



Digital TV here in April 2010

21 July 2009

DoC gives details about cost of Digital TV set top boxes and the number of new channels which can be expected

The Department of Communications today officially launched its Digital Dzonga, an advisory body for South Africa's broadcast digital migration. The advisory body will offer government council on the movement towards digital terrestrial television (DTT), a process that has been underway since 2007.

The council includes representatives from the public and private sectors, each of whom hold relevant experience in the broadcasting, media and technical fields associated with the initiative. This includes members from ICASA, the Department of Communications, SABC, eTV, MNET and Sentech.

Lara Kantor, Chairperson of the Digital Dzonga noted that the council is targeting April 2010 as the commencement date for the dual illumination process, whereby television will be broadcast in both analogue and digital formats. Both the Department of Communications and the Digital Dzonga advisory council speculate that by 2011 South Africa will be ready to move forward with full digital broadcast.

Kantor also revealed that broadcaster trials, which commenced in late 2008, were still underway and that the SABS recently approved the hardware specifications for the set top boxes that will be required for normal televisions to display digital signals. Karen Willenburg, a member of the Digital Dzonga, added that once the software specifications were approved by the SABS, the local manufacturing of set top boxes would commence.

"We urge all software partners to conclude their agreements so that we can move ahead with the manufacturing of set top boxes" said Minister of Communications Minister Sipiwe Nyanada at today's event.

The Digital Dzonga will be targeting a price tag of R700 per set top box, adding that this was a reasonable amount to expect for manufacture costs. Poor households are set to receive a 70% subsidy from the government on this cost, although they will have to prove that family members own a TV Licence and receive either a government grant or a pension. "R400 million has been allocated for this reason, from the universal access fund" said Minister Nyanda.

Kantor also revealed that South African television viewers can expect to receive 16 TV channels, data channels and an electronic program guide upon final completion of the digital migration process.

Although April 2010 seems a lofty goal for digital signal broadcast, only 60% of the country is set to be switched on in the coming year. The process will also be incremental in the respect that selected areas would be switched on one by one.