

The Media Association Jamaica Limited (MAJ) and specifically its television members wish to make it clear that it rejects any timeframe for digital switch over for television and or radio proposed to take place in the next three to five years.

The Association says that having consulted all television licensees and most radio licensees in the country, none of them was a party to a decision to set that time frame and none of them was at the November 2, 2010 meeting where that time frame was apparently set.

“Across the world it is a reality that formats are being changed from analogue to digital and Jamaica will eventually have to do so. However, there must be meaningful and adequate consultation on the financial implications and the new investment needs that stations must make to achieve this, before a decision is taken on when switchover will take place”, an MAJ statement said.

The Association is aware that the impression may be given that media was a party to the decision of the National Digital Television Switchover Steering Committee meeting that arrived at such a position on November 2, 2010 but we must note and state for the record that this was not so. As a matter of principle, we cannot understand how such a significant decision could in good form have been taken behind the backs of broadcasters.

“We note that the decision is being taken even without the undertaking of an industry study that was being discussed in previous meetings, and must question why a decision would be made without knowing the state of the industry first”, the MAJ said, adding that in other countries discussions are held years in advance on how the new investments will be encouraged, what incentives will be provided to broadcasters and consumers alike, both of whom will have to bear tens of millions of dollars this will cost “.

It is also curious as to why a time frame is being set for Jamaica that is shorter than for the entire 15 nations of the Caribbean region, Mexico, Columbia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Singapore, India and others, most of whom can better afford an aggressive switchover timetable than Jamaican businesses and consumers . “Countries have set time tables of 2020, 2030 and even as far as 2042 for the completion of the digital switchover, so we cannot understand the approach being taken”, the MAJ said.