



Round-table “The prospects of digital TV in Kyrgyzstan”

Event transcript

On February 19, 2008 there was a round-table at the Bishkek Press Club with the participation of leading media experts and journalists in Kyrgyzstan on the topic of: “The prospects of digital TV in Kyrgyzstan.”

Moderator: Gulnura Toralieva, IPP Programs Director

Speakers:

Oksana Malevanaya – General Producer of the 5th channel;

Ilim Karypbekov- Director of the Media Representative Institute;

Shamaral Maychiev – A media representative;

Alexandr Kulinskiy – The deputy of the chief editor, the newspaper “Lisa”;

Omurbek Sataev – Head of press service of the “Gazprom Oil Asia”;

Denis Kovalenko – Administrator of grant programs “Internews Network”;

Adel Laishева – Program Director of the “Internews Network”;

Maxim Kaganer – The deputy of the general producer, the 5th channel;

Kumar Bekbolotov – Program Director of the IWPR in Central Asia.

Gulnura Toralieva announced the topic of the round-table and introduced speakers.

Alexander Kulinskiy: Digital TV is a good thing in general. It gives more opportunity to TV companies and to the customers. It substantially increases the opportunities of each of us to choose what we like to watch. The question is how it will develop in our country, what we will receive as a result of digital TV transition (DTV); such a transition will begin in 2012. To fulfill international requirements set by the International Telecommunication Union we should start DTV in 2012 although the exact time by which this transition has to be finalized is not indicated. In other words, they have done a favor for us, since by that time many countries of the world will already be using digital TV. Digital broadcasting implies a new format of broadcasting for TV and also for radio. It brings changes both for production and transmission. Generally, the whole technological process of TV will be changed. For example, you want to watch, say the program “Pole Chudes” which is on Friday, but you are not able to watch it on Friday. Digital TV grants you an opportunity to order and watch it today, on Monday, because this TV program has to be on the server of the given channel, and so you can watch it. The same is equally true for the previous series of the program.

There will be some changes in radio as well. For example, it will be possible for radio to transmit some information visually, i.e. advertisements via the creeping line, names of songs and compositions. In general, there will be a visible diversity. Moreover, as far as I know, the format of broadcasting has already been decided. One of the current channels will contain 4 new channels. It means there will be four times more frequencies and we should use them, otherwise they will be taken from us and given to those states which really need them. Those countries that really need them are Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and possibly, China.

There are few positive prospects for our national TV. First of all, one has to pay for digital TV, unless our state is willing to act differently. For example, the transition program into digital broadcasting was adopted in the Russian Federation, and it implies that there will be three packages. One is free, the second is a half-paid, and the third is fully-paid. The first package includes all federal channels, and the state pays for it, and each customer will get this package for free. The second package includes, in addition to those federal channels, some other channels that operate in Russia, and the state pays only half price. There is also the third package, which is fully paid by customers, when each of us, conditionally speaking, can watch any channel on the planet, and must pay for it. How our state will address this we do not know yet; in any case, officials do not consult journalists on the issue of DTV. Will our TV be completely free or completely paid? In this view, there are many questions.

According to modest calculations, the re-equipment and transition into digital broadcasting require from each channel not less than a million dollars. It concerns the middle-scale channels too like Osh-TV. I believe that many Bishkek channels, will be undoubtedly able to pay this price, but for those in the regions it is a serious problem. It may turn out that these channels will cease to exist, because they will not be able to broadcast in digital format; even if they can, will they do it well enough? Even if it is of good quality, will it be chosen, will customers – common TV viewers pay for it? It is a very serious problem. Is it possible that the content of our TV will get worse as a result of transition? Will it be competitive within the conditions of digital broadcasting? Honestly speaking, I worry very much about this process - how adequately will it be handled? In other words, if the state pays, which channels will they sponsor and how will it pay?

