

Framework for Development of Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) Services in Hong Kong

(A) Implementation Timetable

We aim to commence the launch of DAB by late 2010/early 2011, with the digital network extended to cover 95% of the territory by 2013. Milestones will be set for the network development and service provision, with performance bond at an appropriate amount to be imposed on the successful applicant.

There is no plan for analogue switch-off. The Government will monitor market and technology development and review the situation within reasonable time after the launch of the DAB service.

(B) Technical Standards

We will adopt a technology-neutral approach. It will be for the broadcasters to decide on the technical standards to be adopted. For planning purpose, we note that Eureka 147 is the prevailing technical standard providing DAB services using Band III frequency, which supports seven CD-quality audio channels in one Band III multiplex. However, if the more advanced DAB+ standard is used. Up to 13 CD-quality audio channels can be provided through one Band III multiplex.

(C) Spectrum Allocation and Scope of Service

Out of the four Band III multiplexes (i.e., a frequency channel for digital transmission) available to Hong Kong, we will invite interested parties (including existing sound broadcasting licensees and new licence applicants) to submit applications for sharing the transmission capacity of one multiplex (219.584 – 221.120 MHz, also known as Channel No. 11C) for the provision of DAB services covering the territory of Hong Kong. Spectrum utilisation fees will not be required.

Taking into account overseas experience with DAB implementation and the value of the frequency spectrum, we consider it prudent to release **one 1.5 MHz Band III multiplex** for DAB (i.e., **capable of carrying seven CD-quality audio channels** with a territory-wide coverage based on the prevailing Eureka 147 DAB technology or **up to 13 CE-quality audio channels** if DAB+ technology is used). The Government has the

discretion to release more than one multiplex should there be meritorious applications which justify such release. L Band will be reserved.

Applicants will be required to submit their investment and programming plans before the deadline to be specified by the Administration. The DAB services shall not be subject to requirements on programming genres. The operator(s) will be required to broadcast announcements in the public interest provided by the Government and publicity materials of the Broadcasting Authority (BA).

(D) Licensing Arrangements

Commercial DAB services should be provided through a sound broadcasting licence issued under Part IIIA of the Telecommunications Ordinance (TO)(Cap. 106), and regulated under the TO and Part IV of the Broadcasting Authority Ordinance (Cap. 391). Any licensing application, either by new applicant(s) or existing commercial sound broadcaster(s), will be considered in accordance with the licensing regime under the TO. Licences of the existing broadcaster(s) may be suitably amended upon successful application. New licences will be granted to successful new comers.

DAB services will also be subject to the relevant radio codes of practice promulgated by the BA, and technical directions to be issued by the Telecommunications Authority (TA), as in the case of existing analogue sound broadcasting services.

(E) Access to Hilltop Broadcasting Sites

Sharing of existing hilltop broadcasting site facilities (including transmission equipment) is necessary and will be subject to commercial agreement among the DAB operators. The TA could intervene and adjudicate if mutual agreement cannot be reached.

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