

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

ANALOGUE TV SWITCH-OFF RECOMMENDED FOR 2015

The National Steering Committee on Digital Switch-over has recommended a 2015 deadline for switch-off of the old analogue television transmission signals and the start of a full digital national television infrastructure. The decision was made at a meeting of the Committee held on November 2, 2010.

Under current plans, Jamaica will join many countries of the world in switching to Digital television, while phasing out traditional analogue production, broadcasting and reception systems. The process involves eventually switching-off of analogue terrestrial transmissions on a planned basis, under arrangements with the television service provider, government and the affected agencies. It is this switch-off that is being scheduled by the Committee for “three to five years time”, culminating in 2015 at the latest. Some providers have already converted to a digital system or are in a position to move more quickly towards this than others, hence the flexibility in the timeframe.

The transition from the old to new broadcasting technologies is mandated by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), an agency of the United Nations. It is being done in Jamaica as a joint project between government and the private sector media companies in cable and broadcasting.

Among the benefits of Digital television is sharper and clearer television reception. The new technology will also confer greater system capacity, including a larger number of television channels and services, thereby widening choice in the range of content available. The new digital television system should be interoperable with a wide range of data-bases, thereby allowing access not just to television but also to stored data and audio-visual content and interactive features.

Some Jamaican cable service providers already operate a digital delivery system, including the option of mobile television, as well as widescreen and High Definition (HDTV) services now part of the growing market for large-size flat screen TV sets.

The Digital Switchover Policy also takes into account the needs of persons with disabilities by requiring improvements in their access to media services, in line with the principles of equality, non-discrimination and inclusiveness.

The National Steering Committee for Digital Switchover consists of cable TV and other broadcasting industry representatives, the consumer affairs sector, persons with disabilities, the industry regulators and the Government. The Committee is chaired by the Minister of Information and co-chaired by representatives from the cable and broadcasting sectors, as well as the Broadcasting Commission which coordinates the process.

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