

Muthambi gets stick for digital TV defiance

By [Carol Paton & Penelope Mashego](#)

12 Oct 2015

Communications Minister Faith Muthambi came in for a lashing at the African National Congress (ANC) national general council meeting at the weekend for defying party policy on digital migration and broadcasting, and for presiding over instability at the SABC.



The consequence could be that she is forced to reverse her policy on the nonencryption of set-top boxes, which will further delay the process of digital migration.

SA already lags much of Africa on migration and missed the June International Telecommunications Union (ITU) deadline to switch its broadcast signal from analogue to digital. This means the ITU will no longer protect SA's analogue signal, with the immediate result that people living in border areas will experience signal interruptions.

At the heart of the dispute over digital migration is the question of whether the set-top boxes required to decode digital signals for analogue TV sets should be encrypted or not.

Among other things, encryption would enable the boxes to be switched off when stolen and would enable free-to-air broadcasters such as the SABC and etv access to better content.

Although the ANC lekgotla in January instructed Muthambi to encrypt the signal, she defied this instruction.

Speaking at a briefing yesterday, ANC communications sub-committee chair Jackson Mthembu said that Muthambi had failed to consult the ANC on her policy.

"The ANC want to sit down with the minister and hear from her why she decided on this policy. Our interest is to protect the public broadcaster and to make sure that people who do not have access to pay-TV do not receive an inferior service," he said.

Depending on the outcome of the meeting, it was possible that the encryption policy would have to be reversed, he said.

The commission on communications was among the most robust at the council. Muthambi also came under fire for the chaos at the SABC, which has been paralysed by governance problems.

"Why are all these negative aspects of board and management always repeating themselves at the public broadcaster?" he asked.

Telecommunications and Postal Services Minister Siyabonga Cwele said the corporate governance issues at the SABC should be attended to and the SABC should focus on its core mandate. Mthembu said the ANC had been asking itself whether it had the right people with the right skills in management.



Among other things, Muthambi has refused to implement the findings of the public protector, which recommended disciplinary action against chief operating officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng for faking his qualifications. The public protector also found that Motsoeneng's appointment was irregular.

"We have been given a clear mandate by delegates. They said we must speak with government and stabilise the SABC. We cannot as the ANC be sitting on the sidelines and see all these sorts of problems playing themselves out," said Mthembu.

Source: Business Day

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>