SAMENA TRENDS

EXCLUSIVELY FOR SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

Volume 04
Issue 08
August 2013

A SAMENA Telecommunications Council Newsletter

REGULATION 4.0: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ahmed Mekky
Chief Executive Officer
GBI

EDITORIAL

Regulation 4.0: Shaping the Future of Telecommunications

With the current information revolution and the ongoing convergence, the ICTs sector is evolving at a remarkable pace. This dynamism of the sector is resulting in ensuring decisive change in all aspects of the telecommunications industry and that of our lives, including knowledge creation and its widespread distribution, social networking, economic activities, media and entertainment and above all establishing sustainable digital economies. With this arises the need for consensus and collaboration among industry stakeholders on policy matters as well as on new regulatory mechanisms.

These changes have been resulting in the need for a more progressive and congenial regulatory measures so as to aid into the process of digitization in the SAMENA region as well as beyond. The concept of Regulation 4.0 is thus gaining momentum as a result of the need for changes in regulatory frameworks and policies formationascending from the rapid technological progress and evolution in the telecommunications industry. It aims to find new approaches toimprove investment activities byproviding a more flexible environmentthat fosters. The key aspect of Regulation 4.0, therefore, is a more dynamic regulatory framework which is based on promoting an integrated market; granting access and designing clear net neutrality rules; shifting the focus of national regulators towards new regional and international challenges; establishing dynamic efficiency as the centerpieces of regulatory policies;strengthening technological neutrality as a basic principle. Earlier this month, we had a very prolific and erudite summiton the subject with a number of panels discussing the regulatory landscape of the telecommunications industry in the region. The SAMENA Council Regulatory Summit, which was held in Kuwait – 2 Oct 2013,discussed topics including regional regulatory trends, digitization, and public private partnership in light of the Regulation 4.0. Prominent leaders from the telecommunications & ICT industry convened and highlighted regulatory issues at the same time sharing their strategic viewpoints based on their understanding of these issues.

SAMENA region's telecoms market continues its remarkable progression; the need for a sustainable Internet model is increasingly becoming the topic of greater interest in the both regional and international markets. However, this has also opened up the doors to certain issues that include digital right management (DRM), intellectual property (IP), net neutrality, content regulations, and data security. There is a growing demand for consensus on taking actions to quieten down such threats and ensuring that security.integrity and sustainability of the internet are taken as one of the major concern. Increasing interdependency on ICT has justifiable reasons as technology improves and facilitates lives.

The evolving market requires synergies to be forged. To be able to succeed tomorrow, all the stakeholders of the telecom industry must perceive and follow end-user experience and fulfill new demands and evolving requirements through new technologies, innovative services, and modern business models. Multimedia content being the ultimate, personalized deliverable to the consumer, has the near-future potential to make content creators, aggregators, broadcasters, and owners among the key players in today's converged industry.

SAMENA region is a great market for the telecommunication industry where there are many opportunities for development but yet there are still many challenges. The telecommunication industry is currently undergoing dramatic changes—and the processes driving the change have accelerated with the advent of new and modern technologies. The advancement in the world of ICT and the increasing role of digitization appear to have opened new vistas for the telecoms & ICT industry to work together, but it will requiring forging new synergies and cooperation. Alltelecoms & ICT industrystakeholders need to explore ways in which their individual strengths become united to be able to guarantee a sustainable future.

Yours truly,

Bocar A. BA
Chief Executive Officer
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

CONTENTS

The SAMENA TRENDS newsletter is wholly owned and operated by The SAMENA Telecommunications Council FZ, LLC (SAMENA). Information in the newsletter is not intended as professional services advice, and SAMENA Council disclaims any liability for use of specific information or results thereof. Articles and information contained in this publication are the copyright of SAMENA Telecommunications Council, (unless otherwise noted, described or stated) and cannot be reproduced, copied or printed in any form without the express written permission of the publisher.

The SAMENA Council does not necessarily endorse, support, sanction, encourage, verify or agree with the content, comments, opinions or statements made in The SAMENA TRENDS by any entity or entities. Information, products and services offered, sold or placed in the newsletter by other than The SAMENA Council belong to the respective entity or entities and are not representative of The SAMENA Council. The SAMENA Council hereby expressly disclaims any and all warranties, expressed and implied, including but not limited to any warranties of accuracy, reliability, merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose by any entity or entities offering information, products and services in this newsletter. The user agrees that The SAMENA Council is not responsible, and shall have no liability to such user, with respect to any information, product or service offered by any entity or entities in this newsletter. The SAMENA Council's only liability in the event of errors shall be the correction or removal of the erroneous information after verification.

Editor-in-Chief
Bocar A. BA

Contributing Editors
Zakir Syed
Javaid Akhtar Malik
Ali Tahir

Contributing Member
Booz & Company
GBI
Turk Telekom Group
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

Publisher
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

Subscriptions
subscriptions@samenacouncil.org

Advertising
ads@samenacouncil.org

Legal Issues or Concerns
legal@samenacouncil.org

SAMENA TRENDS
#304, Alfa Building, Knowledge Village
PO Box: 502544, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Tel: +971.4.364.2700

EDITORIAL

OPERATOR LEADER'S VISION

Mr. Ahmed Mekky is the Chief Executive Officer of GBI; additionally he is a co-founder and a Board Member of GBI. As CEO, Mr. Mekky has lead the company in building the first ever privately-owned and independently-operated submarine cable in the region, with onward connectivity to Europe, Africa and Asia. He has over 18 years' experience in the telecom sector across the MENA region along with a well-established network of senior business relationships with the major communications companies in the region.

Prior to founding GBI, Mr. Mekky worked with numerous companies across the region on projects encompassing both telecoms infrastructure and satellite communications.

Some of his recent achievements include:

- May 2013 – appointed as Member of Egyptian Kuwaiti Council in Egypt
- February 2013 – appointed to the Board of Qatar Academy Sidra
- November 2012 – elected by the Pacific Telecommunications Council as the first Middle Eastern CEO to their Board of Governors for three year term starting January 2013
- October 2012 – included by Global Telecoms Business in the 2012 Global Telecoms Business Power 100 list
- September 2012 – appointed to the board of the Information Technology Industry Development Agency, ITIDA, which is the executive arm of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, MCIT
- November 2011 – elected chairman of the South Asia, Middle East, and North Africa Council (SAMENA Council) Sub Sea Working Group

Mr. Mekky received his Bachelor's Degree in Engineering with a major in Telecommunications, from Cairo University in 1995. In addition, he has a Pre-Master's in Computer Engineering from Cairo University and a Master's of Science in IT from the University of Nottingham.

GBI™ Connecting the World to the Gulf

Ahmed Mekky
Chief Executive Officer
GBI

Q. Please tell us the vision behind the Gulf Bridge International (GBI), the Middle East's first carrier neutral operator and the owner of the largest and highly equipped regional submarine cable bridging the Middle East to the world.

A. An old economic development theory tells us that one of the ways to develop an area, is to build a railroad through it, and on either sides of the tracks, new businesses and towns will be seen coming up. Now this region has so far seen an almost unprecedented rate of infrastructure growth, yet still lacked the communication links. It is not a 'luxury' anymore to have access to the internet and be connected to it.

My vision was to connect this region to the world, and the world to it. GBI is from the region, for the region and believes the connectivity provided by this infrastructure is the region's right.

Not only is GBI the first such project in modern history that engages all the GCC countries, but it is done on a carrier neutral basis, giving equal opportunity to all.

Q. What are the major benefits that GBI is providing to the operators?

A. The most obvious benefit to operators is the provision of capacity, something crucial to operators in the face of the current fast paced demand. Apart from this, being a carrier neutral company with an open access model, GBI, ensures that different countries and operators are served equally – regardless of their size or geography. This in turn encourages competition and means better 'end solutions' to customers, who can now receive top quality products at the best prices.

We also pride ourselves being the pioneers of latest technologies for operators, for example being the first subsea cable in the world to offer 100G on parts of our cable, with the rest fully activated at 40G. Along with this technology we also give operators diverse routes and increased resilience. We were the first subsea cable to land in Iraq and our new terrestrial North Route gives them a new path linking Asia to Europe.

Q. Please tell us about recent agreement between GBI and Zajil Kuwait.

A. The deal with Zajil Kuwait is GBI's fifth significant capacity deal within the State of Kuwait. Zajil is Kuwait's first Internet Service provider and a leading MPLS Service Provider. This very fact shows the profound impact GBI has left on the telecom business in the region, and particularly in mature markets with Open Access strategies, such as Kuwait. It also shows the strategic significance of the Kuwaiti market to GBI in particular, and to the telecom market in the region as a whole.

Q. How do you look at the wholesale market keeping in view the ever rising international traffic as well as the growing number of roaming agreements?

A. Both factors that you mentioned in your question, among many others, directly contribute to the increasing rate of demand in the global and regional capacity markets. Along with this demand growth also comes more competition, better technologies that can provide more bandwidth per wavelength, and more value-added services. GBI intends to stay ahead of the game by keeping an eye on all these factors and planning ahead intelligently, while continuously updating our network to state-of-the-art technologies and innovations.

Q. Can you please share with us some of the GBI's key projects or upcoming ventures that are under focus?

A. One important initiative that's keeping us busy in GBI this year is expanding our products and services portfolio, both horizontally and vertically. This translates to a number of ambitious geographical expansion plans that will enable our network to reach out to new regions and territories, as well as adding new technologies to our network to enable new value-added services on top of the classical capacity sale products.

Q. Please tell us about GBI's successful execution of the first ever Gulf to Europe terrestrial fiber optic link through Iraq.

A. Current 'traditional' route linking Asia to Europe do so by crossing the Red Sea. A single crossing can become a 'bottleneck' and so for increased resilience, diverse routes are needed. Whilst there are several other cables and routes planned connecting the Gulf/Asia to Europe, our 'North Route' (TNR) avoids the political flashpoints of Syria and other such countries under sanctions. It is also currently the only one such fully operational terrestrial connection between the Gulf and Europe. This new route will play a significant role in the development of the Iraqi Telecom market, to develop into an ICT hub for traffic between Asia and Europe. GBI has worked with all the leading telecom service providers in Iraq and Turkey to create this route and offer to the world one of the shortest latency route between Asia and Europe.

Q. Do you think that there is a significant difference of bandwidth demand between SAMENA region and other parts of the world?

A. Yes I do, and believe this is because of three distinct reasons:

a) One of the biggest differences between the SAMENA region and the rest of the world, and this relates to its bandwidth demands, is in its stage of 'development'. Whilst other parts of the world have reached a stage of 'telecom maturity' – 100mb/s connections are not uncommon in places like Japan and Europe, we in the SAMENA region are still building the infrastructure. Whereas these developed regions have had high capacity infrastructure for a while now, the SAMENA region is only now having this put in place. These developed regions are reaching a 'plateau' of sorts in terms of their bandwidth demands – which is highlighted by their slowing rates of bandwidth demand. SAMENA on the other hand, is quite the opposite.

Currently, the international bandwidth usage in the region increased at a compound annual rate of 77 percent between 2008 and 2012 – the highest in the world. This explosive demand for capacity is forecasted to continue over the next decade, again putting the SAMENA region's bandwidth demands at the fastest growing in the world.