In fact, the state itself has no understanding of how to conduct DTV. Perhaps it has, but we do not know it. Unfortunately, the one who signed those documents in Geneva, Bayish Nurmatov avoids giving any comments. It is sad that he is not here today. According to the national agency, he is the only person who can tell us about how our country will make the transition into digital broadcasting. It is unfortunate that it is hard to meet this person and ask him: what will actually happen starting from 2012? What will happen here? It is not a secret that at the end of May/June this year, the new law on TV and radio broadcasting will be adopted; at least the Ministry of Culture and Information tries its best to adopt this law within this period. In any case it will be adopted by parliament. The transition into digital broadcasting is not specified, it is not discussed in these draft bills. As far as I know, there is another group at the national communication agency, which is in charge of developing new rules of

frequency distribution, and they have already calculated the transition into digital broadcasting. How this commission operates, and what is being proposed – we know only via rumors.

Lastly, I would like to accentuate that digital broadcasting will definitely bring more opportunities for customers, and the only limitation will be the ability to pay. I stress again that I worry about how our national TV will undergo DTV, since it may lose out, after all.

Oksana Malevanaya: I think that our TV specialists should not be afraid of DTV. Within 15 years of independence, we survived many technological revolutions in TV. I am sure we will cope with this one as well, and continue to work well; somehow everything will be alright. There is another point of concern: It is not yet clear whether DTV will be represented as a national project or not. Will it be a state program, and what is the legal basis for this? For example, the question of producing digital attachments – how will it be organized? Will it be distributed for free or for a fee? Indeed, there are many questions, and only the officials who deal with these issues can answer them. However, I think that no one in our country can deal seriously with the question of the digital broadcasting. There are some documents that were formally signed, but when it comes to realization, it remains on paper. The frequency spectrum is still distributed in the old-fashioned way through decrees and directions. It is a global trend; Russia will also start the transition in 2012, and I am not even mentioning countries in Europe and America. In any case, we need to catch up; we need to adapt to this segment.

We try to move along the course of time. Starting from May, our channel plans to find a way into te satellite, and expand the broadcasting zone depending on satellite. We believe that in any case, it is necessary to leave the analog and well-accustomed segment of signal distribution. First of all, satellite provision of signals is getting cheaper, while radio-relay has been always and will remain expensive. Definitely, it is expensive for local TV companies to expand their broadcast zone, or even impossible. Therefore, it will be cheaper to turn towards and apply modern formats of signal provision. About 5-7 years ago, we were interested in the price of signal provision, and it was about 70 000 dollars, a horrifying price for the company "Pyramid." Now, it costs 12-15 thousand dollars, everything is becoming cheaper. Therefore, there is no need to be afraid of new technologies - it will be solved somehow. We hope that the state will not forget about its citizens, and there will be a package for free which will include the programs of local channels, and correspondingly there will be others that people choose themselves.

As for the content, of course, TV must undergo certain changes. We are used to having evening time as the most popular and expensive for advertising accounts. That will change. When you want to watch a series or movie, you can compose your own program. Definitely, the form and type of advertisements will change. How will you place the advertisement in the digital format? It is likely to be advertisements in the form of product-placement.

Regarding the destiny of national channels, I look more optimistically at these things. I do not think that all of them will cease to exist. Of course, all channels will go through a certain screening. It will be connected with money. Those who have the financial means will invest in and purchase new

programs. Those channels without financial support may cease to exist. But again, it is a natural process of the market economy, and not to be afraid of. From the other side, I think that the TV viewer will choose local channels even if the state does not create a free package. Perhaps you have noticed that local channels are not afraid to program their channels when there is prime-time news on the Russian channels. Hence, this barrier is behind us. Before, we were thinking: here is the program "Vremya" at 9 pm, all viewers would be there, therefore we should place ours at 8 pm, then they may watch. Nowadays, there are no such worries. We are also moving away from the attachment to the Empire; Soviet times are becoming the distant past. Our children do not remember or do not know about it. Each lives the life of one's country. I can say therefore that local news is in demand. Moreover, most channels try to provide international information as well. When it is done well enough, I think that Russian news companies will lose more viewers like us - Kyrgyzstani people. The same is true for local movies, soap operas and so on. Firstly, the Kyrgyz-speaking audience, especially in regions, will prefer to watch movies in Kyrgyz. In addition, there is an increase in the number of local serials, irrespective of quality, and it is still interesting for all of us to watch the neighboring street, neighboring house where we see familiar people, our local stars. Therefore, I believe that market will develop, and some new production-studios will emerge, which will offer local and quality products. Local TV companies will try to compete with a number of foreign channels with good content. Certainly, we will need to improve professional levels and develop further. Such competition is always good.

