

Zimbabwe telecom firms on the defensive

By [Dumisani Ndlela](#)

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Zimbabwe's telecommunications sector has gone on the defensive over poor quality service and calls for government to open the market to South Africa's MTN and Vodacom.

Richard Owen, writing in a local newspaper, criticised local telecommunications companies, saying their services were erratic, tariffs high, products poor with “extremely slow connection speeds complete with customer service attitude that would be more appropriate in a correctional facility”.

“Companies like Econet, NetOne and TelOne would not survive in a competitive industry with the kind of service they provide,” said Owen, calling on government to licence South Africa's two mobile network companies to help improve services.

But the peeved telecommunications players hit back, saying in a statement that they had made significant inroads since the advent of the GSM in 1996 but admitting that “the telecommunications services in Zimbabwe are still far from being satisfactory.”

“With respect to the slow internet speeds, this problem is being addressed from many fronts,” said Reward Kangai, chairman of the Telecommunications Operators Association representing NetOne, Econet Wireless, Telecel Zimbabwe and TelOne.

He said Zimbabwe was trying to get access to the sub-marine optical fibre system that connects Africa with Europe and eventually to the “internet cloud” so that speed is significantly enhanced.

The government has previously said it would not immediately license foreign players in order to give current players room to improve.

ABOUT DUMISANI NDLELA

Dumisani Ndlela is a Zimbabwean journalist specialising in business and financial reporting, with experience reporting on commodities, stock and financial markets, advertising, marketing and the media. He has previously reported from a number of regional countries as well as from the UK and Germany on commodities and regional integration. He can be contacted on dndlela@yahoo.co.uk.

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