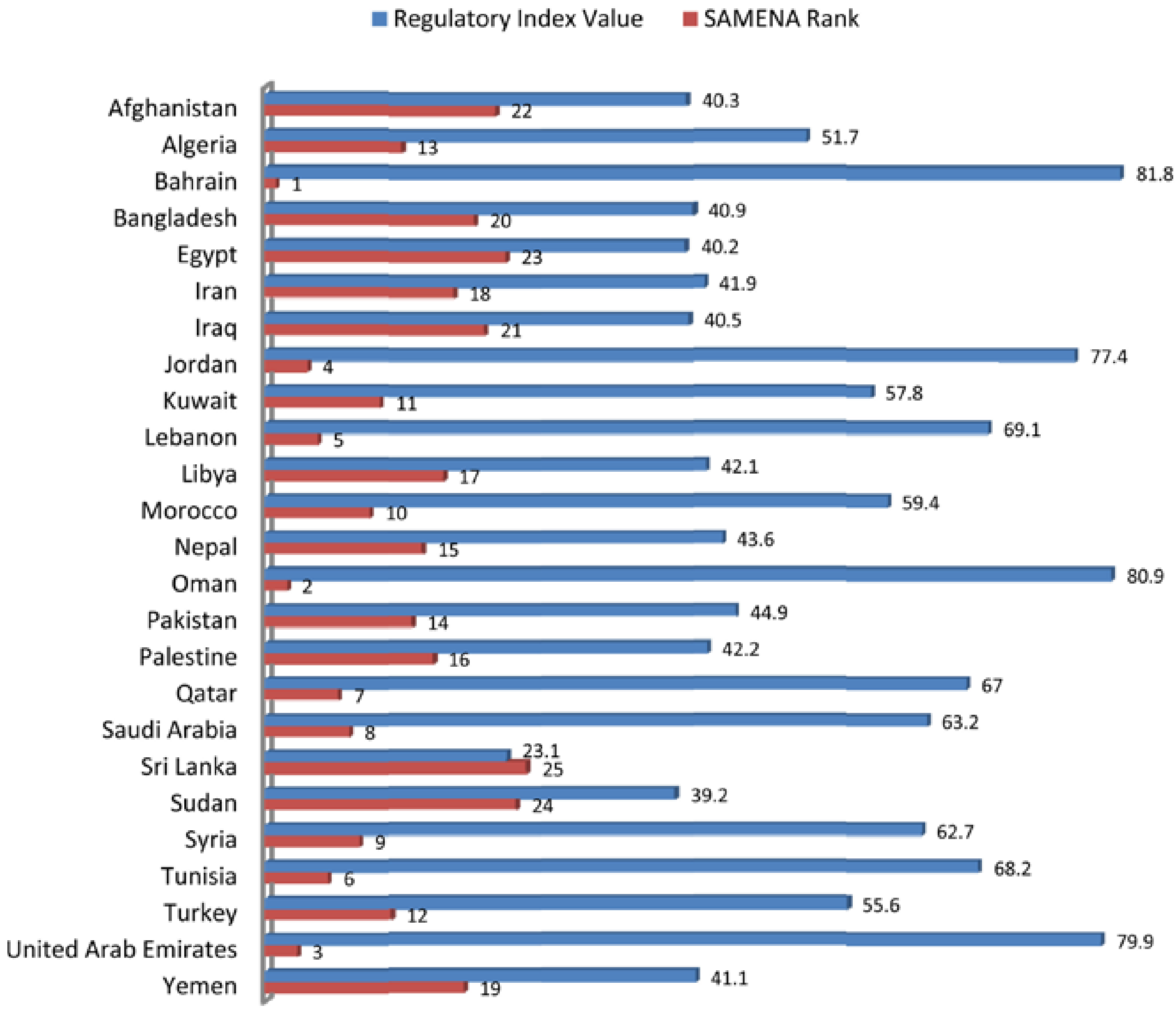
b) Capacity supply to the SAMENA region is also one of the highest in the world, with 8 new cables entering the region since 2010 (IMEWE, Europe-India Gateway, Hawk, TE North, TGN-Gulf, Gulf Bridge, Alasia etc.) and several more set to launch in the future.

c) In addition to the reasons above, according to a 2012 UN Population Report, the SAMENA region had the highest proportion of population aged below 30 at 66.8% compared, to Latin America (52.9%) and Asia (48.8%). (Source: http://blog.euromonitor.com/2012/02/special-report-the-worlds-youngest-populations-.html#sthash.za7c4hBT.dpuf) This differentiates the SAMENA region, as younger people are using far more bandwidth than their older counterparts.

Q. How do you think GBI can join hands with SAMENA Council to tackle the industry's key challenges in the region?

A. GBI is breaking the 'traditional' consortium model by giving open access to all. We believe that connectivity is a right for all.

Regulatory Ranking

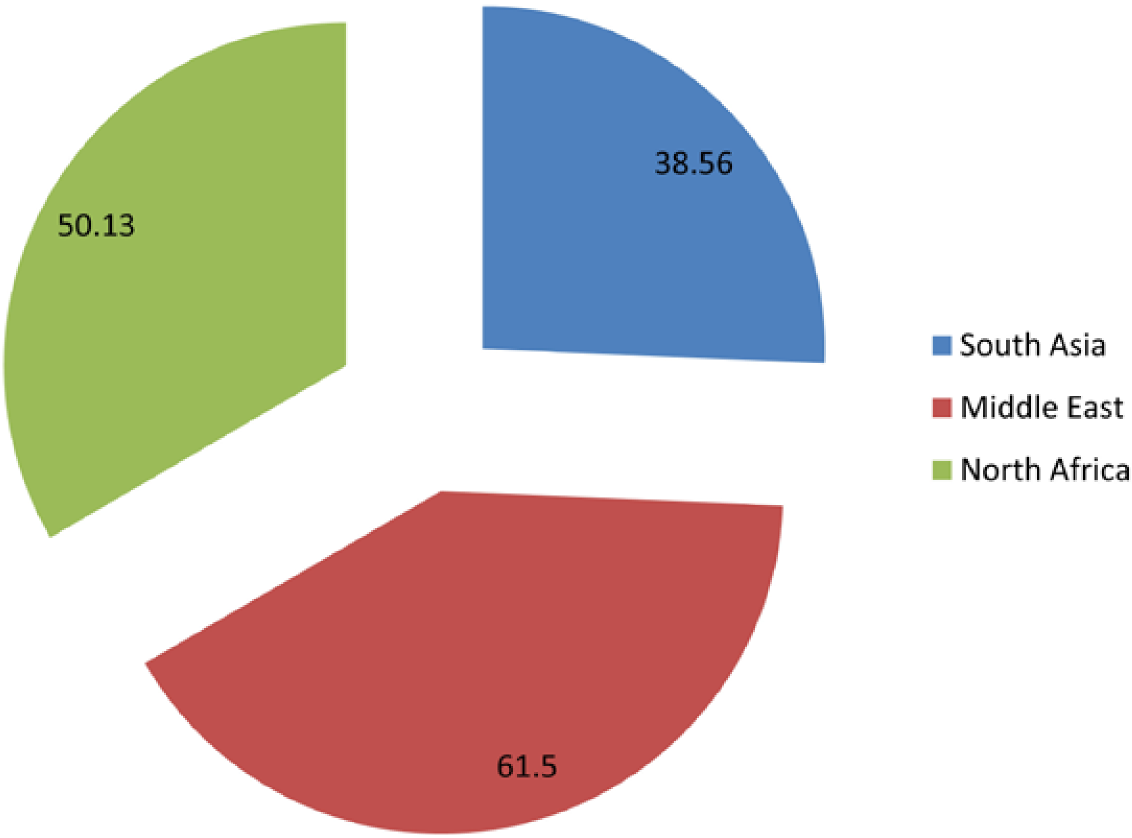


Research Note: Data related to regulatory environment has been taken from The Global Innovation Index 2013 published by INSEAD. Comprehensive ranking has been done with the help of this data. Analyzing this data we find that Bahrain, Oman and United Arab Emirates are the top 3 countries in the SAMENA region. All 3 countries belong to the Middle East which shows that Middle East enjoys strong and sophisticated regulatory laws. Egypt, Sudan and Sri Lanka are the bottom 3 countries within the SAMENA region.

Image Source: SAMENA Telecommunications Council

Data Source: The Global Innovation Index 2013 by INSEAD

Regional Comparison



Research Note: A sub-regional analysis of the SAMENA Region shows that Middle East has the most sophisticated regulatory laws. It is followed by North Africa whereas the South Asia sub-region lies at the bottom.
An analysis of the South Asian region shows that Pakistan (placed at 14 overall) is the highest ranked country whereas Sri Lanka (placed at 25 overall) has the least value with regards to the regulatory environment.
Within the Middle East Bahrain (placed at 1 overall) is the highest ranked country whereas Iraq (placed at 21 overall) has the least value with regards to the regulatory environment.
Within North Africa, Tunisia (placed at 6 overall) is the highest ranked country whereas Sudan (placed at 24 overall) has the least value with regards to the regulatory environment.

Image Source: SAMENA Telecommunications Council

Data Source: The Global Innovation Index 2013 by INSEAD

REGIONAL NEWS

Saudi e-commerce valued at SR15bn annually

Economists confirm that e-commerce in Saudi Arabia is experiencing a high growth, estimating its value at SR15 billion per year. The size of the market is expected to increase at high rates in the coming years due to the eradication of trading obstacles, creating an ideal solution for buying low priced items and with minimal effort. The Kingdom is progressing the fastest among all the Arab countries in the field of e-commerce as witnessed by the significant expansion in this area during the past two years, according to sources. The progress is due to the support of development in communications technology, and has allowed the acquiring of various goods at lower prices compared to what exists in the market.

Jordan's Prince Hassan briefed on regional e-cloud project

HRH Prince Hassan was briefed on the Knowledge Society Regional E-cloud project for West Asia and North Africa, which was launched by the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization (TAG-Org), according to a statement issued recently. The prince voiced hope that the project will contribute to reducing dependency on foreign countries in the ICT field, according to the TAG-Org statement. He also called for establishing an Arab database to be used as a reference when determining priorities and formulating national policies. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, president of Talal Abu-Ghazaleh University, presented a report to the prince on the e-cloud project, which includes specialized funding organizations that will contribute to establishing an Arab database to serve productive, economic and service sectors, the statement said.

IT advances to make Pakistan a digitized nation

Revolutionary advances in information technology are reinforcing economic and social changes therefore the days are not very far when Pakistan will be among the digitized nations of the world. This was the upshot of the speeches delivered at a Digital Punjab Conference organized by the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry in connection with Lahore Shopping Festival in active collaboration with Government of Punjab, Telenor Pakistan and Pharma Health (Pvt) Limited at Expo Centre. Speaking on the occasion, Provincial Minister Dr Furrakh Javaid said that all citizens should have access to and be able to reap the benefits of mobile technology and the internet. This will not only boost socio-economic development, but will also transform the quality of lives and the Punjab government was making all out efforts to promote the information technology. He lauded some of Telenor Pakistan's pioneering initiatives for establishing an eco-system for mobile financial services in Pakistan aimed at providing financial inclusion to unbanked population, 'Agriculture Commodity Trade' enabling farmers to use the platform.

Airtel Bangladesh ties up with Comviva to enhance VAS growth

In a move to leverage VAS for the relatively low-penetration mobile market in Bangladesh, Airtel Bangladesh has tied up with Comviva to provide unique SMS facilities. The messaging solutions that cover Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD), Short Message Service Center (SMSC) and BMG (Bulk Messaging Gateway) portfolio will drastically reduce overall cost around Airtel Bangladesh's operator portal, and will also provide the operator with a single-window web-based environment to access, create, execute and manage services. According to Chris Tobit, CEO & MD, Airtel Bangladesh, "With SMS traffic enjoying continued strong growth, we needed a proven solution to manage the increased load without making major investment. We selected Comviva 's messaging solutions to efficiently route traffic over our existing network infrastructure and deliver an improved level of service to our customers."

Bangladesh, which has a mobile penetration of just over 30 percent, is expected to reach a 100 million subscriber mark by 2015.The country has ARPU 's as low as $2-3 per month, and there has been a limited uptake on MVAS.

UAE mobile usage rises to 74 percent

Mobile usage has significantly increased in popularity throughout the Middle East, with the UAE posting the highest penetration in the region at 74 percent. A recent study, conducted by Google, shows that consumers are becoming increasingly reliant upon mobile devices, with 56 percent of those surveyed stating that they never leave home without their device and that they access the internet with it daily. Even the government and public sectors are trying to capitalize on this trend, with the Dubai government recently introducing its services for mobile users around the clock. The number of mobile subscriptions in the Middle East grew by approximately nine per cent year-on-year in Q1, with mobile penetration totaling 109 percent in June, reveals the Ericsson Mobility Report. This means that one in every 16 mobile subscriptions globally in Q1 2013 was from the Middle East. Ericsson also estimates that approximately 700 million mobile subscriptions will be added in the Middle East and Africa by the end of 2018. The report's findings confirm that mobile-data traffic will continue to grow significantly in the coming years, a trend driven mainly by video. Globally, data traffic is expected to grow 12-fold by the end of 2018.