Ilim Karypbekov: I will talk not about the technical but mostly legal side of the issue. It seems to me that 2012 is a kind of threat for Alexander. In fact, there is no such threat at present. It is because there are a number of international requirements that must be met by the Kyrgyz Republic, but will not be fulfilled or even completely ignored. I am sure that this requirement will also be ignored because of the following reasons. The first reason is that DTV must be carried out by a large national project, which has to be developed from now on, but there is nothing like this. I am not sure whether there are many people, except Alexander and some other specialists present here, who understand generally what digital broadcasting means. It is possible that 2-3 people at the national communication agency know what it is and how to make the transition.

In fact, two draft bills on TV and Radio broadcasting and the national council on TV and Radio broadcasting do not mention digital broadcasting at all. It is because drafters of the bills did not even think about it, and this problem generally has not been raised. Digital broadcasting is not possible in our country in the near future, because there is no legal basis for that. Another reason is the economic component. Alexander said that DTV will cost a million dollars; this is a calculation for the ideal transition. In practice, I think our people in charge will work out certain stages, and the transition will take place gradually. I believe our state will start to think about DTV only when 2012 comes. It will take 2-3 years until the international community understands that the Kyrgyz Republic does not plan to fulfill its obligation. Then, they will apply certain measures to influence the Kyrgyz Republic. It could be economic debt sanctions. Only afterwards, will there be some movement in our country regarding digital broadcasting. I am certain that in 2012 we will not feel any boom, everything will be peaceful and silent, and only one more obligation will not have been fulfilled.

Another point is the ability of our people to accept digital TV, generally. When the question of national TV was raised, some statesmen were in a panic arguing that some families would not be able to pay 10-15 soms for national TV. Then, there is no reason to talk about digital TV. No one will pay for it, most people do not have the TV-set or the apparatus to receive signals of digital broadcasting. This is also a huge problem. Here, one has to take into account this point: the 5th channel will operate through satellite, but the question is how many people will be able to receive this signal? I think that the main state TV channel will be the only source of information for most parts of our country. Hence, the state will be interested in keeping this leverage under its control. When the question of digital broadcasting is raised, the free package will be provided to a certain extent. Whatever the quality of the channel, people will watch the NTRC (National TV and Radio Corporation). It is because, unfortunately, many things are related to the mood and thinking of the chief officials shown on NTRC. For most people, the NTRC is the only source of information. And since we are involved in public activities, we try to watch the NTRC news in order to understand the position of the authorities on certain issues. Our regions watch and will continue to watch NTRC, because it is interesting for them irrespective of the high quality of other channels. We will always be interested in our own issues. As a result, our authorities do their best to keep this leverage under their control.

In addition, I would like to mention one more problem. It is the problem of people who are closely linked to TV and Radio broadcasting. Today, there is the national communication agency. It has been said that there is only one person who knows all the details of the signed international treaty, and has a comprehensive understanding of the digital broadcasting issue. The point is that a new method of frequency distribution is being developed. It is not the first variant of frequency distribution, because all is connected with officials. As long as there is a new chief official of the national communication agency, all other officials of the agency are replaceable. Until they adapt, a year will pass, and they will come to the conclusion that it is necessary to solve this problem. When they start to develop and raise certain issues, the leadership changes again and hence, the rest changes as well. No one knows what the previous team was doing, and everything starts from scratch. When you address them, they do not have enough understanding to reply. It is chaotic, and we will not have a national program until there is a well-established policy of succession. At present, there is no such system. All programs and initiatives are connected to certain people and if they are dismissed, everything fades away. This is also another reason that until 2020, there is no need to worry about digital broadcasting.

Shamaral Maychiev: First of all, DTV means we need to have a starting point of transition, i.e. analog-broadcasting. The major question in digital broadcasting is the resource of frequencies. Today in our country 80% of the frequency resource belongs to the military, and 20% to civilians. Many countries, first, make the conversion of the frequency resource. It means the civil sector must have 80% and 20% is for the military. Then, the frequency resource is published and each citizen, each broadcasting company can say: it is my resource. Digital TV transition means there may be 4 broadcasts at one frequency. However, first of all, it is necessary to make an inventory of the frequency resources. It is the conversion – namely, it is necessary to take away the analog

frequencies and transform them into digital format. There are not only the FM-frequencies, but the military also can work here. Other mass media can work as well.

It is an objective process, the whole world is transitioning into digital broadcasting. Our republic adopts certain documents; on September 19, 2006, the government approved the conception on TV and radio broadcasting. A similar concept is adopted in Russia; it is 80 pages and includes the detailed analysis of the current state of affairs of broadcasting. We need to do the same analysis, because the question of information products received by the population is at stake. In other words, we need to calculate the number of modern TV-sets which can be easily transformed into digital format, and the old TV-sets. In addition, broadcasting stations that deliver signals to the population have to be checked as well, because there are several variants of digital broadcasting. Right now, I wish to talk instead about specialists. According to the law on communication, all questions on frequency resources have to be solved by the national communication agency. At present, we have a law on communication that does not specify the distribution of frequencies. The European Bank of Development announced the tender on the development of a new law; a foreign company won the tender and are working on it. Irrespective of this law, we need a legal basis. Digital broadcasting is an objective process, it does not depend on law, people will receive information, will use certain instruments. Therefore, nowadays, the national plan on digital broadcasting in the Kyrgyz Republic is being developed.

Our country belongs to the first group which includes the CIS countries, Africa and Europe. Kyrgyzstan must have the resource that will be enough to develop digital broadcasting for 30-40 years. When we transit from analog mode to digital broadcasting, the analog frequency is divided into 4. However, after 10-15 years some new technologies may appear, and this digital frequency has to be divided again. To avoid such problems every other 10 years, we need to consider such a possibility. And this resource must belong to Kyrgyzstan, i.e. all stations must have the status of international legal protection. The analog system of "Pyramid," NTS and KTR implies a certain struggle for a frequency, while the public requests a frequency from the national agency. But the digital format means that frequencies will be included in the united catalogue and will be regulated not by national law but by international law. For this purpose, it is important to secure the resources for Kyrgyzstan and clearly name it. Further, the corresponding networks must be planned. Transition programs from the current analog networks into digital broadcasting networks must be developed. The current analog and digital broadcasting use the same frequency range. Since it is an objective process, all countries of Africa, Europe and the CIS organized the first regional conference.

Another problem here is that the Batken oblast is located at the crossroads of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China and Kyrgyzstan, but the territory is small, and the air space has to be somehow divided. It is a very complex question. One must divide in such a way that stations should not interrupt each other. I have here with me a document, prepared by the chief of radio-frequency management of the national communication agency. This document says that in 2004 there was the first session of the regional conference. The second session was held in 2006, where 120 countries participated. During the second session in Geneva, 120 countries signed the agreement; on behalf of the Kyrgyz Republic, the

agreement was signed by the head of the delegation, the deputy director Bayish Nurmatov. He's the one who knows everything, but it is difficult to catch him. The date of DTV was decided; it was June 17, 2005. Until this date, priority is given to the current analog plans of broadcasting and the introduction of digital transmitters must not interrupt the analog ones; after this date, the priority is for the digital plan, and the analog transmitters that interrupt the digital ones must be switched off. However, the major problem is that we have not made the conversion yet, so today, even the national communication agency does not know which frequencies belong to the military and which to civilians. The military received different equipment from Japan, China, Germany, and the USA. This equipment operates at different frequencies, they may take any range. Therefore, the military must take certain frequencies; otherwise, even the national communication agency will not be able to decode the frequency.

According to the adopted plan, the Kyrgyz Republic received one of the best frequency resource distributions, with the exception of the Batken oblast which is on the territory of three countries. It gives some hope, but much still remains beyond understanding.

