



Media Release

For Immediate Release

20 January 2022

**COMMISSION INVITES PARTICIPATION ON IN-CAMERA
HEARINGS SCHEDULED FOR 23 FEBRUARY 2022 – 4
MARCH 2022**

The Online Platforms Market Inquiry (“The Inquiry”) invites stakeholders to participate on the virtual in-camera hearings following today’s release of a “call for participation” which is now available on the Commission’s website available on the Inquiry website(<https://www.compcom.co.za/online-intermediation-platforms-market-inquiry/>). The in-camera hearings scheduled for 23 February to March 2022, follow the Inquiry’s Public Hearings held from 2-29 November 2021.

The purpose of the in-camera hearings is to accommodate stakeholders that require to make submissions to the Inquiry Panel and Technical Team of a confidential nature, which could not be dealt with in the Public Hearings, and which cannot be dealt with adequately through confidential written submissions. This may also include submissions of an expert economic or legal nature that traverses confidential information in its analysis.

The call for participation explains the structure of the in-camera hearings and how stakeholders can participate in the hearings. Stakeholders wishing to participate are urged to fill in the “Inquiry In-Camera Hearing Form” and send it to the Inquiry email address (oiptmi@compcom.co.za) by 17h00 on 31 January 2022. The Inquiry will then

inform stakeholders directly of their hearing dates and time slots by 17h00 on 4 February 2022.

Aside from in-camera hearings, stakeholders may still participate by making submissions to the Inquiry email address (qipmi@compcom.co.za) or by completing the Inquiry's updated business user survey for businesses that use the online channels to reach consumers - [Questionnaire for business users of online platforms \(office.com\)](#). The Inquiry is particularly interested in understanding the experience of business users, in particular the extent of platform dependency, the restrictions placed on their business by platforms; the perceived fairness of search algorithms, platform terms & conditions, and platform commission fees; as well as the impact on their business of any unfair treatment. It is essential that businesses undertake the survey if their voice is to be heard.

The Inquiry has completed its first phase of information gathering, which included the release of the Inquiry's Statement of Issues ("SOI") along with Requests for Information ("RFIs") to various online platforms and an online business user survey. The insights from that exercise resulted in the release of a Further Statement of Issues (FSOI), along with further requests for information from market participants and lastly the Virtual Public Hearings held in November 2021. The full set of issues and documents are available on the Inquiry website as well as public versions of stakeholder submissions (<https://www.compcom.co.za/online-intermediation-platforms-market-inquiry/>).

Recordings of the public hearings are also available on the Commission's YouTube channel. (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfpSJZxdHcryCC20ipPAuCq>).

Since the advent of the pandemic, South African consumers and businesses have embraced online channels for shopping, food delivery, booking travel accommodation, research before big purchases like cars or homes and downloading apps for almost every aspect of digital life. In response to the growing importance of the online economy and competition concerns in these markets emerging in other countries, the Competition Commission launched a probe into competition and participation in the online economy in May 2021. The purpose was to ensure that consumers and businesses that use online platforms to reach consumers benefit from competition

amongst online platforms, and that small and historically disadvantaged businesses also get to participate fairly in the online economy.

All documents relating to the next phase of the Inquiry can be found on the Inquiry website which include, the Inquiry's Administrative Timetable and the Guidelines for Participation in the Inquiry.

[END]

Issued by:

Siyabulela Makunga, Spokesperson

On behalf of: The Competition Commission of South Africa

Tel: 012 394 3493 / 072 768 0238 (whatsapp) / 067 421 9883

Email: SiyabulelaM@compcom.co.za

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