Grameenphone secures US$ 345 million to widen rural network

Grameenphone is set to receive US$ 345 million funds from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank Group, to expand its coverage in rural areas. "Improved access to mobile telephony and data services is critical for economic growth and poverty reduction. Bangladesh's teledensity remains low by global standards," IFC said in a statement on its website. "Experience from rural Bangladesh shows that livelihood opportunities improve as a result of information and transactions facilitated through mobile phones," said Kyle F Kelhofer, IFC country manager for Bangladesh. IFC has supported the growth of the telecom sector in Bangladesh through a long-term engagement with Grameenphone since 1998. Grameenphone, which was listed on the bourses in 2009, traded at Tk 209.30 per share yesterday. The company also featured in the top turnover chart with its transaction of 23.76 lakh shares worth Tk 50 crore.

Electronics market UAE expected to value US$ 4.3 billion by 2015

The electronics market in the UAE is expected to reach a value of US$4.3 billion by 2015, Saudi Gazette reported. The electronics market in the UAE, currently valued at US$3.9 billion, is expected to remain an important market in the Middle East region. Sales of computers are expected to be at US$2.2 billion this year rising to US$2.7 billion in 2017. AV sales were projected to increase from US$1.4 billion in 2013 to US$1.7 billion in 2017. Handset sales are seen rising to US$694 million in 2017 from an estimated US$508 million this year.

Global Payments and Dialog launch the first mobile point-of-sale (mPOS) solution in Sri Lanka

Global Payments Asia-Pacific Limited (Global Payments), a leading pan-regional card payment processor in Asia Pacific, and Dialog Axiata PLC (Dialog), a premier telecommunications service provider in Sri Lanka, announced the launch of an innovative mobile payment solution that turns a smartphone or tablet into a mobile point-of-sale (mPOS) terminal — the first of its kind in Sri Lanka. This award-winning mobile payment solution* enables merchants to accept card payments beyond a counter-top sales environment and wherever business takes them within Sri Lanka.

This mobile payment solution helps small and medium enterprises (SMEs) quickly and easily establish a means to accept MasterCard(R) and Visa(R) card payments through a smartphone or tablet. The business can download a free app provided by Global Payments on their mobile device and connect it to a secure card reader to start accepting card payments instantly.

Cyber Gear launches Middle East's first 'Responsive Web Site'

Cyber Gear has launched the region's first 'Responsive Web Site'. According to Sharad Agarwal, CEO of Cyber Gear, "Responsive web design is an unique web design approach aimed at crafting sites to provide an optimal viewing experience, easy reading and navigation with a minimum of resizing, panning, and scrolling across a wide range of devices from desktop computer monitors to mobile phones. Our corporate site at www.cyber-gear.com uses flexible grids, fluid layouts and CSS media queries." According to recent industry surveys, by 2015, 50 percent of all the users will be accessing web sites from their tablet or smartphone. Facebook alone sees 7,000 different types of mobile devices visiting its site daily. In this mobile era, whether you want to increase customer engagement, improve click through rates or drive conversions, you need to provide a consistent and user friendly web experience across all devices; and the smart way to go about it is through responsive web design. As each HTML template is designed to work on many different screen sizes, resolutions and types, when loaded up, it'll easily adapt to its new environment, morphing and changing so that none of the original quality is lost and the design remains just as sharp as always.

REGULATORY & POLICY NEWS

Bidding begins in Taiwan's 4G spectrum auction

Taiwan's National Communications Commission (NCC) has kicked off the bidding in its auction of LTE-suitable spectrum, according to the Digitimes. Having approved all seven companies that had applied to take part in the sale process last month, the auction itself could now take as long as a month to be completed.At the start of July 2013 it was confirmed that the companies that would vie for LTE-suitable spectrum included all four of the country's 3G licensees – Chunghwa Telecom, Taiwan Mobile, Far EasTone and Asia Pacific Telecom. The other three companies that will participate in the auction are: Foxconn Group subsidiary Ambit Microsystems; a mobile telecom company newly established by the Ting Hsin International Group; and another new company set up by the Shinkong Group. In total, the government is offering a total of 270MHz of spectrum in the 700MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands, and having outlined the starting prices for the 4G-suitable spectrum in May 2013, should the government sell all the frequencies at the lowest price, it will raise approximately TWD35.9 billion (USD1.2 billion) in total.

NCA reports 817,202 ported numbers since MNP launch

Ghana's telecoms watchdog the National Communication Authority (NCA) has reported that 447,095 subscribers have used Mobile Number Portability (MNP) service in Ghana in the year ended 30 July 2013, a 21% year-on-year increase on the 370,107 ported numbers reported one year earlier. According to a press release, the total number of completed porting requests (since the launch in July 2011) has reached 817,202, which represents 3% of the country's mobile subscriber base of 27 million. Moreover, the average porting times have also dropped from five hours and 21 minutes reported in July 2011, to five minutes and 25 seconds in June 2013. NCA attributed the success of the MNP services to 'the initial advance preparations and rigorous testing and the collaboration amongst all the key stakeholders: NCA, Porting Access Ghana (the central MNP service provider), and the mobile network operators.' The watchdog forecasts that the number will further increase to one million ported mobile numbers by end-October.

NPT receives new application for 1800MHz Svalbard spectrum

The Norwegian Post & Telecoms Authority (NPT) has received an application for frequencies in the 1800MHz band for use on the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. The application reportedly seeks two 20MHz frequency blocks in the 1710MHz-1785MHz and 1805MHz-1880MHz spectrum bands. Any competing bids must be submitted by 20 September and be accompanied by a bank guarantee. Svalbard, which is midway between mainland Norway and the North Pole, previously hit the telecoms headlines in June 2011 when Telenor launched a Long Term Evolution (LTE) base station there, which it claimed was the northernmost 4G network in the world at that time. The site uses Huawei's SingleRAN LTE solution and is located in Longyearbyen, Svalbard's largest settlement, where temperatures drop to as low as -50 degrees celsius in winter.

BTRC moves to open telecom infrastructure business for all Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has taken a move to open telecom infrastructure business for all so that the telecom network can be reached to the rural level within a short period.At present only two operators are responsible for building network infrastructure across the country, but the regulator is not happy with their activities over the last four years after the issuance of licence of the Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network (NTTN). The operators - Fiber@home and Summit Communications Limited - are doing business of the network infrastructure mainly taking lease of fibre optic cables from the mobile phone operators and the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Limited (PGCB), according to the BTRC. Explaining the present scenario of the telecom infrastructure in the country, BTRC Chairman Sunil Kanti Bose said, "We have to create a competitive environment for developing network infrastructure and reach it to the rural area."He said the commission has already revised the existing NTTN guideline and it would be sent to the ministry of post and telecommunications within two to three days for final approval.

FNA sticks to original FTR decision

Germany's telecoms regulator, the Federal Network Agency (FNA, also known as BNetzA), has given its final approval for the new fixed line interconnection rates charged by Telekom Deutschland. The decision covers the basic origination and termination rates, as well as fees for optional and special services, including calls to value added services, transits between different networks and narrowband internet traffic. The interconnection rates had been approved by the FNA on a provisional basis at the end of November 2012, but a national consultation and the European Commission's (EC's) opinion were required before a final decision could be issued. At the start of August, the EC asked the FNA to modify or withdraw its provisional decision and to lower the rates further, on the grounds that the German watchdog had not applied the methodology recommended by the EC for calculating termination rates. Brussels noted that the charges proposed by Germany are three times higher than the average of countries which follow the recommended approach set out in European Union (EU) telecom rules.

Regulator flags up imminent withdrawal of CTS numbers

The Gibraltar Regulatory Authority has reminded former customers of collapsed telephone company CTS (Gibraltar) Limited that their CTS numbers will be withdrawn on October 1, 2013. The deadline was initially announced earlier this year after the regulator received a number of complaints from disgruntled users.Ex-CTS customers who ported their CTS numbers to another provider said they were missing calls and texts from outside Gibraltar. The problems impacted mobile phone users most and arose because international operators were trying to route calls through non-existent CTS numbers.Last April the GRA asked local phone providers not to port anymore mobile or fixed numbers from CTS customers and to give them new numbers from their allocated range instead. "The GRA is confident that customers have had enough time to change their numbers to those allocated to other authorised mobile network operators and at the time recommended customers to contact their relevant current provider to make the necessary arrangements," the GRA said.

SIM re-registration enters fifth phase

The United Arab Emirates' telecoms watchdog, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), has implemented the fifth and penultimate phase of its SIM re-registration campaign 'My Number, My Identity', which was launched in July 2012 and is scheduled to end at the start of 2014. The 18-month initiative is being implemented in collaboration with the country's two licensed telecoms operators, Etisalat and Du, to increase awareness of new registration procedures for mobile services and requires subscribers to update their personal data and ensure that their SIM cards are registered under their name to prevent misuse. 'My Number, My Identity' is divided into six stages, each of which targets a different group of subscribers; during the remaining two phases, around four million customers will be required to re-register their details.'The campaign focuses on the procedures that will be taken by the TRA to ensure the transparency in dealing with mobile subscribers and protecting their privacy if misuse occurs by users who use mobile services not registered under their names,' noted TRA director general Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim, adding: 'According to the latest statistics registered during

Mauritius migrates to a new 8-digit mobile numbering plan

Mauritius' telecoms regulator the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) has announced that a new eight-digit mobile numbering plan came into effect in the Republic of Mauritius on 1 September 2013. According to a press release, the digit '5' has been added as a prefix to all existing seven-digit mobile numbers in the country.

Continued LTE growth in Brazil

The Brazilian telecoms regulator Anatel has revealed that Telefonica subsidiary Vivo was the fastest growing 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) network operator in July, with its user base up 42% to 116,019. The second largest LTE provider, TIM Brasil, saw its own subscriber total jump 85.3% to 66,178, while America Movil unit Claro reported growth of 25% to reach 44,178 customers at end-July. Anatel said there were 257,214 LTE users in Brazil at 31 July, with more than 93,800 of these located in the state of Sao Paulo.

A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN THE SAMENA REGION

Active Consultations & Invitations for Feedback

Afghanistan

Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA) is seeking consultancy services to conduct Quality of Service Monitoring through drive test and provide ATRA with a methodology to monitor "Quality of Service" of the service providers, based on international best practices. Beside the consultancy firm will be required on the job trainings. The objective of the consultancy is to support to monitor "Quality of Service" of telecom service providers in telecom market in Afghanistan in accordance with the international best practices and the concerned operators licenses and support to develop a methodology and/or monitoring mechanism to be utilized by ATRA for future monitoring and quality control issues. Expression of interest, including technical and financial offer must be delivered by September 22, 2013. (August 14, 2013) atra.gov.af

Jordan

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) invites all interested parties for their views and comments on the Public Consultation on "Top-Down Cost Accounting System for Dedicated Capacity and Narrowband Markets." TRC in 2010 took decisions in market analysis procedures thereby designating operators that enjoy significant market power (SMP). TRC levied remedies to be implemented in the Jordanian telecommunications market on these operators. The scope of this consultation is to present the draft regulatory decision by which TRC intends to set principles for providing top-down cost accounting system according to the market review decisions for the Wholesale Broadband Markets and the Wholesale Dedicated Capacity Markets. The cost accounting system shall be based on the accounting rules and reporting formats ("model principles") which will be set by the end of this consultation. TRC considers adopting top-down cost accounting principles ("model principles") as explained in this document. The aim of the consultation is to provide a basis for discussion and to consult the relevant issues with the industry. September 19, 2013 has been fixed for all operators and other stakeholders to provide their answers to the questions as well as comments and proposals to TRC. (August 2013) trc.gov.jo

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) invites all interested parties for their views and comments on the Public Consultation on "Top-Down Cost Accounting System for Wholesale Broadband and Wholesale Dedicated Capacity Markets". The scope of this consultation is to present the draft regulatory decision by which TRC intends to set principles for providing top-down cost accounting system according to the market review decisions for the Wholesale Broadband Markets and the Wholesale Dedicated Capacity Markets. The cost accounting system shall be based on the accounting rules and reporting formats ("model principles") which will be set by the end of this consultation. TRC considers adopting top-down cost accounting principles ("model principles") as explained in this document. The aim of the consultation is to provide a basis for discussion and to consult the relevant issues with the industry. September 19, 2013 has been fixed for all operators and other stakeholders to provide their answers to the questions as well as comments and proposals to TRC. (August 2013) trc.gov.jo