Also I can say that there is information that the national communication agency of KR will continue to participate actively in all the above mentioned measures, so that by the summer 2009, the country will have a developed and properly agreed plan for digital broadcasting within the region, which allows us to optimally use the radio-frequency resource, secured for Kyrgyzstan at the conference in Geneva. At the moment there is a working group which works on these issues. There is already a frequency resource for the introduction of digital broadcasting without limiting analog broadcasting. In fact, it is a big technical problem, and it has to be decided with the extensive participation of civil society. Today, radio frequency distribution is done by the SCRD (State Commission on Radio-frequency Distribution). If before there were ministers, today the SCRD participants are department chiefs, and only operators. In neighboring Kazakhstan, civil society participates in this process and it is open. But there is no information at all about this sphere in our country. This is because 80% of the radio-frequencies belongs to the military. It is a serious problem, because in order to decode these frequencies, one has to transform them into other frequencies. For this purpose, we need to make an inventory of the radio-frequency resource, but how is this to be done if every time one blunders into coded military frequencies? Therefore, it is quite a serious problem.

Kumar Bekbolotov: 64 channels are available to the population owing to Ala-TV. The leadership of this company made some efforts and was able to create cable channels and to provide their content. How difficult will it be when digital broadcasting comes to Kyrgyzstan? It seems to me, it will be a very serious issue. Even the current channels and TV in Kyrgyzstan have some evident problems with content formation. Some of them fill 80% of the content by re-transmission of foreign channels. And now we are talking about dividing it into 4 channels. Personally, I have serious doubts that the media community in its current form will be able to provide quality content for each channel.

Shamaral Maychiev: it is a big problem in view of competitiveness. Today there are Ala-TV and Sekatel, and competition between them. Ala-TV delivers through cable and receives subscription fees, while Sekatel uses the air channel. At the same time, any of you can buy a small antenna, link to

Sekatel, and not pay. Ala-TV requests Sekatel to place a code on its signal, but Sekatel do not code it. It is profitable to have a larger circle of customers including those who do not pay. As a result, there is a kind of dumping; Sekatel has more advertising accounts, therefore, it has more market opportunities.

Digital broadcasting is an interactive broadcasting; it is a struggle for markets. If today we are talking about content, then it will be a struggle for the customers who will use this TV-set. By means of TV, it will be possible to buy, to pass university tests, etc. In other words, the TV-set will help an individual to become active, to use Web-money, to do whatever he wants via the TV. The whole picture therefore changes. And our TV must become competitive. The competition will be strengthened. Again here is the market. And there could be the biggest problem. Digital broadcasting means that the jurisdiction of Kyrgyzstan is not clear, because the delivering station is in Katar, how can a local customer complain? It concerns the protection of honor and dignity as well. There could be a problem, when it comes to purchasing, and sales, i.e. when you are working interactively. Our rural resident can go abroad and work; at the same time, he must have legal protection. It is the second problem of digital broadcasting irrespective to the technical problems that I have already mentioned. Internet and digital broadcasting must fall under international jurisdiction, so that disputes in this sphere can be regulated.

Digital broadcasting will come one day anyway. However, it will be good to facilitate these problems. It is great that this topic is discussed at the Bishkek Press Club. It will be very good if there are more discussions about this issue. Then, more people and participants of the process can understand it.

Omurbek Sataev: It is understandable that DTV brings some serious technical, financial and legal issues. One has to think about the population as well. There is a kind of panic among the people. Recently I visited my region, Issykkul, and people there are discussing it as well. People in the regions hear that there will be DTV, and they have serious concerns. One says that current TV-sets must be thrown away, others argue that it is necessary to buy DVD-players, since there will be no access for the population, etc. The worst thing is that there is no information for the people; it contributes to the panic, because many things are unclear.

Ilim Karypbekov: I think we have long time to go until the TV-set is activated. As for the near future, I will say that the problem of the product's absence will remain. In addition to international regulation, there will be certain international mechanisms to impact states so that they will introduce digital TV. I think that such a mechanism will be as follows: if those frequencies that were allocated are not used, they will be taken away. Moreover, in my view, there will be a mechanism of internal regulation. The state will regulate a process of using the local product and a percentage of retransmission. The market itself must regulate it, business and market principles must be introduced.

