



SABC Presentation on the Discussion Document on Digital Sound Broadcasting

12 July 2018

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Introduction

- The SABC would like to thank the Authority for the opportunity to make this submission to the Discussion Document on Digital Sound Broadcasting
- The SABC supports the Chairperson's intention to introduce DSB services in South Africa.
- The SABC welcomes and appreciates the Chairperson's invitation to contribute to the intended implementation of DSB services in the country.
- The SABC will focus on areas that affect the public broadcasting services

SABC's Mandate

- SABC is the only public broadcaster within the Republic of South Africa
- SABC is charged with specific mandate as set out in the Broadcasting Act not only to provide radio and television programming that informs, educates and entertains; but further states that these are to be made available throughout the Republic in all official languages .
- The SABC delivers on its mandate through 18 radio stations plus Channel Africa and 5 television channels
- DSB services has the potential to aid the Corporation in achieving this mandate

SABC's Panel

Mr. Frank Awuah : Specialist: Spectrum

Ms. Fikile Skosana : Manager: Projects Policy and Regulatory Affairs

The urgent need for DSB services

- Traditionally radio is a free-to-air service
- It is to be enjoyed for free
- Subscription based radio systems have failed almost throughout the world
- The growing trend of internet radio has partly been due to slowness of the introduction of DSB which has not been in line with other countries like Netherlands
- However in addition to the cost associated with data consumption, the capacity will not be able to sustain the demand for concurrent usage for data streaming
- The only viable option for radio to remain relevant is DSB

The urgent need for DSB services cont'd

- Current analogue platforms have spectrum limitations
- Limiting the introduction of new and varied services
- Limiting our need to achieve the universal service and access mandate
- DSB will help us to be able to reach the rural areas
- Broadcasting on 18 radio stations, the cost savings on signal distribution on DSB is promising
- DSB offers other features that enhance the relevance of radio to listeners - the easy tuning abilities, availability of more channel choices, better listening quality, early warning systems, slide shows etc.

Licensing

- Mux licensing
 - It is important for the Authority to consider licencing many mux operators as allowed by the frequency plan.
 - There should be a separation between Mux operators and Signal distributors
 - For the sake of efficiency and effectiveness, Mux Operators should be categorised into:
 - National Mux;
 - Regional Mux; and
 - Local Mux.

Licensing cont'd

- Mux licensing cont'd
 - Individuals should be given the chance to own and operate Muxes for local and regional coverage
 - There is also a need for broadcasters to agree on the contribution and distribution of network design (the design should make economic sense for broadcasters)
 - National coverage should be reserved for the Public broadcaster
 - Regional or Provincial coverage – for commercial broadcasters
 - Local coverage – for Community broadcasters

Licensing cont'd

- Bit Rate licencing
 - In the analogue dispensation, licensing is based on frequency per transmitter and the details of the respective transmitter power and effective radiated power
 - Proposed that licensing be based on the bit rate and geographic coverage
 - Licence fees also to be based on these aspects
 - For example:
 - Licence type: DAB+
 - Bit rate: 64kbps
 - Coverage: Free State province
 - The broadcaster will take the licence conditions to the Mux operator to provide for the 64kbps and the signal distributor to provide coverage

Moratorium on new DSB service licences

- DSB will require dual illumination
- The cost of which has to be borne by incumbent broadcasters in addition to their analogue transmissions cost
- It is also a common business practice in other countries where DSB has been successful that DSB should have a new, unique contents altogether
- Thus in order to drive uptake, new programs needs to be made for DSB services
- So there will be dual illumination costs plus new and compelling content costs in order to drive uptake and develop the DSB market
- Therefore it is recommend that existing broadcasters who helped to develop the market be licenced first for x years

Frequency allotment plan

- The current frequency allotment plan needs to be reviewed and increased in order to allow for the proposed 3 tier Mux operator licencing
- The current plan is also based on large SFNs
- Large SFNs have not been tested with regard to its network stability
- SFN is supported as spectrum efficiency is highly improved
- However, Large SFN over province-wide has not been tested
- Recommend SFN in the large Metropolises and MFN in the country
- This will allow for licencing of Local Mux operators
- The plan also provide for only DAB+
- DRM+ and DRM30 should be planned for as well

Standards

- The strength of radio is in its portability.
- Hence the adoption of the standard for DSB services should be in line with the standard adopted by the Southern African Democratic Countries (SADC) and ITU Region 1.
- Therefore DAB+ and DRM systems are recommended
- DAB+ and DRM30 complements each other
- A multi-standard receiver will be ideal for DSB radio
- It is anticipated that FM will be in operations for many years to come
- It is common to see FM and DAB+ receivers in one unit
- Recommend that FM, DRM+, DRM30 and DAB+ should all be in one same receiver

No set date for ASO

- Setting a date for analogue switch off is discouraged.
- At the moment a typical DSB receiver cost about R1,000. Not everyone will be able to afford.
- This implies that the switch-off of analogue services should be determined by the adoption of the digital services by the consumers.
- Moreover, unlike DTT, there are no international pressures to switch-off the analogue sound broadcasting services. Hence, analogue sound broadcasting services must be left to continue alongside digital services.
- Market forces should determine the switch-off date of analogue services.

Summary and conclusion

- No further delays
 - Many lessons to be learnt from DTT
 - Delays is one of the lessons
 - OTT is about to take over DTT and make it irrelevant
 - Much the same way any further delays in the introduction of DSB might result in internet radio taking over radio
 - The result is that the poor will continue to be marginalised
 - We cant always be at the bottom when it comes to technology adoption especially the once that improves lives in the information age
 - There must be an incentive for market developers
 - Hence the moratorium for a set number of years

Summary and conclusion cont'd

- Open up healthy competition to allow licencing of Mux operators and separate between signal distributors and Mux operators
- Adopt DAB+ and DRM systems in line with SADC and ITU Region 1
- Frequency allotment plan should be reviewed urgently especially with ASO taking effect for TV (at least for some TV broadcasters) and availing VHF band as well as for DRM systems.
- For FM and AM, there should be no set date for ASO

THANK YOU