Country-wise Policy & Regulatory Developments

Afghanistan
Board Chairman: Mr. Abdul WakilShergul
[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)}
The World Bank approved US$50 million grant, through International Development Association (IDA) to help Afghan Government reinforce legal, regulatory and institutional reforms. The Development Policy programmatic Series: "Promoting economic Growth and Fiscal Sustainability", which is a series of two programmatic grants, aims at supporting policy reforms in selected areas critical to strengthening revenue mobilization and improving the enabling environment for investment in sector with a high growth potential. To this end the operation support legal, regulatory and institutional reforms in different government departments including information and communication technologies (ICT). The second grant in the project series is expected to commence by the end of 2013.
(August 7, 2013) worldbank.org

Algeria
Chairperson: Ms. Zohra Derdouri
[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]
Qatari telecoms group Ooredoo, which holds the controlling stake in Moroccan cellco Wataniya Telecom (Nedjma), has expressed its full support for the recently launched 3G license auction in Algeria. Ooredoo's chairman commented that they welcome the Algerian authorities' decision to begin the process for granting 3G licenses. As a long-term partner in the growth and development of the telecommunications sector in Algeria, Ooredoo will participate fully in this process. Algeria's telecoms watchdog ARPT launched a tender for the authorization of 3G mobile concessions on August 1, 2013. The regulator will award three licenses to domestic mobile operators for the provision of 3G services; interested parties need to submit their tender applications and pay a fee of DZD1million (US$12,590) before August 15, 2013. Algeria's Minister of Posts, IT and Communications, pledged that 3G services will be introduced to the country by November 2013; the government previously postponed the long-awaited tender in order to complete the acquisition of local mobile operator Djezzy, although the process remains ongoing. Nedjma has invested US$338.9 million in its infrastructure during the last 18 months, with a significant portion of the sum spent on 3G-ready technology and network enhancements; in preparation for 3G's eventual arrival, Nedjma introduced a new dongle compatible with GSM, EDGE and 3G technology in February 2012. Nedjma is the third largest cellco in terms of subscribers in Algeria, after market leader Djezzy and second-placed Algerie Telecom; the company had signed up 9.25 million subscribers by end-March 2013, corresponding to a 24.5% share of the Algerian wireless market. (August 6, 2013) telegeography.com

Telecoms Regulator ARPT launched a tender for the authorization of 3G mobile networks on August 1, 2013. The regulator will award three licenses to Algerian mobile operators for the provision of 3G services; interested parties need to submit their tender applications and pay a fee of DZD1 million (US$12,590) fees before August 15, 2013. Minister of Posts, IT and Communications, confirmed that 3G services will be introduced to the country in November 2013. The Algerian government previously postponed the long-awaited tender in order to complete the acquisition of local mobile operator Djezzy. Although negotiations between Djezzy's current owner, Russian-backed Vimpelcom group, and Algiers regarding the planned purchase have reportedly stalled on numerous occasions, Minister noted that discussions between both sides are 'currently ongoing and on track'. (August 1, 2013) telegeography.com

Bahrain
Chairman: Dr. Mohammed Al Amer
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]
Telecoms Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued a decision finding mobile operator Viva non-compliant with various conditions of its frequency license, its mobile services license and its national fixed services license. The TRA found Viva was not authorized to upgrade of 165 fixed point-to-point microwave links, thereby exceeding the bandwidth limitations set out in the frequency license, for which it incurred a fine including a penalty for the period of unauthorized use of spectrum. In addition Viva has been ordered to pay the outstanding spectrum license fees due in respect of the upgraded links, and the TRA has ordered Viva to downgrade all unauthorized links, within 90 days from the date of the order. (August 7, 2013) TradeArabia

Bahrain is one of five countries in the Middle East and North Africa region that have improved their ranking in cellular competition index. The kingdom's ranking this year with a score of 64.18%, was higher than its index rank last year. The index results for this year revealed that Saudi Arabia tops the score - as the most competitive Arab market - with 76.58%. A new report, "Competition Levels in Arab Cellular Markets 2013" was released to the Arab Advisors Group's Telecoms Strategic Research Service subscribers this month. The report ranks the Arab countries according to their cellular competition intensity level, based on a methodological approach. The Arab Advisors Group devised the Cellular Competition Intensity Index to rate and to examine the intensity level of competition in the Arab world's cellular markets. The index takes into account the number of operators, packages, and services available in each of the 19 countries covered by the Arab Advisors Group. Each category was assigned a certain weight according to its importance as an indicator of competition.
(August 1, 2013) gulf-daily-news.com

Bangladesh
Chairman: Sunil Kanti Bose
[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]
The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has published the official list of qualified bidders for the upcoming 3G license auction, confirming that all five private sector domestic cellcos GrameenPhone, Banglalink, Robi, Airtel and CityCell are eligible to place bids on 8 September. However, with the August 26 deadline for paying deposits looming, the operators are yet to confirm if they will take part, due to pending issues including an unresolved dispute with the National Board of Revenue (NBR) which has demanded around US$388 million in unpaid VAT on replacement SIM cards. Adding to the uncertainty, the BTRC is yet to issue the final terms of the auction, including confirmation of whether it will issue any unsold licenses previously earmarked for a foreign new entrant to domestic bidders in the apparent absence of overseas interest, while

operators have been querying the details of the auction bidding rules in an ongoing consultation with the regulator. (August 20, 2013) telegeography.com

Bangladesh's five mobile networks have all submitted applications to participate in the country's 3G license auction, although no new entrants have decided to enter the market. Officials of Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi, Airtel and Citycell all confirmed that they had submitted their applications, although payment of the US$20 million deposit is being held up by ongoing disputes over SIM card taxes. Although the government relaxed the VAT rules on the license fees, the mobile networks are still disputing the imposition of VAT on replacement SIM cards sent to customers who have a faulty or lost card. Plans by the government to encourage a new entrant into the crowded market have not materialized either, and the license that had been reserved for a new entrant will now be offered to one of the incumbent bidders. State owned Teletalk already has a 3G license, but will be required to match the fee paid by the private networks. The auction is due to take place on the September 8. (August 13, 2013) cellular-news.com

National Board of Revenue (NBR) has announced a cut in value added tax (VAT) on 3G mobile spectrum fees from 7.5% to 5% following negotiations with network operators who have threatened to boycott the upcoming 3G license auction unless all pending tax related issues are resolved. Although stopping short of cutting the VAT on 3G spectrum fees to as low as a proposed 2.5% rate, the latest move is seen as a further attempt to appease the operators, following the recent waiving of VAT on regulatory fees which was previously written into the 3G licensing terms. According to the latest published schedule, the deadline for filing 3G license bidding applications is August 12, 2013, with the auction set to take place on September 8. However, there is a pending dispute over a previous demand by the NBR for BDT30.18 billion (US$388 million) in unpaid VAT on replacement SIM cards from GrameenPhone (BDT15.80 billion), Banglalink (BDT7.74 billion) and Robi Axiata (BDT6.64 billion), although a special committee is working to resolve the issue. (August 12, 2013) telegeography.com

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) reports that the total number of mobile phone subscribers in the country reached 105.05 million at the end of June 2013. The figure was up from 99.86 million at the end of March 2013 and 93.79 million at mid-2012. The BTRC also reported that mobile internet users reached 33.9 million at June 30, 2013 (up from 27.8 million twelve months earlier), while the regulator also recorded that WiMAX wireless broadband subscribers passed the half-million mark in June 2013, ending the month at 505,000 (up from 482,000 the previous quarter and 418,000 year-on-year). The BTRC's WiMAX figures only count the country's two holders of nationwide Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) licenses permitting fully mobile WiMAX services in the 2.5GHz spectrum band namely Banglalion and Qubee, and currently exclude other fixed-wireless (including fixed WiMAX) ISPs such as Dhaka's Ollo (which is in the process of applying for one of the spare BWA licenses).
(August 1, 2013) telegeography.com

Egypt
Executive President: Dr. AmrBadawi
[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]

Telecom Egypt, the country's landline phone monopoly, said an integrated license allowing the company to provide mobile services to boost sales growth is "imminently around the corner." The license that was expected to be issued in mid-July has been delayed by political upheaval following the ouster of President Mohamed Mursi on July 3, Telecom Egypt Chief Executive Officer Mohamed Amin El-Nawawy said today in a phone interview. "We have a near-final draft," El-Nawawy said. While "obviously some of the bigger landscape issues that have been happening in Egypt late in June and July might have slowed things down a little bit," the company is "still very optimistic that the government will soon be deciding a date for the issuance." Telecom Egypt, 80% owned by the state, has been facing revenue pressure as more people switch to mobile service from fixed-line phones, while slower business activity has led to fewer calls abroad. Second-quarter revenue from voice services fell 15% from a year earlier, the Cairo-based company said today. The government is considering new rules to allow Egypt's four telecommunications providers to offer mobile, fixed-line and broadband services under a single license. The move would enable the Egyptian Co. for Mobile Services, which operates the Mobinil brand, as well as Vodafone Group Plc (VOD)'s local division and Emirates Telecommunications Corp. (ETISALAT)'s Etisalat Misr unit to offer landlines, while Telecom Egypt would add wireless services. (August 15, 2013) bloomberg.com

Iran
Minister of communication & Information Technology:
[Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC)]

Mobile Communication Company of Iran (MCI) a majority owned subsidiary of fixed line incumbent Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI) has been listed on the Tehran Stock exchange's (TSE's) Second Market on August 20, 2013.
(August 22, 2013) ameInfo.com

Jordan
Chairman of the Board of Commissioners/CEO: Mr. Mohammad Al Taani
[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) will hold on August 29 a specialized seminar on the convergence of media and telecommunications, in cooperation with the Italian Telecommunication Regulatory Authority and Partners of the Jordan – EU Twinning Project, to provide institutional support for TRC. The Green Paper on Convergence of Media and Telecommunications will be presented during the seminar; illustrating the results of the work made by the group of European and Jordanian experts who analyzed the transformation of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector in Jordan; in addition to proposing a new regulatory approach to keep pace with the rapid developments in this vital sector. The final Green Paper, which will take into account the opinions and comments received, will be presented at the final conference of the Twinning Project, on September 19, 2013. In retrospect, the announcement of launching the Jordan - EU Twinning Program for Institutional Strengthening of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) was announced last year through a formal ceremony. This project is funded by the European Union (EU) under the supervision of the Ministry of Planning and International

Cooperation, and through a consortium of French, Spanish and Italian countries. This consortium is presented in order to find a comprehensive and developed approach of technical, organizational and operational aspects to shift to the Kingdom to Next Generation Networks; to apply specific market remedies and revise TRC regulations related to such remedies; to transmit to digital broadcasting and use of digital dividend, and update legal approximation to keep pace with the European Union countries to be able to deal with the issues of convergence; and finally, to enhance TRC staff capacity in the field of Electronic Authentication and Electronic Signature. It is worth mentioning that the inter-institutional Twinning programs aims at helping beneficiary countries to develop modern and efficient administrations, with the needed structures, human resources and management skills. They bring together the public sector expertise from EU Member States and beneficiary countries yielding to concrete operational results for the beneficiary country, under the terms of the Association Agreement between that country and the EU. (August 25, 2013) trc.gov.jo

Jordan's Consumer Protection Society says that it plans to file a lawsuit against the government's recent decision to raise taxes on mobile phones and subscriptions. The government recently doubled the tax on mobile handsets to 16% and on subscriptions to 24%. The society's President, Mohammad Obeidat, said that the new taxes pushed up prices and was an "unacceptable" burden on the low and limited income citizens of the country. He told the Jordan Times that the society will file the lawsuit with the Higher Court of Justice, which serves as an administrative court concerned with looking into disputes about government decisions. Reports from dealers and the mobile networks say that they have already seen a 15 percent decline in sales since the tax was imposed. The government plans to auction of additional radio spectrum in September, but all three mobile networks have previously indicated that they will have to review their intentions to bid for the spectrum in light of the higher taxes on their services. (August 1, 2013) Jordan Times

Kuwait

Minister of Communication: Salem Mutheyeb Ahmed Al-Utheina

[Ministry of Communication (MOC)]

