

SA Global Business Services sector continues to buck the trend

- *Local body is founding member of Global Technology & Business Services Council*

Johannesburg, 16 July 2020 -- The South African Global Business Services (GBS) sector continues to buck the trend; not only has it pioneered best practice in 'keeping the lights on', but it is a sector that has arguably thrived in a global economic lockdown. In South Africa, GBS extends across multiple sectors including finance and accounting, telecommunications and media, human resources and even legal services. As a result of innovative technology that is the backbone of the sector, operations were able to pivot to agile working arrangements including work from home, scaled down on-site operations and/or blended working models. This ability to maintain operations, keep workers employed and service a global market was strongly endorsed by Minister Patel of Trade, Industry and Competition as a blueprint for business in all stages of the highly regulated lockdown.

Now, in another global first, the South African GBS industry body, BPESA, has joined 11 other independent regional organisations serving the GBS sector to create the Global Technology & Business Services Council (GT&BSC). The Council comprises the leading GBS locations servicing over 10,000 organisations, including multi-nationals, indigenous tech companies, SMEs, and start-ups. The founding members are: Bosnia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Egypt, India, Latin America, Latvia, Malaysia, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, United States and Ukraine.

The Council brings together impressive innovation from countries that have collectively managed the pandemic crisis effectively; e.g. India shifted almost 90 – 95% of its 4.36 million technology workforce to 'work-from-home'. South Africa too successfully managed to migrate significant workers with over 45% of the workforce working from home during June 2020, whilst innovative ergonomic solutions were deployed to keep on-site workers safe but productive. In some operations this resulted in a 100% utilisation of the workforce.

The international focus of many South African GBS operations was key to the government designating these operations as essential services. As a result of industry and government collaboration, South African operations could ensure continuity of service delivery to local and international clients. These operations significantly mitigated the negative impact of the Covid-19 for all clients. This was recognised by the international market and confirmed South Africa as a reliable and innovative GBS location. As a result, international clients looked to South Africa to de-risk geographical risk; Amazon, for example, grew its existing South African operation by 3,000 workers, servicing US and UK users.

South Africa brings these learnings to the GT&BSC, where we will also benefit from the experiences of the other founding members. This collaboration could be key to supporting all members to breach the 'next normal'. The council members highlighted "We are all

incredibly proud of how well our industry responded to the challenges presented by Covid-19. Partnerships and individuals around the world worked tirelessly to ensure key services were delivered in really adverse conditions, remodelling and reinventing business processes literally overnight.

“It is the council’s firm belief that technology, collaboration and access to a global talent pool will be key to driving business and governments out of the inevitable downturn,” says Andy Searle, CEO of BPESA, the not-for-profit company that serves as the industry body and trade association for Global Business Services in South Africa.

Sharing best practices, thought leadership and collaborating on new operating models on a global stage will accelerate recovery around the world. “We are delighted that our entire industry is collaborating in this global way for the first time and believe this will provide significant value to I global governments, our members, their customers and their employees around the world”

The world is still in the grips of the Covid-19 pandemic and there is no doubt there is and will continue to be devastating economic fallout globally. It is anticipated that the world will retreat from globalisation, and if it does this sector has demonstrated that it is possible to positively utilise its interdependence and preserve business as usual. The council provides a forum to collaboratively and responsibly shape the future of the sector globally. It will share thought leadership and bring influence to bear on the direction of the sector and its reputation in the eyes and minds of the buyers. In addition, it is a platform to develop, share and implement best practices for business and for crises, such as Covid-19.

This unprecedented cooperation will ensure that the sector continues to contribute positively to the growth of the global economy and that it does so with strong and positive social impact on the more marginalised communities of society.

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About BPESA

BPESA is a not-for-profit company that serves as the industry body and trade association for Global Business Services in South Africa serving the international and domestic markets. Its purpose is to market South Africa to the world as an attractive place to offshore their business processes, thereby stimulating local job creation, particularly for unemployed youth, and coordinating industry role players to provide a sustainable supply of suitably skilled people to enable the sector to remain competitive and to grow.