



MEDIA RELEASE

6 July 2015

COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER FAITH MUTHAMBI COMMENDS RADIO PULPIT 657AM ON LEADING RADIO INDUSTRY INTO DIGITAL ERA

Communications minister, Faith Muthambi, emphasized the importance of community media during an official visit to Radio Pulpit 657AM (2015 MTN Community Station of the Year). She congratulated the Station and the Pulpit Media Group (PMG) on receiving this prestigious award and indicated that part of her visit was directly linked to Radio Pulpit's ground breaking involvement in a digital era.

During Muthambi's visit she emphasised the fact that community media is central to government's communication approach and expanded on the fact that radio will have to evolve to find its place in the digital broadband environment.

"I have always wanted to visit this Station because it has been so innovative to consider going digitally using DRM. Let me start by congratulating Radio Pulpit in making history with the first live DRM test broadcast. I think it is something that you deserve a pat on the back for. It is something you need to brag about. You are a leader in this space."

Muthambi stated that government will look at digital audio broadcasting options – DRM and DAB favourably for simultaneous licensing for services. "Brazil and India, our trading partners from BRICS, have been looking at DRM favourably for their community broadcasting sectors, but what is important to me as a minister is the best interest of the poor people of this country. Manufacturers must also design and build DRM receivers for the South African SADC region. I will not support the importation of these receivers from any other country outside of our SADC region. We must also avoid the situation where our broadcasters are going to be charged licence fees. Our region is very attractive and big enough for any player that would want to partner with our local manufacturers and share their skills and resources for the development of our region."

According to Muthambi, government is serious about digital migration and has been working around the clock to assure that the issue of spectrum interference is dealt with. "As a country we are ready with Sentech and the SABC is on board. Digital migration is also to revive the local electronic manufacturers. We need to contribute towards growing our economy. So I can assure you that we are on track, and I am also excited that Radio Pulpit is a step ahead in moving our country forward. "

In her own words radio is "tops" and a "priority". While referring to Radio Pulpit receiving the PANSALB award as Radio of the Decade for Multilingualism and Nation Building in 2008, the minister stated the beauty about community radio is that people are able to access it in their own language.

“Community broadcasting is a key player and it can actively encourage social cohesion and nation building. We should utilise community broadcasters to inform South Africans about their rights and responsibilities, and to also establish high moral values based on respect of others. ”

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Muthambi also touched on the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult for media houses to be financially sustainable due to a lack of commercial support from the state and the private sector and referred to her approval of the publication of the community broadcasting support strategy. “We will look at the transformation and empowerment of community media, funding challenges and corporate governance issues.”

On a question about the future of radio she remarked that many people predicted radio’s death when television was introduced, but radio has continued to have a bright future. “I heard that the majority of South Africans depend on their radios for information and there are statistics that support this.”

In closing, Muthambi encouraged Radio Pulpit to continue building the moral fibre of society. “Keep up the good work, because I know daily, with all your platforms, you are changing the lives of South Africans and in so doing it means you are moving our country forward,” she said.

Contact person:

Jean Lung
Radio Pulpit Communications Manager
012 334 1237
jean@radiopulpit.co.za

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