Chinese telecoms vendor Huawei and Kuwaiti telecoms group Zain have announced plans to build an integrated all-IP mobile backbone network in Kuwait. According to a press release, the backhaul network adopts a 100G internet protocol (IP) and Optical Transport Network (OTN) integrated technology, and could support Zain Kuwait's potential upgrade to next generation Long Term Evolution Advanced (LTE-A) technology, in addition to the future provision of fixed network and bandwidth leasing services. With the deployment of high-end routers and 100G wavelength divisions, the solution provides enhanced bandwidth and significantly improves the efficiency of the backbone network. Zain Kuwait's COO Hani El-Kukhun commented: 'As our LTE subscribers grow and overall data multiplies in demand, we realize the growing pressure this puts on our backhaul. Our radio capabilities need to be able to cater for these growing demands which have been carefully planned, but now it is time to unify our backhaul to be able to provide end to end quality of service (QoS) and a seamless end user experience. The total unified IP end to end network will be one of the most advanced in the region.' (August 1, 2013) telegeography.com

Lebanon

Acting Chairman & CEO: Dr. Imad Hoballah

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The World Bank is allocating US$6.4 million to fund a project aimed at boosting Lebanon's mobile Internet systems. Beneficiaries include software developers, university students and graduates, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) firms, industries where new software applications can improve productivity, and mobile users at large. "Fostering investment and capital accumulation in new and innovative sectors that use existing domestic human resources and skills can help unleash Lebanon's potential for growth and over the long-term shift the economy towards a more sustainable growth path," said Ferid Belhaj, World Bank Country Director for the Mashreq. "Lebanon is recognized for its strong education system and its multilingual and educated entrepreneurial population. It is important to build on this human capital when addressing economic growth and job creation." With literacy rates above 90 % and gross tertiary education enrollment at 54%, the country's young graduates represent a competitive talent pool. However, Lebanon's unemployment rate, particularly among young people and women, is high. While the national unemployment rate is 11%, 34% of all young people and 18% of women are actively looking for work. "The mobile Internet segment can create jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for the talented, technology savvy Lebanese youth," said Carlo Maria Rossotto, World Bank Regional Coordinator of the ICT sector. "This project aims to strengthen digital skills and create new enterprises in the mobile Internet space which is a driver of economic growth and job creation". The project has support within the Government of Lebanon and is aligned with the government's latest Economic and Social Reform Action Plan. (August 5, 2013) cellular-news.com

Libya

Minister: Osama Siala

[(Ministry of Telecommunications & Informatics)]

A unit of Libya's sovereign wealth fund is in talks to buy a 35% stake in state-owned Tunisie Telecom from a conglomerate owned by Dubai's ruler. Dubai Holding's arm, Emirates International Telecommunications LLC (EIT), is trying to reduce debt and is set to take a huge hit on the stake it bought for $2.25bn in 2006. JP Morgan Chase valued it at $650m in July. The company has been hit by political and economic turmoil since the popular uprisings in the region that started in 2011. LAP GreenN, a subsidiary of the Libyan Investment Authority's (LIA) Libya Africa Investment Portfolio (LAP), is doing due diligence on the potential purchase, the sources said, and has hired an international investment bank to advise it, a source told Reuters. LIA has assets of about $60 billion. EIT said in a statement that it "carries regular strategic options reviews which could materialize in a disposal including for its stake holding in Tunisie Telecom". Set up in 2007, LAP GreenN offers mobile and fixed line services and has operations in operations in Uganda, Ivory Coast, South Sudan and Sierra Leone. Tunisia has a population of about 10.5 million and mobile penetration of 95 percent. Tunisie Telecom has more than 4 million mobile subscribers and a million for fixed lines. In June, Tunisia said 13 companies including Abu Dhabi-based Etisalat and Turkey's Turkcell had expressed interest in buying the stake. But Reuters also reported that most of those companies had only expressed an initial interest and backed away from discussions. "A potential buyer has to be aware of the political risks associated with the purchase. A niche player like LAP GreenN is best positioned for that. This is not for every telco firm out there," a regional telecoms banker told Reuters. "The key thing in this deal will be how LAP GreenN gains access to funds to purchase this stake," the banker said. Dubai Holding is among the group of companies badly hit by the financial crisis. Many of its units have had to restructure debts. But the emirate's economy is recovering thanks to a rebound in tourism, services and the property market. Credit Suisse is advising Dubai on the sale process. EIT has also put its 26 percent stake in retailer Axiom Telecom up for sale. (August 22, 2013) tripolipost.com

In Libya, the telecoms are up and working and more fiber optic linkages are being established to improve efficiency, but policy makers want to see the telecoms entities devolve from state ownership to private companies. With the overthrow of the last regime, already a great change has taken place with a type of organic liberalization as the telecoms sector is free of the corruption and nepotism that was rampant during the old regime. With the overthrow of the regime, already a great change has taken place with a type of organic liberalization as the telecoms sector is free of the corruption and nepotism that was rampant during the old regime. "We want to promote the private sector, we want to make sure that this telecom law is up to the international standards and we want to make sure there is an independent regulator because the monopoly from the previous regime was very strange and decisions were being made and licenses given all from the same place," said Usama Siala, Minister of Communications and Informatics of Libya. Currently the draft law is in the hands of the General National Congress, but the timetable for enactment is uncertain. "Let's say for example there is a lot of talk about establishing a third license for a third operator in Libya, well with the existing law we cannot do that," Siala said. So the status quo of Libya telecoms continues to be that of a monopoly arrangement under government ownership. Once the new law is passed the minister wants to see a new "third operator" that will not just serve the country's four main cities, but provide service throughout Libya. I want to secure the interests of the subscribers and the interests of the Libyan government, and at the same time I want it to be easy for the investor to feel secure about their investment here in Libya. This is what the telecom law is focusing on," the telecoms minister said. Rated at 98th in the world for subscriptions to fixed broadband Internet service, there are an estimated 72,800 users, or 1.5 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants again these figures are from 2010.
(August 1, 2013) marcopolis.net

Morocco
Director General: M. Azdine El MountassirBillah
[Agence Nationale de Reglementation des Telecommunications (ANRT)]

The plan by France's Vivendi to sell its 53% stake in Maroc Telecom has garnered significant overseas attention, having attracted suitors from South Korea to the Gulf. In late April, Vivendi announced that it had received bids from Qatari telecoms operator Ooredoo and Abu Dhabi's Etisalat, both of which are seeking to expand abroad as growth slows in their saturated home markets. The two firms have a presence in other North African countries, but not Morocco. Though the details of the offers have not been disclosed, the French media company is seeking at least €5.5bn. The bids will also be reviewed by the Moroccan government, which owns a 30% stake and must approve the buyer, Global Arab Network reports according to OBG. Maroc Telecom is the incumbent operator in the kingdom, maintaining a 45% share of the mobile segment as of March, ahead of competitors Méditel and Wana, which account for 29% and 26%, respectively, according to the regulator ANRT. It also competes in the fixed-line and internet segments and owns controlling stakes in four telecoms operators in West Africa. It is little surprise that the sale has attracted strong interest. With almost half the population under the age of 25, opportunities for revenue growth in the North African state should be impressive. Indeed, the headline indicators in the mobile market appear robust. Average monthly usage per client rose from 64 to 72 minutes between March 2012 and March 2013, and total minutes for the first quarter of 2013 increased by 27.23%, to 8.21bn. Subscribership was up by 9.05% over the same period, reaching 39,516,521. The mobile penetration rate now stands at 121.51%. While voice traffic continues to provide the bulk of growth for operators, as in other regional markets, the data segment is attracting increasing attention as firms look to boost revenues. Morocco had more than 4m internet subscribers as of March 2013, equivalent to a 12.49% penetration rate, with 82% of users going online via their 3G-enabled mobile devices The trend towards higher revenue data services looks set to intensify, with at least one license for 4G technology expected by the end of 2013 as part of a larger plan to bring mobile broadband to the entire population by 2022. However, any new entrant to the market will also face challenges. In its 2012 annual report, Vivendi noted that the "intensely competitive" environment in the mobile sector led Maroc Telecom to increase promotional offers and marketing initiatives in 2012. Wana, for example, entered the market only in 2010 but has seen significant growth in the intervening period. This has had a noticeable impact on average revenue per user (ARPU). In the year leading up to December 2012, mobile revenues per minute fell by 27% according to the ANRT, including a 30% drop in the prepaid segment, which continues to account for more than 90% of all subscribers. The price competition has come about in part as a response to actions by the ANRT. Although the regulator cannot set retail prices, it can influence wholesale gross prices by reducing interconnection fees charged by Maroc Telecom to access its network. For 2013 ANRT adopted a uniform network interconnection rate of Dh0.13 per minute (€0.01) for all carriers at all hours of the day. The regulatory authority's stated aims in adopting this change are to simplify the rate structure; balance traffic flows and increase service quality by avoiding network overloads at peak hours. For 2013, the ANRT also lowered the gross SMS termination rates by 40%, to Dh0.05 per SMS (€0.005), with the goal of encouraging lower prices. As the market continues to develop, competition between the three operators for share will no doubt maintain pressure on prices and revenues. Average revenue per minute has continued to fall, by some 22% between March 2012 and March 2013, from Dh0.65 (€0.06) to Dh0.51 (€0.05). Prices fell even more dramatically for internet services over this same period, with average monthly bills (combined ADSL and 3G) declining by 31%, from Dh55 (€4.95) per month to Dh38 (€3.42). The trend is hardly unique to Morocco as telecoms sectors become ever more competitive throughout North Africa; operators are looking to diversify revenues to maintain profits. In Egypt, for example, the urgency is even more pronounced: ARPU rates are roughly one-third those of Morocco. However, to offset falling prices, Maroc Telecom's new suitors may opt to focus on increasing overall usage and investing in high-value areas such as data services to ensure sustained growth over the long term. (August 27, 2013) english.globalarabnetwork.com

Nepal
Chairman: Mr. Digambar Jha
[Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTR)]

The country has witnessed significant growth in internet services in last five years. At the end of the last fiscal year (mid-July), data penetration reached 26.10% with total subscriber base touching 6.91 million. Till July 2008, internet service was available only to 515,592 subscribers and a majority of them relied on slow data services like dial-up and GPRS, according to the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) data. Now, there are multiple choices for consumers for high speed data services that include high speed wireless 3G, new technology based WiMAX and cable internet at competitive price. In fiscal year 2010-11, telecom companies and internet service providers (ISPs) added 1.7 million new data customers up from 844,213 in the previous year. Director NTA said the expansion of data-enabled GSM mobile service was the main driving force for the growth. "With demand for mobile data growing, operators having only voice service will find it hard to exist in coming days," he said. Availability of cheaper Smartphones, decline in bandwidth price internationally, increased attraction towards social media and competition among operators has pushed up the market of wireless mobile internet, according to NTA officials. Of the 6.91 million internet subscribers, around 6 million surf data through their mobile handsets. Telecom companies Ncell, Nepal Telecom (NT), United Telecom Limited (UTL) and around four dozen ISPs are providing data services. Telecom companies, however, command 99% market share, while ISPs hold 1%. From last fiscal year, NT has been focusing on data service and started new WiMAX internet service. NT has been offering multiple data services like dialup, WiMAX, EVDO, 3G and leased line connectivity. With focus on mobile data users, NT is preparing to implement package schemes, according to joint-spokesperson for NT. "We are working on a real time billing project to this effect," he said. Currently, NT charges Rs 1 per MB (exclusive of taxes) in GPRS and 3G internet services, and Rs 0.50 per MB in IP-CDMA-based Sky Pro service. The state-owned company has also run an offer for Sky Pro, under which in which customers paying Rs 2,359 can get 5 GB package, USB dongle and RUIM card. This offer allows users to use internet at Rs 0.47 per MB. Ncell has also been offering different internet packages ranging from 3 MB (24-hour validity) to 10 GB (30-day validity). "We have data packages costing Rs 0.29 to Rs 2 per MB and customers can choose size as per their need," said Milan Sharma, corporate communication expert at Ncell. ISPs, which were mainly targeting the corporate customers until last year, have started bringing schemes with focus on individual customers. According to the NTA's recent Management Information System (MIS) report, Ncell has 3.4 million customers, while NT has 3.2 million users by the end of last fiscal year. UTL and ISPs have 95,657 and 85,821 data users, respectively. The NTA said there would be more competition, especially in data, between the two telecom companies and other companies planning to expand the market across the country by obtaining the unified telecom license. Director said with NT adding new 3G lines and Smart Telecom planning to go nationwide, the market will see more competition in terms of quality and price.
(August 26, 2013) ekantipur.com

