation signed with Google, Meta, Tik Tok and Media Monitoring Africa to address disinformation challenges, and promote conditions for free and fair elections.

Communications Manager for MMA, Nomshado Lubisi-Nkosinkulu, told the audience that democracy is under threat. “South Africa is dealing with unprecedented threats and political analysts are calling the upcoming election period as one of the most crucial and potentially aggressive election periods in our young democracy. It is for this reason that forming a multistakeholder partnership is important and using dedicated tools such as Real411 will also help mitigate and investigate disinformation and other online threats during the election period as it offers one central place for the public to report such threats regardless of the platform,” she explained.

The webinar was an information sharing and dialogue platform to engage on the mechanisms that have been introduced by the IEC, social media companies, media houses, civil society organisations and the Regulator to preserve the integrity of the electoral process and protection of personal information.

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ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE INFORMATION REGULATOR OF SOUTH AFRICA, MEDIA MONITORING AFRICA AND THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION.