



**ESWATINI
COMMUNICATIONS
COMMISSION**

Notice 5/2025: Decision to Retire Legacy Mobile Network Technologies (2G and 3G) in the Kingdom of Eswatini

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General Notice NO. 5/2025

Decision to Retire Legacy Mobile Network Technologies (2G and 3G) in the Kingdom of Eswatini

The Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) hereby announces its final decision to strategically phase out legacy mobile networks (2G and 3G) across the Kingdom of Eswatini. This decision marks a significant step towards modernising our national telecommunications infrastructure and ensuring that all EmaSwati benefit from faster, more reliable, and higher-quality communications services.

This essential transition supports the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini's vision for national development. A modern communications sector is the backbone of a thriving economy and is critical for enhancing the delivery of public services, education, and healthcare. Our goal is to ensure that the technology utilised within the country is forward-looking and aligned with international trends. The decision was reached following a public consultation process where we received valuable input from various stakeholders. We have carefully considered all comments and concerns. In response to feedback requesting more time for the transition, the Commission has extended the proposed timelines.

In accordance with the Eswatini Communications Commission Act, 2013, the Commission has decided on the following plan:

Ban on New Devices: A ban on the importation and type approval of 2G-only and 3G-only mobile devices will be imposed, effective 30 November 2025.

2G Network Retirement:

All 2G networks in the country will be officially shut down, effective 31 December 2028.

3G Network Retirement:

All 3G networks in the country will be shut down, effective 31 December 2030.

These staggered timelines are designed to provide sufficient time for the device market to evolve and for consumers and businesses to smoothly transition to newer, more efficient technologies.

The Commission is confident that this move will improve operational efficiency for service providers and, most importantly, deliver a superior quality of service to consumers. We will continue to monitor market developments throughout this period to ensure a seamless transition for the benefit of the nation.

Chief Executive
Eswatini Communications Commission

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1. THE COMMISSION

The Eswatini Communications Commission is a regulatory body established in terms of the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) Act, 2013 to regulate and supervise the electronic communications sector including electronic communications networks and services.

2. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The telecommunications sector serves as the backbone of most modern economies and underpins various other sectors that are essential for economic activities, from efficient delivery of public services, e-commerce, access to education, health services, etc. The sector has become a critical part of everyday life, allowing citizens and businesses to connect and communicate efficiently across the globe and driving global economic growth.

The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini's Policy Statement 2024 articulates the many challenges and issues that the country faces, including deliberate programmes and initiatives that must be undertaken to address them. These range from poor delivery of public services, low economic growth, unemployment, deteriorating health and education services to diminishing national identity. These are big challenges and the ICT/Telecoms services can play a significant role in addressing them. The ambitious strategy and programme to improve access to and delivery of government services being implemented by the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology is testament of the critical role that ICT services need to play to improve the lives of EmaSwati. This desire is highly dependent on the availability of reliable and relevant connectivity infrastructure and services.

The government and relevant authorities are therefore required to put in place the relevant frameworks and initiatives that supports the deployment and operationalisation of connectivity infrastructure in a resource-efficient manner. These initiatives can include determinations, based on the obtaining environment at a particular point in time, on what technologies are fit to best serve the aspirations of the country at large.

In this context, the Commission issued a proposed decision on the retirement of legacy mobile technologies (2G and 3G) in Eswatini on 09 November 2024 for public consultation.

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Following the public consultation exercise on the proposed decision, the Commission received a number of comments on the issue, some supporting the proposed decision while others had concerns that required consideration before conclusion of the matter. Some of the concerns from stakeholders are summarised as below:

3.1. **Timing of the Decision:** a majority of the stakeholders, while supporting the decision, were concerned that the proposal to sunset legacy technologies within the next two (2) years is problematic and requested that more time is given to the process. This would allow stakeholders to prepare for the implementation of the decision while also allowing the device eco-system for newer technologies to mature. The Commission has considered this point in coming up with the Final Decision;

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3.2. Industry-led Legacy Technologies Transition: some stakeholders were of the view that this transition be led by market participants instead of regulatory or policy processes, following international best-practices.

3.3. 3G First and then 2G: some stakeholders proposed that the 3G technology is retired first and then 2G later as it has been the case in other markets. While this is understandable, it is important to note the local market is at different stages of development with some with others having an idle 2G network and high utilisation of the 3G network, and vice-versa;

3.4. Dependency on 2G Technology to Achieve Universal Digital and Financial Inclusion: some stakeholders submitted that a large number of the population is still dependent on 2G technology to conduct financial transactions. Financial services are accessible using any of the network technologies (2G/3G/4G), and with current smart phone penetration at around 80% (and growing), indicating that in a few year's time, less people will be dependent on 2G technology for basic services.

4. ESCCOM COMMENTS

In view of the received comments from stakeholders, the Commission has noted that there is no common position from the industry in relation to the matter. However, the Commission still has the responsibility to ensure that the technology utilised within the country is forward-looking and aligned with applicable international trends while promoting the interests of end-users and licensees as regards the quality of all communications services and equipment within the remit of the Commission.

In this regard, and based on the market study analysis and traffic patterns for both 2G and 3G networks, the market conditions warrant the sunseting of 2G network first. The analysis showed that approximately 75% of voice traffic uses the 3G network and to ensure minimal disruption, starting with the retirement of 2G network makes sense.

Regarding concerns on the effective timelines for the decision, the Commission noted these concerns and considered that the effective dates for transitioning each technology is moved out by a period of two (2) years. The staggered implementation timelines of the sunseting of the networks take into account all the comments and concerns from stakeholders and to allow enough time for the device ecosystem to evolve. The intention is to improve business operations and efficiency of sector participants while ensuring that consumers receive quality services.

5. DECISION

In support of the continued development and modernization of telecommunications services in a manner that best promotes economic and social development, and in accordance with section 38 of the Eswatini Communications Commission Act, 2013, the Commission proposes:

5.1. A planned retirement of legacy mobile telecommunications (2G and 3G) networks across the kingdom of Eswatini as follows:

- 2G Network: Effective 31 December 2028
- 3G Network: Effective 31 December 2030

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5.2. A ban on the importation of 2G-only and 3G-only devices by 30 November 2025 is imposed. This includes the ban of equipment type approval for such devices.

6. **CONTINUOUS MONITORING**

The Commission will monitor developments in the market in relation to this decision and may review certain aspects of the decision, if necessary.

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