Telecoms watchdog is threatening to cancel the operating licenses of five internet service providers (ISPs) in the country over their failure to launch services, and for not staying in contact with the regulator. The Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) is planning to revoke the licenses of national ISP Neptell Global and four rural ISPs, Mandabi Multipurpose Society Development Centre, Samajik Nyayakalagi Sanchar Abhiyan, Pratidhwani Media, and Namchhe Network. As per the NTA's stipulations, all domestic licensees in Nepal are required to submit financial reports each year declaring their income. Based on the report, the ISPs are required to contribute 2% of their annual income to the Rural Telecommunications Development Fund (RTDF) and 4% as royalty to the government. However, NTA says that the agency has faced problems in contacting the ISPs. 'Even if we dispatch letters, they come back to us saying the address is not found,' he notes. It is not the first time that ISPs have come under the spotlight. Recently, the operating license of Himal Technologies, an ISP which targeted urban parts of the country, was scrapped automatically after it failed to renew it. The NTA has said that rural ISPs in particular are 'dying' as a result of intense competition from rival mobile internet services offered by Nepal Telecom and Ncell.
(August 22, 2013) The Kathmandu Post

The Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) is seeking to implement measures that would require all domestic telecoms operators to make payments for their 3G mobile, WiMAX and satellite (mobile) services in advance, and as such, as asked the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) for its go-ahead to apply the rule. Under the plan the regulator will request service providers to pay their frequency fees within the first three months of a given financial year (i.e. mid-July to mid-October). Although the NTA ushered in a new 'Telecommunications Radio Frequency Distribution and Pricing Policy' in 2012, it omitted to incorporate a fee collection schedule for wireless-based services. Explaining the measure, NTA Director told that the existing policy holds the companies responsible for paying the determined fee only for additional, maximum frequency and VSAT by the first three months of each year. To date, state owned Nepal Telecom (NT) and privately run Ncell have each been using 2×10MHz of frequencies for 3G mobile services and will each pay NPR240 million (US$2.45 million) per annum in fees, while the former has also been using a 30MHz block of spectrum for wireless broadband WiMAX services (launched last year); it is being charged NPR12 million per year for the rights to these frequencies. In addition, two other firms i4 Technologies and Constellation each offer a satellite-based Global Mobile Personal Communication Service (GMPCS) service, and will each have to pay NPT15,000 per MHz, for spectrum use. (August 20, 2013) eKantipur News

The government of Nepal is considering hiring in a consultant to carry out a feasibility study into the proposed launch of the country's own satellite to take the orbital slot it has been allocated by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). According to the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) ITU has made it a mandatory requirement that Nepal claim its slot allocated at either 50 degrees east or 123.3 degrees east (in 1984) by 2015. As such MoIC will now head up a five-member committee to carry out the study using as estimated NPR100 million (US$1.04 million) of this year's budget, to consider the size of the investment that would be required, and business models for launching commercial broadcasting and/or defense, telecommunications and weather forecasting services, amongst others. The panel will include one member each from the regulator, Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment and Nepal Television. The study is expected to start within the next twelve months, once a consultant has been hired, with initial estimates putting a cost of NPR35 billion on launching the new satellite. (August 6, 2013) telegeography.com

Oman
Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Hamed Al-Rawahi
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The Information Technology Authority (ITA) continues its survey of the 'Access to and Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) by Households and Individuals 2013' that targets 11,000 randomly selected households in the Sultanate. The actual field work has already started on July 30, 2013 and will continue till end of October, 2013. The survey kicked off with Muscat Governorate, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South. Data collectors will visit the randomly selected houses for the purpose of completing the electronic form specifically designed for the survey. The form comprises three main parts. The first part aims at finding out the extent of which Internet, computers, cell phones, printers, scanners and video games are used in a particular house. The second part focuses on the relationship between the age and the nature of technology a certain user finds best to use. In other words, video games might be preferred by a 6-year-old child and a teenager might more likely opt for social channels through a cell phone rather than a personal computer or a laptop. The third part is mainly to measure how interactive are the users and the individuals in regarding to the eGovernment services as well as to know their impression on the Internet services in the Sultanate. The survey form has been designed as per the international standards of basic information and communications technology indicators issued by the global partnership on measuring ICT for development. It is worth to note that the ITA implements this survey for the first time in the Sultanate benefiting from international and regional experiences in this regard. Results of the survey will be extremely important to the eGovernment services provided to citizens and residents in the Sultanate, and will contribute to the decision-making process and strategies related to ICT in the Sultanate. The results also provide an additional insight of necessary statistics for the purpose of international comparisons. The ITA extended its appreciation to all co-operating households and individuals for their support to ensure an accurate data survey. The ITA also informed that the survey team would have ID cards as well as an official ITA letter for all participating families and individuals. There are also 100 tablet devices for the participants selected through a random draw at the end of the survey.
(August 26, 2013) zawya.com

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has no plan to ban the popular mobile application 'WhatsApp', according to the authority. Authority has no plans of banning any mobile application or social network at the moment and will take appropriate action as and when it is needed. There were rumors among users who are greatly attached to this OTT App (Over-The-Top Application) that Oman would follow some other countries which are planning a total ban on such Apps that are used as a means to spread 'information' and thereby causing confusion among the general public. Some of the countries in the region have announced that they would stop the usage of WhatsApp. And there was fear in the Sultanate that the authorities in the country would follow suit. (August 1, 2013) The Observer

Pakistan
Chairman:
[Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)]

Pakistan has joined the league of the fastest growing telecommunication industries of the world as 70% people are using different mediums of communication in the country while active SIMs reached the number of 125 millions. GSMA Intelligence revealed the report based on one year study, the report showed that Pakistan have more or less 125 million active SIM cards and at least 70% people use mobile on daily basis. According to GSMA report, approximately 5.9 billion SIMs are under usage by the consumers across the globe which showed significant development in international telecommunication industry in last few years. On the other side, the major development in telecom industry leave a disastrous drawback on global environment as intense increment in energy requirements which resulted to place it in the list of biggest consumers of diesel, the biggest medium of carbon production.
(August 27, 2013) thenewstribe.com

Pakistan's Task Force of National Response Centre for Cyber Crimes (NR3C) has shut down 31 illegal voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) businesses since February this year, local media outlet. NR3C conducted raids in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi, seizing equipment worth approximately PKR700 million (US$6.8 million). The loss to the exchequer halted by the raids was estimated to be PKR300million per month. Illegal VoIP traffic reportedly increased significantly from late 2012, when the creation of the International Clearing House (ICH) led to a hike in tariffs for international calls. The NR3C was constituted on the orders of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to take immediate action against individuals and companies involved in the business of grey traffic and its trading, in close coordination with the Director General (Enforcement) of the hamstrung sector watchdog Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). (August 8, 2013) The News

Qatar
Executive Director: Mr. Greame Gordon
[The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR)]

Qatar's Ooredoo has launched a fiber broadband package aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) under the Business Fiber banner, allowing smaller companies to connect to the internet at speeds that were traditionally restricted to large corporations, at no additional cost. Ooredoo will automatically upgrade and connect all current ADSL broadband customers in the SME segment to its direct fiber network over the coming months, multiplying their speeds by a factor of ten, meaning that subscribers to a 1Mbps plan will be upgraded to 10Mbps, 2Mbps to 20Mbps, and 4Mbps to 40Mbps, with no increase in monthly fees. Business Fiber packages include unlimited monthly data usage (subject to fair usage policy). Ooredoo is deploying Business Fiber on a zone-by-zone basis across Qatar, and plans to connect all its business customers to fiber by mid-2014, as part of a wider plan to cover all homes and businesses by the end of 2014. Having started the commercial rollout of Ooredoo Fiber in 2012, the network has connected more than 60,000 homes. In addition to offering a direct fiber internet connection, Ooredoo is marketing its add-on services for the business sector, saying: 'Businesses will also be able to enhance their IT costs by moving their IT infrastructure to the Ooredoo Cloud virtual computing platform, delivering remote back up, and managed voice and support services.' (August 5, 2013) telegeography.com

Saudi Arabia
Governor: Eng. Abdullah A. Al Darrab
[Communication & Information Technology Commission (CITC)]

In its latest update on the Kingdom's telecom sector, NCB Capital, the GCC's major wealth manager and the Kingdom's largest asset manager, believes that growth in the sector will remain driven by the broadband and corporate segments. However, the increasing competition in broadband and the continuous changes in the sector's regulations are the main concerns. "We maintain our overweight rating on Mobily with a PT of SR 93.2 (18 percent upside) and STC (Saudi Telecom Co.) with a PT of SR 45.7 (upside of 15%)," noted Abdulelah Babgi, equity research analyst at NCB Capital. "We also upgraded Zain from neutral to overweight with a PT of SR 11.6 (upside of 16%)." NCB Capital has upgraded its rating on Zain to overweight following the recent positive developments on the company's debt issues. "We believe the agreement with the Ministry of Finance and the refinancing of the junior debt will reduce financial charges and accordingly alleviate some of the pressure on the bottom line," Babgi said. "Based on this, we have revised our estimates for Zain by 3-12% for the projection period between 2013 and 2020. We also believe that these agreements indicate a greater likelihood that Zain will secure a positive deal in refinancing its senior debt of SR 9 billion. This should be a major positive catalyst for the stock once completed," he added. NCB Capital PT for Mobily has increased slightly off the back of a reduction in the equity risk premium by 0.5%. "However, our forecasts for Mobily remain broadly the same following the Q1 2013 results, which were in line with our estimates," added Babgi. "Our PT for STC is down by 0.4% off the back of lower than expected results in Q1, 2013, although this was slightly offset by the reduction in the equity risk premium. Despite the strong local operations, some of STC's international operations remain a significant concern." NCB Capital continues to believe growth in the sector will be mainly driven by the data and corporate segments, supported by continued investments and increased smart phone penetration rates. However, increasing competition in these segments and further changes in the CITC's regulations are the main concerns. The valuation of the sector remains attractive at 9.2x 2013e P/E, compared to regional peers at 10.5x. From the telecom stocks under coverage, Mobily remains NCB Capital's top pick due to its strong financial prospects coupled with a strong dividend outlook. (August 23, 2013) arabnews.com

Saudi Arabia's Etihad Etisalat (Mobily) has signed a deal that will see it taking a controlling stake in the country's second landline network, Etihad Atheeb. Mobily does not have a landline license, so the acquisition will enable it to sell bundled products and access the network for backhaul capacity. It already owns an ISP, which it bought in 2008. In a statement, the company said that it is buying the controlling stake from four shareholders who have jointly agreed to sell. Etihad Atheeb had itself previously expressed an interest in buying a stake in a mobile network operator, but has posted years of losses and was now seen as a likely target for a buyout by one of the country's mobile networks instead. Etihad Atheeb Telecom is a joint venture of Atheeb Trading Company, Al-Nahla Trading Company, Bahrain's Batelco and Traco Company. Just under half its shares are listed on the stock exchange, where its shares have been suspended several times over the years due to its ongoing losses. Batelco is not one of the sellers of its shares, and that company's intentions are currently unclear.
(August 22, 2013) cellular-news.com

Sri Lanka
Director General: Mr. Anusha Palpita
[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

Indian mobile operator Bharti Airtel is in advanced discussions to sell off its Sri Lankan operations to UAE operator Etisalat. According to one source, Standard Chartered Bank is advising Airtel in the transaction. Bharti Airtel Lanka, which has a subscriber base of 1.7 million, has been valued at US$ 110-130 million. The company's subscribers have not grown in the past four quarters, and despite investing over US$ 300 million since 2007, the unit continues to make losses. Airtel declined to comment. (August 23, 2013) The Economic Times