Oksana Malevanaya: In my view, the nature of the problem is a little different. First of all, there are major rules of the game. Nowadays, if frequencies are not used, the national communication agency must take them back.. If before, the SCRD was led by the Security Council secretary, now, it is led by

the director of the national communication agency. Some things have changed; I am not sure for better or worse. In the past it was quite a closed structure, and the same is true for today. And, perhaps, only specialists can tell what is happening in practice.

As for the re-transmission, each channel, each company chooses the way to go. If one prefers as a parasite to sit on a large Russian channel, and produce a narrow range of own programs as agreed by one's partner, and to place time according to the agreement, it is one way. For example, if one has the Russian channel as a partner, it is impossible to deliver signals to the satellite. Imagine, there is NTV which broadcasts via satellite, why will it need to include you with your less qualitative programs? In other words, according to the world experience, it is impossible. Therefore, we have started to think from the very beginning that we need to expand a range of broadcasting. Taking into account that it is not easy to work with RPO NTR on the signal distribution in the traditional manner, we were thinking about the satellite. As a result, we try to produce our own content as much as possible, to conclude agreements with content-makers, so that we can buy the same movies, programs. It is a normal and traditional practice.

As for Ala-TV, perhaps, not many of us have thought that when we conclude an agreement with Ala-TV, there is no section that below the screen that will be a creeping with horrible grammatical mistakes, which covers the sub-titlers. All of us are compelled to read it. I am watching a movie about love, at the same time there are ads on selling livestock. It is a violation of customers' rights. We do not think about it, and continue to watch. Ala-TV gives for renting its frequencies, channels. Those who rented also can show whatever they want, while we, customers, need to see this product. When I do not like a certain channel, I will switch to another one, but it is not written that we are obliged to consume ads. In other words, they collect the subscription fee and they gain via ads at our expense. Basically, it is not a fair attitude towards all of us. When there is the digital signal, such things are impossible.

Everything must be legal. The one who delivers a signal, who disseminates it, and how it reaches a customer- these are all puzzles of the same picture, and it must fit. So far, we do not have a clear vision. I do not think that our group has developed such a vision, it is impossible. We do not know the situation in practice in view of our international obligations. In any case, Kazakhstan, Russia and of course, KR also have difficulties with DTV until we will have our own format. Despite the fact that we are a small country, we cannot ignore it, and we need to make a transition; otherwise it is foolish. We will be overwhelmed. They cannot function without us, and since they are almost ready for the transition, may be they will help us out. Russia needs to prepare about 50 million digital transmitters in order to distribute to people, on average, it is one transmitter for a family of two people. China needs to work for 2 years. In addition, we will join them, and we are of a considerable number as well.

Shamaral Maychiev: The frequencies are divided in this way: the even numbers belong to Kazakhstan, the odd numbers to Kyrgyzstan. The same is true for Uzbekistan. The only difficulty is with the Batken oblast: there are three republics; the frequency has to be divided into three. The one frequency must not be used by two transmitters.

Azamat Ababakirov: Apparently, there were discussions at the US Congress, in the committee on telecommunications. The point was to sell a band that is released to Google and other internet-companies to advance their own products of wireless Internet and so on.

Alexander Kulinskiy: Digital TV exists already in Kyrgyzstan; there are two companies in Osh which deal with the development of the digital TV. They bought transmitters and started a distribution to their customers and delivering signals. There are rumors that there is a company in Bishkek which is dealing with these issues and solving the technical aspects. Then, it will start broadcasting in Bishkek. Digital TV for Kyrgyzstan is not for tomorrow, it is an issue of today.

As for the content digital TV will be regulated by the international bodies with respect of the IPR (intellectual property rights). Why am I concerned so much about local channels and their content, which has to be broadcast? It is because KTR and RTR will not be able to show movies at the prime-time or any other time with a terrible translation. They will not be able to show it even with a proper translation, because they will be under sanctions of the international telecommunication union. It concerns other channels operating in the CIS space and the whole world. In fact, digital TV is more under the control of bodies protecting IPR. I consider it as a big problem for our channels. Will they be able to have content that is sufficient, so that they will not be shutoff, because they violate somebody's rights?

