

# Minister Gen (RET) Sipiwe Nyanda's Speech at the Opening on Set Top Box Manufacturing

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, GEN (RET) SIPHIWE NYANDA, MP AT THE NATIONAL SUMMIT ON STB MANUFACTURING, 22 OCTOBER 2009

DEPUTY MINISTER DINA PULE

CAPTAINS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INDUSTRY

LEADERS OF NGO'S AND TRADE UNIONS

REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND STATE INSTITUTIONS

MEMBERS OF THE DIGITAL DZONGA COUNCIL PRESENT HERE

MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

On behalf of the Department of Communications I welcome you to this Summit. This gathering marks an important milestone on our journey of migrating from analogue to digital broadcasting.

Let's begin by revisiting the reasons why this Summit and all other supporting and associated activities are important.

We are preparing the ground on which future generations will continue to build on and contribute to the work of creating a developmental state with a thriving economy that provides opportunities for all.

We are also meeting here to re-emphasize the need for all South Africans to embrace a culture of working with government to realize the goals that we have set ourselves as a nation. Indeed government alone will not win the war against many of the socio-economic challenges facing our people. We need to create lasting partnerships between the state, the private sector and labour to overcome all these issues before us.

When the Broadcasting Digital Migration Policy was finalized in 2008, a thorough and inclusive consultation process and research had already been conducted.

A Digital Migration Advisory Committee was appointed to advise the Minister on how the Department should approach this mammoth task, especially in light of the tight deadline set for the completion of this process.

It is important that this Summit notes that the policy choices we make as a country, and in this regard the Digital Migration, will ensure that the process is not only about modernizing technology, but that it also addresses key socio-economic, developmental and infrastructure challenges facing our young democracy.

In his State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma made it clear that the fight against poverty remains the cornerstone of Government policy. It is the responsibility of each department to identify its particular contribution to achieve the priorities set by our government.

It is important that as we explore various ways of meeting these objectives, we do so in partnership with other relevant parties including industry and labour. This principle bears reference with regard to our meeting here today.

The country is only one of a few to set itself deadlines to fully migrate its terrestrial television broadcasting into a full digital platform before the 2015 global deadline.

To achieve our deadline of switching off the analogue signal by November 2011, it is important for this Summit to note that significant progress has been made to ensure that we meet this deadline.

We therefore, collectively, have a challenge to ensure that our country meets this deadline.

Already in October 2008 we switched on digital transmitters and this milestone marked the beginning of a journey of a thousand miles. Our targets might sound ambitious and almost impossible, but I have no doubt that working together we can make it happen within the set timeframes.

Allow me at this point to address my expectation on the role that ICASA has to play in ensuring that we achieve our objectives. As government we have committed to capacitate the regulator to ensure that it efficiently implements policies as set by my department. In this case the finalization of the digital broadcasting frequency band becomes urgent to ensure that the required frequencies are made available to all those will be affected by the migration process.

We are currently in a period of dual illumination wherein the digital signal is transmitted simultaneously with the analogue signal. I am also informed that industry is conducting tests as an additional measure to confirm that the country is indeed in a transition mode. This is testimony that industry is getting ready and recognizes the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead of us.

We of course, collectively again, have a responsibility of ensuring that as we move the country to a brand new world of broadcasting, we take along the entire population with us.

It would be counter-productive for us, the role players, to bring into the country all these modern, state-of-the-art technologies but fail to prepare the nation.

I therefore call on the various interested parties involved in this process to come up with initiatives that would complement my department's Public Awareness Campaign aimed at informing the public on how the new era of broadcasting will affect their lives.

The process of migrating from analogue to digital also presents economic and employment opportunities, hence it must be seen as this sector's contribution to the national imperatives as outlined by the President.

This Summit should therefore seek to address the critical issue of ensuring that as many South Africans as possible become part of this process so that they share in the economic spin-offs to be derived from this process.

This Summit should ensure that it emerges with resolutions that would see a Proudly South African migration process that takes full advantage of locally available skills and resources.

For its part, Government has already made a decision to support poor TV-owning households and we are in the process of finalizing the details regarding the implementation of the support scheme. This will be shared with the Summit and will be open for inputs.

The set-top-box or digital decoder manufacturing strategy to be discussed by this Summit in the next two days will form the cornerstone for sustainable growth in the ICT sector and introduce new and emerging players who have been struggling to make a break-through. Some of them are here today.

Furthermore, this process will stimulate the growth of the economy in line with the objectives set by the National Industrial Policy.

It will further encourage e-commerce activities and expand the ICT infrastructure, linking rural and urban communities as well as uplift the poor through information sharing, which will be made possible through the introduction of new channels.

Like other sectors of the economy, the ICT sector has to respond adequately to the quest of finding ways and means of improving the delivery of services to our people.

As part of the continuous process of building excellence in the electronic industry, we are at an advanced stage towards the finalization of the digital decoder Manufacturing Development Strategy.

This strategy will promote collaboration between government and the industry.

My wish and I hope I'm speaking on behalf of everyone present here today, is to see the migration process playing a critical role in skills development, job creation and the transformation of the ICT industry. The process must serve as a catalyst in efforts to meet our objectives to skill the youth and women of our country and prepare them as agents of change in their communities, particularly those in the rural areas and with limited exposure to opportunities.

That's the reason you are here with us to ensure that you get an understanding of where we are headed as government and share with us your vision for the migration process in particular, but the industry in general.

Several other stakeholders are playing a key role to ensure that South Africa's migration process becomes a resounding success. These include the Department of Trade and Industry, the National Treasury and the Department of Science and Technology.

In closing, I urge all role players to continue working with the Digital Dzonga office, which was set up to advise the Minister and the Department on matters relating to the Broadcast Digital Migration process.

I wish you all the best as you seek to find mutually beneficial solutions and the best formulas to ensure that this process mirrors the character of our country as a winning nation.

I thank you.