Sri Lanka's telecom industry has been a trailblazer in the South Asian region, being the first to introduce latest technologies in the market-be it GSM telephony, CDMA fixed wireless telephone services, ADSL Internet access, GPRS Internet access for mobile telephone, WiMAX broadband services, 3G and 3.5G mobile communications and HSPA mobile broadband Internet services. Sri Lanka now boasts of one of the most sophisticated telecommunications industries in the region, perhaps at par with many developed nations. With so many players, big and small, each one of them has found their niche in the ever growing pool of telecom. Competition has only led the way for development and advancement. Sri Lanka' telcos are in line for a bonanza as the island nation experiences some peace now after nearly three decades of armed conflict. The telecommunications industry also had a significant impact on the economic and social trends in Sri Lanka as an improved ability to communicate-both within and outside the country and greater access to information have improved livelihoods, lifestyles and the quality of life of nearly all segments of the population. Sri Lanka's telecom industry has grown at a breakneck speed last year after the restoration of peace. Over the past decade, telecom industry has been the fastest growing area of Sri Lanka's economy led by the mobile telephony segment. From only 256,655 subscribers in 1999, total telephone connections have rocketed to 14,095,346 in 2009, implying a compound annual growth rate of 34%. Consequently, composite telephone penetration has risen from just 5% in 1999 to 85% in 2009. So, mobile telephony penetration has now reached around 45-48%. This leaves room for a further increase in mobile telephony penetration, especially at the lower-end of the market as economic growth accelerates and disposable income rises. The technology available to consumers is at par with most developed nations, ranging from ADSL fixed wireline services to WiMAX fixed wireless broadband access, GPRS mobile telephony Internet to HSPA mobile broadband Internet connectivity. By the end of 2009, broadband Internet market comprised around 170,000 ADSL fixed wireline connections, 7,000 WiMAX fixed wireless subscribers and 63,000 HSPA mobile units. Sri Lanka Telecom, being the only fixed wireline telecom operator, is the sole ADSL Internet service provider in the country. Meanwhile, Dialog is the only telco currently offering WiMAX fixed wireless Internet access, in addition to its HSPA mobile broadband Internet connectivity. However, Sri Lanka Telecom will start commercial operations of its own WiMAX broadband network in the second half of 2010. Mobitel and Airtel are the other operators offering HSPA mobile broadband Internet access. With the economy becoming stable, GDP is set to grow by over 7% per annum in real terms in the next few years, which is resulting in a high demand for telecommunication and data transmission services from business enterprises. With so much of development and boom in this sector, it gave rise to another major problem which created a stir among telcos regarding their existence. It was the vicious tariff war that left almost all telecommunication service providers with losses over the past couple of years. In order to control this dangerous situation, telecom regulators of Sri Lanka had to create an equitable industry to promote new investments in infrastructure and technology. (August 15, 2013) voicendata.com

Sudan
Director General: Dr. Izz Al Din Kamil Amin
[The National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC)]

Telecoms regulator is considering allowing mobile virtual network operators (MVNOs) to enter the country's wireless sector. The watchdog has been holding discussions with external advisors, although the proposal remains at a very early stage. 'Unlike other countries in Europe and further beyond, most Sub-Saharan telco markets probably still aren't quite matured enough to make the MVNO model work effectively as it has elsewhere, although this does seem to be gradually changing,' said a source.
(August 27, 2013) TMT Finance

Tunisia
President: Mr. Hassoumi Zitoune
[National Telecommunication Commission (INTT)]

The Tunisian government confirmed that Meninx Data Center has been awarded the management contract to provide, host and operate the country's number portability systems. Meninx Data Center expects to have its number portability systems in place by November this year. Meninx Data Center is owned by Tunisian group Meninx Holding. Earlier this year another company within the group, Meninx Technologies, formed a public-private partnership with the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) to promote deployment of IPv6 in the country. The duo are working to ensure better address management in IPv6 of Tunisian websites hosted in Meninx's data centre in Enfidha, which also hosts a secondary copy of the Tunisian Domain Name System (DNS).
(August 28, 2013) Agence Ecofin

LAP Green Networks is in talks with Dubai Holding's Emirates International Telecommunications unit to acquire the latter's 35% stake in Tunisie Telecom . LAP GreenN has begun conducting due diligence and has hired an international investment bank to advise on the potential purchase. EIT was given the green light by Tunisia's Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies to offload the stake in June this year, with the caveat that the buyer be an experienced global telecommunications operator, in the hopes that the new partner would be a valuable addition to TT.. (August 16, 2013) Reuters

Turkey
Chairman & CEO: Dr. Tayfun Acarer
[Information & Communication Technologies Authority (BTK)]

Turkish mobile giant Turkcell has announced that it has successfully conducted a Long Term Evolution-Advanced (LTE-A) test in Istanbul, achieving downlink transmission speeds of around 900Mbps. The trial was conducted in a laboratory environment with technical support from Chinese vendor Huawei. Despite the lack of progress in issuing licenses for 4GLTE services in Turkey, Turkcell has been at the forefront of LTE testing in the country, teaming up with Ericsson in 2009 and April 2012. The initial test which was also laboratory-based saw Turkcell notch up speeds of 168Mbps, while the more recent trial saw LTE tested 'on the go' in Istanbul, with speeds topping 100Mbps.
(August 2, 2013) telegeography.com

United Arab Emirates
Director General: Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The Mubadala Development-owned satellite company Yahsat launched its commercial broadband service in the country, effectively becoming the third internet service provider in the UAE. Mubadala is an Abu Dhabi Government strategic investment company. While most customers are unlikely to switch, for those who fall outside the coverage areas of du and Etisalat's fiber broadband coverage, Yahclick presents the opportunity to access high-speed internet. Talk of network sharing of Etisalat and du's fiber-optic broadband infrastructure came to the fore once again with hints that it could become a reality by next year. The discussions, which began about four years ago, will enable consumers in the UAE to choose their fixed-line network provider rather than be limited to whichever company supplies their area or building. Osman Sultan, du's chief executive, recently described the possibility of network sharing as a "game-changer". His company's mobile subscriber base grew 16% in the second quarter of this year compared with the same period last year to 6.6 million. Its fixed-line customer base is substantially smaller, at just 580,000 across the UAE. Once network sharing becomes a reality, du is likely to focus its effort on the domestic market rather than pursue international expansion through mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) licenses as was initially planned this year before the company pulled out of bidding for an MVNO license in Saudi Arabia. Etisalat, on the other hand, has its sights set on international expansion once again. The operator is now in exclusive talks with the French conglomerate Vivendi for a 53% stake in Maroc Telecom. The binding offer is valued at Dh18.8 billion, but the acquisition is subject to approval from the Moroccan government which has a 30% stake in Maroc Telecom and the period of exclusivity will run until September 25. Etisalat's Pakistan subsidiary PTCL is also eyeing up an acquisition of its competitor Warid Telecom in a deal that could potentially be worth US$1bn, according to Reuters. Despite both operators recording growth in the first half of this year, with du announcing an exceptional Dh1bn dividend payout last month and Etisalat's UAE subscriber base rising 12% to 9.9 million, overall domestic growth has slowed down. "Both companies had a decent second quarter. Etisalat had a very good quarter, they have a new manager in their marketing and commercial unit who has sorted out pretty good offers, so they have had very strong first and second quarters this year," says Petr Molik, the chief financial officer at Menacorp. "I think now both operators will continue to be challenged by the drop in average return per user [ARPU]." According to the Telecoms Regulatory Authority (TRA), mobile penetration levels exceed 200% in the UAE and with the rise of free messaging applications such as Whatsapp and WeChat and voice over internet protocol services such as Skype and Viber, traditional revenue streams are being dented resulting in lower ARPU for both operators. Growth in data revenues however, is likely to continue but both operators will be under pressure to offset the loss in voice traditional revenues through other means. Etisalat is looking to boost its international earnings while du is hoping to expand its data-centre business and explore opportunities in over-the-top services.
(August 9, 2013) thenational.ae

Regulatory Activities Beyond the SAMENA Region

ITU

ITU and the Government of Barbados have signed an agreement to establish a National Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT), a key mechanism to strengthen cybersecurity, detect the threat of cyber-attacks and manage a timely response. Established within the framework of the ITU-IMPACT initiative on strengthening cybersecurity, the project will provide Barbados with the necessary skills and technical capabilities to build a national point of contact to respond in an effective manner to cybercrimes and cyber-attacks. IMPACT – the International Multilateral Partnership Against Cyber Threats – is the operational home of ITU's Global Cybersecurity Agenda providing facilities and resources to ITU's 193 Member States to effectively address cyber threats, as well as assisting United Nations agencies in protecting their ICT infrastructures. The ITU-IMACT collaboration will support the establishment of the CIRT in Barbados, providing elements in project management as well as incident management software applications needed to properly combat cyber-attacks. The agreement to set up the CIRT was signed by Mr. Brahima Sanou, Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau and Mr. Reginald Bourne, Chief Telecommunication Officer in the Division of Energy and Telecommunications in the Prime Minister's Office in Barbados. ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré said the setting up of National Computer Incident Response Teams in the region would firmly establish critical mechanisms to deal with cyber threats, referring to the CIRT established earlier in Jamaica. "The two CIRTs in Barbados and Jamaica will be able to collaborate and encourage other countries to build such national capabilities, which are critical in the battle to improve the capacity to strengthen cybersecurity both at the national as well as regional levels," Mr. Brahima Sanou noted. "All this support comes from the strong commitment that the countries in this region have expressed and the signature of this agreement with Barbados is an expression of this commitment." Signing the agreement on behalf of the Government of Barbados, Mr. Reginald Bourne said "This is another indication of the government's commitment to ensuring a safe and secure environment for the people of Barbados and all its investors and its visitors using ICTs." (August 13 2013) itu.int

SAMENA

In what has been considered as one the world's most prominent meetings of the telecommunications industry associations in recent times, the First Regional Congress of Telecommunications witnessed the emergence of SAMENA Council as a global advocate of ensuring sustainability of the Internet and accelerating digitization as a best means to ensuring sustainable growth in emerging digital economies. The First Regional Congress of Telecommunications, held in Panama City recently, was represented by AHCIET, ASETA, CANTO, ESOA, ETNO, GSMA, SAMENA Council and PTC. In this congregation of regional industry associations, approximately 2000 representatives from countries from the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Caribbean, USA, and Europe participated. Their participation was centered on the need to exchange insights on various areas of interest to the ICT industry, and offer cross-regional evaluation of needs and possible ways for moving forward. Some of the outcomes of the engagement included expressed willingness by industry associations toward aiding the development of the Information Society, by ensuring that industry associations remain in contact and convene at a common platform, regularly. The SAMENA Council was among a handful of organizations that had recommended an agenda direction for the discussion prior to the Congress, and did so in close collaboration with AHCIET. By offering the proposition to work collaboratively and being the sole organization to do so with regard to sustaining digital business growth and digital service adoption, the SAMENA Council elevated its agenda-setting goals, specific to the SAMENA region, to new agenda-defining heights in the global marketplace, which is confronted with issues common to regions around the world. Some issues include but are not limited to broadband proliferation, spectrum allocation and harmonization, investments, regulations, taxation, roaming, among others. Dr. Mustafa Aykut, SAMENA Council Policy Board Chairman, who represented the SAMENA Council and presented the SAMENA Council's SMART SAMENA concept, created as a part of a region-wide ICT policy and digitization study said, "The telecommunications sector has faced several technological developments over the years, affecting current and future functionalities of the markets. Regional associations contribute to development of digitization initiatives. Co-operation among regional associations strengthens the public-private-people relationships, supporting common interest actions as well as ensuring improvements in the sector." The SAMENA Council's exchange of information and regional insights from South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa invited attention for collaboration and issue-specific cooperation from multiple regions, and especially from some of the worlds' most renowned and oldest telecoms industry associations, with which the SAMENA Council will soon develop a cooperative agreement. (August 15, 2013) samenacouncil.org

GSA

LTE networks went live in 12 new markets in the first seven months of this year, GSA reports. The number of LTE networks in commercial operation worldwide reached 200 as of the end of July, up from 146 at the end of last year, according to new research published on Thursday. More than half of the total launched in the past 12 months, Global mobile Suppliers Association (GSA) revealed. "106 LTE networks were commercially launched in the last 12 months, representing 112% annual growth," said GSA president Alan Hadden, in a statement. 54 operators launched LTE networks in the first seven months of this year, while 12 new markets saw LTE introduced for the first time; in total 76 countries have LTE networks. The dozen newcomers to the LTE world were: Chile, Iceland, Iraq, Lebanon, Malaysia, New Zealand, Paraguay, Qatar, Spain, Thailand, US Virgin Islands, and Venezuela, the GSA said. The research firm's announcement comes amidst much talk of LTE launches in Europe. Vodafone launched its LTE network in the Netherlands on Monday, after the cut-off date for the GSA's latest numbers, while in the U.K both Vodafone and O2 plan to make their LTE services commercially available on 29 August. (August 8, 2013) totaltele.com

