

## Speech by Deputy Minister Dina Pule on the theme “Briefing on Digital Migration Process”

Speech by Deputy Minister Dina Pule on the theme “Briefing on Digital Migration Process”; delivered at the National Summit on Set Top Boxes (STB) Manufacturing scheduled for the 22-23 October 2009, from 09h45 – 10h00 (time set for delivery of speech).

Honourable Minister of Communications Sipiwe Nyanda, Director-General Mamodupi Mohlala, Leaders of Industry, officials of the Department of Communications and other government officials, ladies and gentlemen.

It is clear that migration from analogue to digital sound and television broadcasting technologies will be global and universal over time. Meanwhile, this migration will progress in all countries or regions at varying pace, according to the wherewithal of the respective countries.

South Africa is amongst the 120 countries in Europe, Middle East and Africa who took the important step towards the introduction of digital broadcasting when we signed a treaty agreement in June 2006 at the conclusion of the International Telecommunications Union’s (ITU) Regional Radio Communications Conference in Geneva, heralding the development of “all-digital” terrestrial broadcast services for sound and television.

The digitalization of broadcasting in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East represents a major landmark towards establishing a more equitable, just and people-centered Information Society. The digital switchover will leapfrog existing technologies to connect the unconnected in underserved and remote communities and narrow the digital divide.

Minister Sipiwe Nyanda took the bold and forward looking step to uphold the Department of Communications proposed deadline for analogue switch-off by 2011.

Much has already been said about the benefits that broadcasting digital migration from analogue to digital will bring to our country, society and communities, but let me reiterate the following:

- The switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting will create new distribution networks and expand the potential for wireless innovation and services;
- The digital dividend accruing from efficiencies in spectrum usage will allow more channels to be carried across fewer airwaves and lead to greater convergence of services;
- The inherent flexibility offered by digital terrestrial broadcasting will support mobile reception of video, internet and multimedia data, making applications, services and information accessible and usable everywhere and at any time;
- It opens the door to new innovations such as mobile broadcasting, interactive services along with High-Definition Television while providing greater bandwidth to existing mobile, fixed and radio navigation services, and so forth.

It is encouraging that in the challenging leap forward to final migration from analogue to digital broadcasting, the Department of Communications together with several other partners and stakeholders, have taken the following well thought out key steps:

- In 2005, the Minister of Communications established a Digital Migration Working Group (DMWG), lead by the DOC, whose task was to develop recommendations on the digital migration process. It submitted its final report to the Minister in November 2006.

- The Cabinet, in February 2007 decided that South Africa should migrate to digital broadcasting, before 17 June 2015, the date by which the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations specialised agency for telecommunications, has stipulated analogue broadcasting should end.
- The Cabinet approved the following with regard to the Broadcasting Digital Migration process in South Africa;
- That on 1 November 2008 the digital signal be switched on and the analogue signal be switched off on 1 November 2011, providing for a three-year migration period, known as dual-illumination period;
- to, in principle support, and consider the subsidization of set top boxes (STBs) for poor families following the development of models for such subsidization by the DOC and its presentation to Cabinet;
- that sufficient frequency spectrum be set aside to provide for new television channels; and to provide specialized television services dedicated education, health, youth, SMMEs, sports and three regional service channels catering for a combination of three provinces each.
- that radio frequency spectrum that is freed-up by the digital migration process should, in addition to providing more broadcasting channels, enable the provision of additional ICT services traditionally not provided in the broadcasting radio frequency band, such as mobile broadcasting and wireless broadband.

that a strategy for the development of the Set Top Box Manufacturing Industry and one for the Creative Industries be developed working with the departments of Trade and Industry and of Arts and Culture.

## PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

- The Policy provides for a three year dual illumination period with the switch-on of the digital signal being on 1st November 2008 and switch-off on 1st November 2011 of the analogue signal. Post the 2011 switch off of the analogue signal, the public will be able to continue to receive television reception through Set Top Boxes or TV sets equipment to receive digital signals. Digital signal switched-on on 30 October 2008. SABC, eTV and Mnet are running pilots currently.
- In order to achieve the migration targets set for the country, the policy proposes that options of STB Scheme-for-Ownership-Support, STB SOS, to assist the poor TV households be explored. In addition the technical features of the Set Top Box are such that they enable the Set Top Boxes to be considered as tools for e-government delivery thus narrowing the digital divide. Cabinet has approved that 5 million poor TV households be subsidized. An amount equaling R400 million has been allocated in this regard.
- The STBs for free-to-air services will have standardized operating systems prioritizing security features, interoperability, addressability and inter-connectability. In addition to facilitating e-government, these features enable disconnection of stolen boxes and reduce the possibility of an influx of boxes not manufactured or approved in South Africa from flooding the market. The South African Bureau of Standards is at final stages to gazette the South African DTT Standard.
- The policy proposes that the public broadcaster, on its own or in partnership, cater for three public regional television channels as well as channels prioritising education, health, youth, SMME, interactive services, as well as Parliamentary and government information and services needs. In addition, regional television services will be required to provide an open window for community television services.
- Developing the South African electronics and local content industries

- The policy advocates the need for the development of a South African electronics industry as part of contributing to job creation as well as to South Africa's global excellence in the manufacturing of Set Top Boxes. In addition, and, as part of developing the Creative Industries, the creation of Digital Content Generation Hubs aimed at generating local content for digital broadcasting is planned.

- Rolling out the Digital Terrestrial Television transmission infrastructure

- The national coverage of the digital broadcasting signal shall be achieved in a phased manner. Although, the DoC's targeted aim to cover 50% of the population by the end of the 2008/09 financial year, only 33% is anticipated to be covered during this phase. It is projected that we would cover the balance of the population by 2010/11 enabling analogue switch-off. Areas that are difficult to reach will be covered by satellite means.

- Implementing the migration to digital

- A digital migration office referred to as Digital Dzonga has been established to oversee the implementation of the Policy in South Africa. 12 Digital Dzonga Council members appointed by the Minister in 2008.

In conclusion I would like to say that it would be a win-win situation for all of us, if broadcasting digital migration culminates in us developing an internationally competitive electronics industry through the Set Top Box manufacturing, greater spectrum efficiency by connecting more communities to Information Communication Technologies, and last but not least by creating a more ICT inclusive society.

The Director-General Mamodupi Mohlala would unpack further the strategies surrounding Set Top Boxes and the Scheme for Ownership Support for poor households.

I wish you all the success in your deliberations to further capacitate South Africa's industrial manufacturing capacity, in this instance, particularly in the area of electronics.