ADDENDUM A

PROGRESS REPORT BY ACCESSIBLE BROADCASTING SUB-COMMITTEE TO THE WORKING GROUP AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

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Since the last Accessible Broadcasting Sub-committee report in July 2017, the subcommittee has actively engaged with the following authorities: the SABC; the Department of Communications; Digital Radio Mondiale (DMR); the CSIR; DSTV; the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications and the Working Group's Inclusive Education sub-committee.

It has responded to commentary and queries raised by public forums and individuals and has conducted research into alternative accessible options to provide innovative ICT solutions for the disability sector and regulators that were both affordable and accessible.

It has investigated the migration to Digital TV and Digital Radio with regard to the introduction of Audio Description as well as the introduction of multiple mother tongue language transmissions, South African Sign Language interpretation and the use of ICT broadcasting in Education.

1. **SABC EDITORIAL POLICY REVIEW SUBMISSION:**

The Sub-committee circulated its draft submission to members of the Working Group for comment and input during the last week of August following the SABC's nationwide engagement workshops and duly made its submission to the SABC's Editorial Policy Review Panel by the 31 August deadline.

The final submission advised that members of the subcommittee had attended the various SABC workshop sessions held throughout the country where they voiced requirements and concerns for the SABC to consider when adopting policies and standards relating to accessible broadcasting on Radio and TV that had been raised by fellow Working Group members representing all disability groups and by interested and affected civil society persons over the past two-year period and which had formed part of its work programme. These included:

1. Introduction and regulation of guidelines for Audio Description on TV and Radio stations;
2. Introduction and regulation of guidelines for broadcasting South African Sign language and provision of a captioning channel;
3. Introduction and regulation of flashing images for persons with photosensitive epilepsy on TV and website images;
4. Introduction of digital radio broadcasting technologies and infrastructure;

5. Provision of a digital radio channel specifically for persons with disabilities, including presenters who are persons with disabilities;

6. Audio-described movies and TV dramas to be broadcast on a Digital Radio Channel, not transmitted via a TV Channel (to overcome current analogue TV transmission awaiting migration to Digital TV infrastructure). Also, broadcasting Audio Described soundtracks via Radio frees up the 2nd audio channel on TV transmissions to facilitate alternative use of this channel, for multiple indigenous language translations;

7. Use of Broadcasting in Education for persons with disabilities and introduction of Digital Radio for distance learning in rural areas;

8. Broadcasting and availing access services in all official languages (synchronizing TV programme broadcasts with Radio broadcasts of the audio content in various official languages in the absence of digital TV migration);

9. Making websites and online social media communications more accessible to persons with disabilities;

10. Positive portrayal of persons with disabilities and content on locally made Radio & TV programmes and casting performers with disabilities instead of using abled bodied actors and presenters when the script has roles specifically written for persons with disabilities;

11. Not broadcasting dramas or programmes which portray a negative or compromising attitude towards persons with disabilities or the institutions to which they belong.

2.   MEETING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Accessible Broadcasting Sub-Committee together with representatives of the Accessible Websites Sub-committee held a very positive and fruitful meeting with the Department of Communication's Acting Director General Ms Qinisile Delwa and her Broadcasting directorate to discuss the National ICT and Broadcasting Policies ; provisions for the migration to Digital TV and Digital Radio with regard to the introduction of audio description and other access services for persons with disabilities as well as introduction of multiple mother tongue language transmissions and the use of South African sign language interpretation using ICT broadcasting in Education.

Also, the need for universal design to accommodate the four main types of disability affecting web access (Visual; mobility; cognitive and auditory) was presented by Hanif Kruger and Mariza Jurgens.

It became apparent during the meeting that the initial draft regulatory document presented at the ICASA ICT Policy Hearings held in November and December 2014 had not wholly addressed needs in the disability sector; nor had associated accessibility and affordability factors been fully considered and neither had its public participation processes comprehensively engaged with the relevant entities in the Disability sector.

As the ICT Chamber for Persons with Disabilities had established a national stakeholder engagement platform since the time of the 2014 hearings time, as well as establishing various sub-committees such as accessible broadcasting, accessible websites and inclusive education whose works programmes actively engaged and represented the

interests of all persons with disabilities as well as various government departments, authorities and commercial suppliers of assistive devices, the acting Director-General, subsequently appointed her Director of Public Broadcasting Ms Ntombi Masakazi to serve on our Working Group for Affordable and Accessible ICT for Persons with Disabilities.

3. DIGITAL RADIO INVESTIGATIONS

It was previously reported by the sub-committee that Digital Radio Broadcasting had been recognized as an ideal alternative transmission channel for audio described soundtracks to programmes being simultaneously broadcast on TV to overcome the lack of migration to Digital TV by the SABC as well as the significant benefits of Digital Radio broadcasting in the promotion of inclusive education without incurring data costs.

The Department of Communications was busy drafting a Digital Radio Policy intended for submission to Parliament in December 2016, which had not as yet been submitted. Two alternative modes of Digital Radio transmission are being considered and various pilot trials are being conducted in both DAB+ and DRM (Digital Radio Mondiale).

