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Department:  
Communications  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**THE IMPACT OF DUAL ILLUMINATION: THE INSIGHTS INTO THE ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION**

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**1. Introduction**

Mr Chairperson, The Chief Executive of Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, Your Excellencies, Chairperson of the various regulators represented at this event, colleagues industry, Ladies and Gentlemen. It has been a while since the ITU took a resolution to migrate all broadcasting systems in region 1 (Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Islamic Republic of Iran to digital. At the CTO's Digital Switchover Forum in 2007, the Department of Communications shared with the delegates as to how the process is to unfold in South Africa. Since then, the much-awaited policy has been approved by Cabinet and subsequently released for immediate implementation.

Broadly, SA's approach is characterised by the following:

- A relatively shorter dual illumination (1 November 2008-1 November 2011) with stricter time-table, (**Advantages**)
  - ① Reduces dual illumination costs
  - ① Reduces risk of technology dumping
  - ① Provides sufficient time to for uptake and usage of STBs and digital TVs – before 2015 cut off date

- ① Note: *Longer dual illumination does not necessarily leads to a successful implementation*
- A developmental approach consistent with a developmental state that SA is as evidenced by:
    - Stronger state intervention in the economy
    - The ruralness of the country (approximately 70%)
    - 94% of the population relies on FTA
    - 18% of the population relies on government grants, therefore, not able to afford the requisite STBs for accessing digital TV
  - The need to contribute to economic growth through local manufacturing of STBs, thus reviving the local industry and creating jobs

## **2. Progress towards a completed transition**

On behalf of the government of SA, we are happy to announce that the following has been achieved in accordance with the policy:

- The switch-on of a digital signal has successfully occurred in selected regions, including JHB and Durban, thus signalling a phased approach to the process,
- Trials are currently underway and full digital launch is expected in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2009,
- A body referred to as Digital Dzonga has been established to raise public awareness and coordinate industry activities and plans.
- Funding obtained through Sentech<sup>1</sup>, our signal distributor the costs of dual illumination (R800 million infrastructure upgrade and R330 million for dual illumination spread over 3 years)
- STB manufacturing strategy is being developed

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### **3. Overcoming the strategic challenges of inequitable access and consumer uncertainty**

In a developing country like South Africa, Digital Migration is a complex project. Thus, the success of migrating to digital broadcasting services is not only determined by the availability of infrastructure or the heightened communication awareness with the public. Implementation of subsidy schemes for poor people are critical in driving takeup. As confirmed, preliminary research has demonstrated that 4.5 million of the TV households will not be able to afford Set-Top Boxes. To this end, SA government has:

- Made a firm commitment to provide subsidies to 5 million poor TV owning households envisaged to be rolled-out by the Department of Social Development, and the strategy outlining the implementation of these subsidies, is currently being developed by the Department,
- Controlled STB entry into the market to ensure that the STBs not complying with approved specifications cannot work, while stolen ones are disabled,
- Balancing competing interests (public, commercial and consumers),
- Hybrid model to be used to reach those areas with difficult topography (satellite to complete terrestrial).

### **4. Bridging the remaining gaps in broadcasting infrastructure**

It should be acknowledged that SA's achievement to date was a culmination of long and hard work by the government in collaboration with the broadcasting industry. It is quite an ambitious migration period even by the world standards. We are however confident that with the South Africans working together this short migration can be achieved.

Finally, there are a few lessons that as a country we have learnt:

- i. There is no *one size fits all* in the implementation of BDM as every country is unique. It is this uniqueness that should shape the process. Thus, factors such as the objectives of the country, the profile of the country (population

density and psychographic characteristics, topography, economic capacity) are key determinants.

- ii. Commitment from, cooperation and coordination amongst all the stakeholders,

New challenges such as economic meltdown, global warming and climate change are emerging. We need to seek ways of confronting them, lest they scupper or plans of changing our people's lives.

South Africa is also at an advantaged position due to the planned FIFA's Confederation Cup and World Cup in 2009 and 2010 respectively. These are key events around which DTT take up are planned. Therefore, as a country we will do whatever it takes to maximize consumer take up in anticipation of this.

We hope, you will all join us in celebrating these important events in on digital platform. This is likely to be an important hallmark in our historical time because with rapid technological development centuries from now, our future generations will be able to read that *there was once a FIFA World Cup broadcast on Digital platform. It was hosted on African Soil.*

Wishing you well in your deliberations and hoping that the ideas shared at this event will assist all of us in shaping a digital future for our people because we owe it to them.

Thank you!