Oksana Malevanaya: It is again the question of price. For example, a movie that is available in a format which is popular in our republic can be sold for 100 dollars. But as long as you mention that you plan to purchase this movie and broadcast to satellite, the price goes up for more than a hundred times.

Maxim Kaganer: Alexander mentioned the price- a million dollars for DTV. It is true. It is the price of re-equipment, a complete package that is necessary to make one's own programs, and broadcast it. There is a nuance, the transmitter that will deliver a signal, can deliver from two to eight programs. Even though, the transmitter is four times more expensive than the usual one. It can deliver 8 channels, and plus it has radio-frequencies. The question is whether companies can get together and unite. This is because it is a common problem.

Regarding the content, and its competitiveness, I believe, it will be competitive. The major problem of content-production in Kyrgyzstan is that the process is expensive. All channels except the state channel survive owing to advertisements. When the situation improves, there will be some new production-studios. I believe that there will be an increase in price this year. Then, you will see yourself that by the end of the year, we will have our own enlarged content. Therefore, there is no need to worry; the major point is not to think that we live in a country where the epoch of TV is over. We have good specialists; the only thing is to pay them. I as a specialist in marketing, can say with confidence that the business laws are equal and fair to all of us. As long as people see that it is profitable, we will have the same situation as in Russia. You can see that there was a rapid increase in

production of serials and other things. We will have a similar course. Plus, our product will be designed for our country; I think we will integrate into the international community, or at least into the Central Asian one.

Alexander Kulinskiy: I want to say that the million dollars is the price indicated by the TV company owner. He calculated that DTV at the moment will cost this amount. It is calculated that since 2012 the prices will fall, because in 2012 the transition will be massive. Most countries will start transition in this period, hence the production will rise in this period, and the price for equipment will fall as well. The price of transmitters that are necessary to use digital TV will fall. Russia counts that transmitters of Chinese production will cost 20 dollars, of Russian production - 50 dollars, and by 2012 the price will drop by at least three times. It is because more people will use them. As for the TV zones, according to the estimation of RPO and NTR, 80% of the TV zone in Kyrgyzstan is ready to receive digital signals. Only 20% of TV-sets cannot receive the signal. By 2012 a share of the latter will decrease, plus there are special devices that will format digital signals into analog. It means that soviet-era TV-sets can also receive. The point is just to pay for the transmitter. By 2012 the quality of tuners and transmitters will drop by two times, as a result of mass production. It is particularly true, because the majority relies on China. It is necessary to buy often, that is all. In Russia they have considered this point: a transmitter will be given for free only once. It is obvious that along the process, everything will move gradually in the right direction.

Discussion participant: It was mentioned that the protection of IPR will become easier. How about those who broadcast prohibited information? Will it be easier to control them as well, or on the contrary, will it become more difficult?

Oksana Malevanaya: There is such an example. There was a conflict that NTV-plus allegedly shows pornographic movies. It is easier not to debate with the state, and the channel stopped showing them. The most interesting thing is that other providers of TV products also rapidly removed not only pornography but also some erotic movies from all packages, even though they were not told. Digital broadcasting makes it impossible. It is possible to prohibit everything, including some programs of extremist orientation, but people can download from TV as well as via Internet. To control the digital broadcast is an attempt to control the Internet; in practice, it is not possible.

Discussion participant: I represent the Chair of Journalist at the University of Arbaev. I ask the expert to come back to the point: was it difficult to invite Nurmatov? And who was in charge to develop the national project on DTV?

Ilim Karypbekov: In fact, there is a group which does not function yet. Everything basically starts like this in our country. As for Mr. Nurmatov, it is very difficult to have officials of the national communication agency visit such events. They often refer to the point that the situation has changed. The situation changes quite often there. There are no rules on frequency distribution, they distribute as they wish.

Gulnura Toralieva made the concluding points and thanked participants.