

**Opening remarks for Commissioner Tate**  
**Videoconference with German officials on DTV transition**  
**March 5, 2008 9:00 AM**

Guten Tag! Good afternoon to you in Germany, we are just starting our day here in Washington! Thanks to all of you for agreeing to have this videoconference with us to discuss transition strategies for DTV. Given the February 17, 2009 deadline that Congress has given the FCC to complete the transition and reclaim the analog TV spectrum, we recognize the need to have a comprehensive strategy in place that can cover all contingencies. We had discussed the matter here and decided that it would be prudent to check in with other countries to see if we can learn from their transition. We feel that it would be especially useful to talk with you, given that Germany has already made substantial progress toward completing its transition, with the completion of the transition in the Berlin/Brandenburg market in 2003, and several other regions since that time.

We've already held videoconferences with officials in Sweden and the U.K., and found those exchanges to be very useful. Sweden, having completed the switch-off of its analog signal in October 2007, provided us with a review of its overall experience working with stakeholders, surveying consumer views, and educating consumers, and the challenges and lessons that resulted. The U.K.

officials gave us a good overview of the status of the UK DTV transition activities, including a well-funded consumer outreach campaign.

In the United States, the FCC, together with NTIA, has developed informational materials and has begun working with consumer groups. In addition, private industry stakeholders have created the DTV Transition Coalition and are voluntarily conducting outreach efforts. We've continued to work to ensure that TV broadcasters fulfill their obligation to switch their broadcasts to digital transmission by the deadline set by Congress. Neilson (an industry ratings company) estimates that as of January 1, 2007, about 13% of the people and 14% of the television households (about 15.2 million households) in the United States receive TV via an over-the-air signal only. Unlike the German government, we do not have data on precisely how many of these consumers and households already have DTV receivers, but the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) reports that the numbers of "DTV products" sold to consumers is continuing to increase each year, and estimates that over 20 million such products were sold in 2007 alone.

From a regulatory standpoint, we've done several things:

- We mandated the inclusion of digital tuners in television receivers, which will help increase the number of U.S. households with the equipment able to receive over-the-air digital signals;

- We've made channel assignments for TV broadcasters and we are tracking the readiness of those stations to broadcast digitally;
- We've required that retailers that continue to sell analog-only TV equipment must, at the time they make the sale to the consumer, provide information regarding the February 17, 2009 transition;
- We are working with NTIA in the testing of digital-to-analog converters. Under a NTIA-administered program, all United States households are eligible to apply for up to two, \$40 coupons towards the purchase of digital-to-analog converter boxes; and
- We've also taken steps to ensure that all cable subscribers, including those with analog TV sets, can view broadcast television after the DTV transition (about 35% of all television homes are analog-only cable subscribers).

The challenges we face at this point include developing a comprehensive plan to manage and mitigate the risks posed by the transition, identifying potential problems before they occur, and effectively employing our limited resources. We have made significant progress in educating consumers about the DTV transition, including developing information materials, and reaching out to consumer and industry groups. We clearly have much work to do, however, to ensure a seamless transition. Last month we held a workshop on consumers in rural areas and on tribal lands. Just last week, the FCC held a DTV consumer education

workshop focusing on consumers with disabilities. There were a number of speakers at that workshop who were able to provide a wide range of information on resources available to people with various disabilities to support them during the transition. This week, the FCC released the DTV Consumer Education Order requiring television broadcasters, Multi-Channel Video Programming Distributors (MVPDs), telecommunications carriers, retailers, and manufacturers to promote awareness of the nation's transition to digital television. On April 1 we plan to hold another DTV workshop, focusing on low-income consumers.

Without further delay, however, I'd like to hand the discussion over to our two Bureau Chiefs from the International Bureau, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, who I'm sure will have numerous questions to ask you. Thanks again for participating in this discussion.