ICASA approved a second pilot broadcasting trial of DAB+ Digital Radio technologies in the first quarter of 2017 in which a Non-Profit Organisation within the Disability Sector had been allocated a dedicated Radio Station called "*The Spoken Word*". The introduction of DRM is currently being demonstrated in the Wecodec/BBC trials in Johannesburg.

Following the ICT Chamber Meeting held in August 2017, Thembeka Khaka, a pioneer promoter of DRM in South Africa introduced the accessible broadcasting subcommittee to the DRM Consortium headquartered in London. The DRM Consortium is an international non-profit organisation supplying expertise and global collaboration within the sector and has approximately 100 members and associates that include various broadcasters, network & transmitter providers, chipset and reciever manufacturers, car manufacturers, broadcasting unions and research institutions.

Ms Khaka subsequently gave a presentation to members of the WG following an Education Sub-committee meeting held in September. She highlighted the significant affordability and accessibility features of DRM and the fact that it could transmit both data (in the form of text and images) as well as audio for educational purposes and distance learning in rural communities and was specifically tailored for people with disabilities .

The sub-committee is busy investigating the potential digital radio broadcast benefits to the disability sector of both DRM and DAB+ in its recommendations to the Department of Communications and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications.

4. **CSIR - MERAKA INSTITUTE HUMAN LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH IN EPUB 3 DIGITAL PUBLISHING**

Members of the sub-committee participated in panel discussions at the CSIR's symposium held in September which brought together various role players from the accessibility community and stakeholders in digital publishing.

Discussions incorporated how local speech technologies embedded in the CSIR's enhanced EPUB3 publications could support digital publishing in South Africa as well as how the TTS (Text-to-Speech) aspects of these technologies could potentially be incorporated in the digital radio broadcasting of school text books in English and various indigenous South African languages.

5. **DSTV AUDIO DESCRIBED PROGRAMME SCHEDULE**

The Multichoice Programme Manager continues to email the Working Group with monthly schedules of DSTV programmes and channels that have audio description capabilities for the WG to distribute to members on its list. Mariza Jurgen's requested that DSTV consider flighting these AD Movies at more appropriate viewing times.

Multichoice advised that in September they would be looking to opening up the Action Channel to Audio Described content and hoped to have a new channel with new movie titles. They were also investigating VuzuAmp as some of the bigger TV Series that they'd be introducing in the near future had Audio Described soundtracks.

6. **MEETING WITH PARLIAMENTARY PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATIONS**

The sub-committee is awaiting advice on the rescheduling of the meeting originally set aside for the 31 October from the Portfolio Committee.

7. **KALEIDOSCOPE "GESIGSEINDERS" RADIO DRAMA ON RSG FOLLOW-UP**

The subcommittee followed up on listeners' comments regarding their perceived negative portrayal of blind persons in the Kaleidoscope radio drama "Gesigseinders" broadcast on RSG by addressing this matter in the sub-committee's recommendations made in the SABC Editorial Policy Review for both radio and TV productions.

The subcommittee also noted SA Blind's resolve to write a letter of concern to Kaleidoscope proposing an alternative story line and Kaleidoscope's response. Also noted was SA Blind's undertaking to write a letter to the RSG radio station manager and if needs be, to take the matter to BCSA to ensure that visually impaired persons are not perceived in a negative light by sighted society.

8. **GENERAL RESEARCH & ALTERNATIVE ACCESSIBLE OPTIONS**

The entertainment industry is using online video platforms to make material more available to persons with disabilities. Currently, Youtube offers closed caption services on videos for deaf and hard of hearing persons by providing the ability for content creators to upload or transcribe their videos with closed captions. Viewers can also contribute closed captions to creators of video content who allow it.

However, Youtube does not currently provide a similar audio description service for its videos although there are a few lobby groups and bloggers who are campaigning for Youtube to create a system that allows people to record audio descriptions right on the website (as per the audio caption service) or to be able to up load these audio descriptions to a video as an extra layer of audio. That way, built into the online player, they can enable an AD button, much like closed captions offers right now. Although, there is a website called: YouDescribe.org which allows volunteers to add descriptions to YouTube clips.

TV Broadcasts are not the only options to access audio described sound tracks for movies and TV programmes. There are a lot of DVDs and Blu-Rays with audio description options that are commercially available as both these formats use multiple audio tracks for a variety of reasons such as surround sound; stereo sound, audio commentaries; alternative languages and music-only tracks.

Currently Apple's i-Tunes.com has hundreds of classic movies and older TV Shows that support audio description. If one has the iTunes app installed, one simply needs to log onto the website: iTunes.com /forward slash/ audiodescription and the site will automatically open-up the application and display the entire catalogue of AD movies.

Netflix has also taken huge strides to include Audio Description for the majority, if not all of their original content programmes.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT
The work of the accessible broadcasting committee is ongoing and it is greatly appreciative of the spirit of collaboration and better inclusion for persons of with disabilities in the drafting of the ICT Broadcast Policy as indicated by the new acting Director General at the Department of Communications. The sub-committee also looks forward to its rescheduled meeting with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Communications.