**Some quick thoughts on key digital switchover issues:**

**1.Set-top boxes**

a. Cost: Since most Kenyans viewers face significant financial burden in obtaining digital converter boxes currently retailing at a prohibitive cost of between Ksh 5000-Ksh 3000, the government should consider subsidizing purchase of the boxes and use the social protection models for identification of poor families to be given first priority.

b. Type: Most of the set top boxes type approved by the Communications Commission of Kenya must be able to pick most if not all the free-to-air channels from both the SIGNET and Pan African Network Group (PANG) digital signal distributors. The current situation where viewers with set top boxes sold by STAR TIMES are denied access to view the more than 20 free-to-air channels from SIGNET and are limited to those aired by PANG must be changed.

**2. Access to Free to Air channels**

Broadcasters and governments should work to assure that digital signals carry at least as far as the old analog ones.

All Pay TV set top boxes must be able to ensure citizens access to free-to-air channels plus their other bouquets on offer. The current situation where DSTV and Zuku subscribers do not have full access to all the free-to-air channels must not be continued. This will ensure that the usually underserved areas can also begin to access a variety of TV Channels.

**3. Periods for simulcasts**

Though acknowledged to be expensive, the Kenyan should provide for longer periods of simultaneous broadcasts in analog and digital to give viewers and broadcasters adequate time to adjust to the shift. Governments, broadcasters, and civil society groups should begin public education programs years in advance to ease disruption to viewers when the transition takes place.

**4. Transparency in frequency spectrum management**

A reformed CCK that meets the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 requirements should ensure transparency in the lengthy proceedings that designate specific parts of the airwaves for different types of digital broadcasts and award licenses to specific broadcasters. Officials should engage in detailed consultations with broadcasters, civil society groups and individuals, following internationally accepted guidelines for openness.

**5. Transition of current broadcasters and New Entrants**

The Government should proceed on the assumption that all existing analog broadcasters will be licensed for digital signals. These broadcasters should not have to make the case from scratch for rights to be on the air. While preserving existing rights, governments should strive to use digital TV’s additional channels to bring new voices to the airwaves. However, current broadcasters who may have flouted licensee conditions like propagating incitement to hatred, violence and discrimination could be given conditional rights with an understanding that if proven guilty in a court of law such a licence shall be revoked.

**6. Management and Accountability of the Signal Distributors**

Given that Kenya has opted to use centralised transmission networks for digital TV, clear safeguards must be put in place to assure that all broadcasters have fair and reasonably priced access and that the transmission networks are not misused for political purposes.