

## **Opening speech**

**Mr. François Rancy, Director, BR**

# **ITU International Symposium on the Digital Switchover**

**17 June 2015 – "A milestone for Digital Terrestrial Television"**

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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to wish you a warm welcome to the ITU for this International Symposium on the digital switchover in this very special year, where we celebrate our 150th anniversary. The International Telecommunication Union, the oldest member of the United Nations family, established in 1865, continues its work through its members, 193 Member States, 650 Sector members from the private sector, 92 Academic institutions and 13 associate members, dealing with state-of-the-art telecommunications and information and communication technologies.

Broadcasting has always been an important part of the ITU since first frequency bands were allocated to the broadcasting service at the first ITU conference held after the World War 1, in Washington USA in 1927. Broadcasting has played an essential role in the political, social and cultural life of the world citizens. I have no doubt that broadcasting will

continue to prosper in its important tasks of informing, educating and entertaining our societies while providing the most spectrally efficient way of disseminating the same information to all.

Today, 17 June 2015, marks a historic landmark for broadcasting for 119 countries in Europe, Africa, Middle East and Central Asia, as from today, digital television broadcasting will be able to develop its full potential by enjoying full rights in using the UHF spectrum (and for most countries in the region the VHF spectrum) and no longer need to protect analogue transmissions in this region.

This is a key step in the transition from analogue to digital television broadcasting. The process, which began in June 2006, has re-envisioned the way the world watches TV and opened the way for innovations and new developments in the broadcast industry. The GE06 Agreement, adopted by 119 countries nine years ago today, provides not only new possibilities for structured development of digital terrestrial broadcasting but also sufficient flexibilities for adaptation to the changing telecommunication environment.

Digital TV broadcasting offers many advantages over analogue systems for end-users, operators and regulators. Apart from increased quality and number of programmes, digital systems can provide new innovative services, such as interactive TV, electronic programme guides and mobile TV as well as transmit image and sound in high-definition (HDTV) and ultra-high definition (UHDTV).

Digital TV requires less energy to ensure the same coverage as for analogue while decreasing overall costs of transmission. The more efficient use of radio spectrum brought on by digital TV also allows for

the so-called digital dividend resulting from the freeing up of spectrum for use by other key services, such as mobile broadband.

Today's symposium marks "A milestone for Digital Terrestrial Television" towards establishing a more equitable, just and people-centred Information Society, connecting the unconnected in underserved and remote communities, and closing the digital divide. Today, we'll take stock of the countries that have achieved or are in the process of achieving the switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting and explore the technical and regulatory frameworks required to complete the transition to digital TV and build a sustainable ecosystem.

We'll also celebrate the outstanding contribution of broadcasting to the cultural, information, educational and entertainment buildup of our societies for nearly a century and how digital technologies will contribute to further enhance this contribution.

We are very fortunate to have many experts from around the world at the symposium today to explore the objectives of the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting and take a look at advances in television, such as ultra-high-definition TV (UHDTV), Integrated broadcast-broadband (IBB) systems, and smart TV platforms as well as building a sustainable ecosystem for digital TV in the future and its spectrum requirements. New technologies related to digital broadcasting, including UHDTV, hybrid HbbTV, extended image dynamic range, higher frame rates, and immersive audio, will be highlighted by leading developers and experts from ATDI, BBC, EBU, Dolby, Fraunhofer, LS telecom, NHK, Sony and others.

Dear participants and colleagues,

Today, as we are passing the deadline established nine years ago, I am glad to report that 35% of the countries in the region achieved the Digital Switchover (DSO) and I would like to congratulate them.

38% are in the process of rolling out digital TV broadcasting and switching off analog transmissions, while 27% are still to start the process. I would like to encourage them to complete this process to benefit from digital technologies as soon as possible.

I also would like to encourage them to ensure that their analogue assignments still in operation shall not cause or receive any harmful interference to/from the digital assignments of neighboring countries since this is no longer ensured by the Plan procedures. As was the case before 17 June 2015, frequency coordination in border areas is a key element in ensuring that these areas continue to enjoy television reception, whether analog or digital.

I note that the GE06 frequency plan has been designed to reuse in the digital plan about 30% of the channels of the analog plan. This should facilitate the resolution of any possible cross-border interference conflicts.

As always, the ITU will keep promoting best practices in the use of spectrum and introducing in the Radio regulations, when it is required, new provisions which enable their development while protecting other services, hence providing long term assurance for investments in radiocommunication systems. The ITU BR and BDT will therefore continue to support the efforts of its members, in all regions, to successfully complete DSO, hopefully by 2020.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, allow me to thank you for your participation, whether from here or remotely and I look forward to the discussions that we will have today on this very important event, that covers the following topics:

- Objectives of the transition to digital TV– technical and regulatory frameworks;
- The Analog to Digital Switchover – stocktaking worldwide;
- Advanced Technologies for Television;
- Building a sustainable ecosystem for Digital TV.

We will also take this opportunity to honor the individuals who dedicated themselves to the success of GE06 Conference.

I wish you a very fruitful symposium and day.