

Import tax on digital set top boxes waived

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With three years before the deadline to migrate from analogue to digital terrestrial TV broadcasting elapses, Kenya's finance minister, Njeru Githae, has waived import tax on Digital Set Top Box units.

Githae made the announcement on Thursday 14 June 2012 as he delivered the governments budget for 2012/3 financial year. This announcement is expected to boost efforts to ensure Kenya's seamless migration. It is also provides an opportunity for investors in the sector.

The migration to digital television broadcasting is a government initiative arising from the multilateral decision of the Regional Radio Conference of 2006 in Geneva, Switzerland. The decision required all member countries of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to migrate from analogue to digital terrestrial TV broadcasting by 17th June 2015.

Upgraded to DVB-T2

Kenya's president launched the migration process in December 2009. It involved Digital Video Broadcasting - Terrestrial (DVB-T). However, because of technological advancements, the technology was upgraded to the DVB-T2 platform which compared to DVB-T has better quality pictures and sound, 50% more programme channels and improved security to prevent unauthorized persons from receiving services.

Following the announcement, consumer electronics firm Samsung Electronics East Africa has welcomed the announcement. The company is currently awaiting type rating approvals for its DVB-T2 compliant TV sets from the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK).

"We are pleased at the government's move to remove import duty on Set Top Boxes as it will greatly encourage a faster migration process for millions of Kenyans wishing to enjoy digital TV broadcast services," says Robert Ngeru, Samsung Electronics East Africa Business Leader.

Equipment vendors and suppliers intending to sell the set top boxes must comply with the DVB-T2 system specifications and are required to obtain approval of the set top boxes from CCK in line with the Kenya Communications (Amendment) Act No.1 of 2009. Vendors will also be required to display at the point of sale, a valid vendor authorization and type approval certificate issued by CCK.

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