LTE

4G Americas reports that LTE has been commercially launched on 200 networks worldwide in 78 countries and that number is expected to grow to 250 networks by the end of 2013. The surge in LTE deployments will result in more than 100 new LTE networks launched in 2013 alone. Additionally, the evolution of LTE to the 3GPP Release 10 standards of LTE-Advanced has been commercially launched on two networks to date. Some analysts expect numerous LTE-Advanced networks to be launched by the end of this year as operators deploy one or more of the enhanced features of the standard. "Telia Sonera, in Norway and Sweden, was the first mobile network operator to commercially launch LTE in December 2009 and today the groundswell of commercial deployments continues as government regulators allocate and auction new spectrum," commented Chris Pearson, President of 4G Americas. "Internationally harmonized spectrum in the Americas, and the rest of the world, has been the fuel for the explosive growth of LTE commercial network deployments." Pearson continued, "Carrier Aggregation appears to be a very popular feature for operators deploying LTE-Advanced, as it provides the capability to combine disparate and underutilized spectrum assets increasing the size of an operator's mobile data pipes." LTE-Advanced using Carrier Aggregation was commercially launched in South Korea by both SK Telecom (which included a compatible handset) in June 2013 and LG U+ in July 2013. Four commercial LTE-Advanced networks are expected to launch in the United States by the end of 2013. The number of LTE mobile broadband commercial deployments have grown tremendously; from 2 commercial deployments in 2009, 16 in 2010, 51 in 2011, 139 in 2012 and now 200 commercial deployments as of August 22, 2013. There are 250 commercial LTE networks anticipated by the end of this year and more than 440 total deployments in the coming years.

- Global
- 200 commercial LTE networks today; 250 commercial LTE networks expected by the end of 2013
- Over 440 total commitments to LTE deployment by wireless operators to date
- 72 million LTE connections at the end of 2012
- 125 million LTE connections as of June 2013; representing an increase of 64 percent in six months
- Forecast 150 million LTE connections by end of 2013, more than doubling LTE connections at the end of 2012
- LTE connections are forecast to reach 1 billion by early 2018
- North America
- 9 commercial LTE networks deployed in U.S. and Canada
- 40 million LTE connections at the end of 2012
- 65 million LTE connections as of June 2013 with 55 percent global market share
- Forecast 75 million LTE connections by end of 2013
- Latin America
- 25 commercial LTE networks in 12 countries
- More than 165,000 LTE connections as of June 2013

(August 23, 2013) cellular-news.com

United States

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has paused the process of approving AT&T's purchase of Alltel's customer base and its radio spectrum. The regulator paused the 180 day process on day 175 saying that it had not received enough information from AT&T about how it planned to migrate Alltel's customers onto its network. The customers being asked to migrate are currently on Alltel's CDMA based network, and will have to be offered new handsets as well as new tariffs when they migrate services. The regulator said in its latest letter to AT&T that "despite several Commission staff follow-up conversations about the importance of transitioning pre-paid customers, we have received no detailed responses from AT&T on its plans for transitioning ATN's significant pre-paid customer base." Alltel has around 182,000 customers on prepay tariffs that are the topic of concern. In a statement, AT&T said that it is "extremely disappointed at the FCC delay today on this small transaction." The small transaction being US$780 million in value. (August 28, 2013) cellular-news.com

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has decided to relax the rules governing unlicensed communication equipment in the 57-64 GHz band. Taken together, the new rules will enhance the use of unlicensed spectrum as a relatively low-cost, high-capacity short-range backhaul alternative to connect wireless broadband networks and for other wireless applications. These modifications could provide wireless broadband network connectivity over distances up to a mile at data rates of 7Gbps, potentially relieving the need and expense of wiring facilities or using existing facilities with less capability. At the same time the rules for equipment located indoors will remain unchanged, providing regulatory certainty for an emerging family of products that can provide data rates of 7Gbps for applications such as wireless docking of digital devices and distribution of uncompressed video to TV receivers and video displays. In the 1990s, the Commission adopted rules for unlicensed operations over a 7 GHz wide bandwidth, in the 57-64 GHz band. Because of the wide bandwidth, this spectrum is very desirable for high-capacity uses, both in point-to-point fixed operations outdoors (extending the reach of fiber optic networks by providing broadband access to adjacent structures in commercial facilities), and as networking equipment indoors (enabling users to send data between entertainment equipment such as high-definition televisions and video players within the same room, eliminating the need for complex wiring). Responding to a petition by the industry, the Commission increased the power permitted for outdoor operations between fixed points using highly directional antennas, and tied the maximum power permitted to the precision of the antenna beam which determines its potential for causing interference to other users, including to indoor low-power networks. This new rule change would permit outdoor devices to deliver high- capacity communication links over longer distances, enhancing the utility of the unlicensed 57-64 GHz band as a vehicle for broadband. It will also facilitate the use of this unlicensed spectrum as a backhaul alternative in densely-populated areas where 4G and other wireless services are experiencing an ever-increasing need for additional spectrum. The Commission also took additional actions to reduce the regulatory burden on these operations by eliminating a station identification rule that has become unnecessary, and by modifying the measurement units to promote uniformity and consistency. (August 9, 2013) cellular-news.com

Brazil

Telecoms regulator ANATEL is contemplating April or May 2014 as the date for its long-anticipated tender for 700 MHz mobile frequencies. The ANATEL official says that the terms and conditions for the tender are expected to be published by end-December, as Brazil looks to auction off more spectrum to support the rollout of 4G services. However, regulator has reportedly warned that the actual allocation of 700 MHz bandwidth 'could take longer' dependent on the evolution of TV digitization in the country. Brazil has already licensed the use of the 2500 MHz band for 4G (completed in June 2012) and its plans for the 700 MHz band are contingent on the government's efforts to free up spectrum currently assigned to analogue TV operators. However, the plans are accelerating and Brazil now hopes to phase out analogue TV signals over three years, starting 2015. The ANATEL also told journalists at a conference in Rio de Janeiro that the agency is considering moves to amend the deadlines for the deployment target of both 3G and 4G services. Under current plans, 3G coverage should be complete by 2017, while that for Long Term Evolution (LTE) 4G is slated for 2019. The watchdog is considering bringing forward the 3G deadline by one or two years' and shortening the LTE schedule by twelve months. ANATEL also plans to cut the number of public telephones in Brazil by 2016. Although around one million are currently in service, the watchdog has noted a continued decline in their usage due to the rapid rise in alternative mobile and broadband offers. As a result, ANATEL intends to reduce the total to 600,000 by that date, although it plans to ensure that around half of those retained will be able to offer Wi-Fi connectivity via integrated hotspots implemented by the country's public telephony licensees. (August 20, 2013) BNamericas

Telecoms regulator ANATEL has approved new rules governing the provision of fixed telephony services to rural and remote (interior) parts of the country. The new rules, which fall under the remit of the watchdog's 'Regulation on the Provision of the Fixed Switched Telephone Service (STFC) outside the Basic Tariff Area – Rural Service', are designed to cover the regulation and delivery of fixed line services in rural parts of the country, with a focus on providing improved customer care. It is understood that under ANATEL's new rules, a range of pre- and post-paid tariff plans will be made available, with prices to be determined by the regulator. Further, the supply of fixed telephony services in these remote/interior parts of the country will be mandatory for all authorized telcos (i.e. fixed concessionaires) up to a range of 30km from the centre of a town or municipality, while further afield, fixed service providers will need to secure approval from ANATEL for their pricing plans vis-a-vis supporting coverage in these areas. The delivery of services is likely to be made via fixed-wireless technology operating in the 451 MHz to 458 MHz, and 461 MHz to 468 MHz frequency bands. Finally, in order to preserve the economic viability of rural services under the STFC, service providers will be required to bill all calls made by customers living in their entire franchised area as a 'local' call. (August 15, 2013) telegeography.com

Chile

Telecoms regulator SUBTEL has introduced new regulations regarding the handling of complaints from customers. From November this year, companies will have five working days to resolve complaints, compared to the 15 previously allowed, whilst subscribers will be granted a 60-day period to file a claim with their service provider, with a subsequent 30-day allowance to contact SUBTEL if the company does not provide a satisfactory resolution. The Department of Telecommunication has also joined with government service platform ChileAtiende, which offers more than 180 public points of contact for customers to access government services from a range of departments and ministries. Undersecretary for Telecommunications commented on the new rules and the ChileAtiende partnership: 'This way, it will increase service channels and make more efficient the process of claims and delivering a timely response to user requirements. Likewise today announced the new user rights to claim when telcos respond. The fundamental thing is that from November, companies will have five working days to respond to users.' (August 22, 2013) telegeography.com

Argentine

The Jamaican government has announced that the delayed public consultation on an auction for 700MHz spectrum will take place in September. It had been due earlier this year, but based on feedback from an initial information request in April, the Spectrum Management Authority (SMA) and the Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining (MSTEM) announced that they would delay the public consultation indefinitely. No reason was given for the decision at the time, although it was reported that the sticking point was the price being asked. However, the SMA has now confirmed that the public consultation will go ahead next month, without elaborating on what, if any concessions have been agreed on. (August 8, 2013) cellular-news.com

Peru

The government of Peru is planning a new auction of 4G wireless spectrum before the end of this year, with the frequencies to be awarded in the first half of 2014. Details of the spectrum to be offered in the auction have not yet been made public. Last month the Agency for Promotion of Private Investment (ProInversion) completed the sale of two 20-year, 40 MHz (2×20MHz) spectrum licenses in the 1700 MHz and 2100 MHz paired bands (also known as Advanced Wireless Services spectrum) for 4G services. Movistar was awarded the 'A' block of 1700 MHz/2100 MHz frequencies for US$152.23 million more than double the US$63.4 million reserve price whilst Americatel Peru, the Peruvian arm of Chile's Entel, won the 'B' block of Advanced Wireless Services spectrum with a bid of US$105.51 million.
(August 28, 2013) Daily Diario Financiero

Honduras

Telecoms watchdog the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) has launched a public auction CNT-CP003/2013 for the allocation of Long Term Evolution (LTE)-suitable spectrum in the 1700MHz and 2100MHz frequency bands. Under the terms set out by the resolution, the spectrum available for use is listed as follows:

- Block B1: 2×20MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 1710MHz-1730MHz and 2110MHz-2130MHz bands; and
- Block B2: 2×20MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 1730MHz-1750MHz and 2130MHz-2150MHz bands.

Block B3, previously announced as available in a public consultation dated July 22, 2013, is understood to be reserved for state owned telco Hondutel for use after its anticipated privatization, as ordered by the president Porfirio Lobo Sosa. B3 comprises of 2×20MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 1750MHz-1770MHz and 2150MHz-2170MHz bands. The successful bidders are required to establish and operate a national 2G networks in

100% of Honduran municipalities within three years after authorization; their 3G networks must reach 25% territorial coverage in the same period, while the footprint of the 4G networks should cover 15% of the territory by 2016, corresponding to the country's major cities. The tender documentation is available for purchase at CONATEL's offices in San Pedro Sula for US$2,500 fee. According to CONATEL's schedule, interested parties need to register for the auction by September 20, 2013, while the license award will be announced on September 23. In July 2013 CONATEL's President Ricardo Cardona announced that at least ten foreign companies will compete in the country's forthcoming auction for LTE-suitable spectrum this August. One of the international companies reportedly interested in the tender is Telefonica of Spain; local telcos Amnet Honduras (Tigo) and Claro Honduras are also said to be interested in bidding for the spectrum. (August 29, 2013) telegeography.com

Moldova

Telecoms regulator the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (ANRCETI), has announced the launch of a public consultation on the authorization of frequencies in the 1900MHz-1980MHz and 2110MHz-2170MHz spectrum bands for 3G technology use. Under the terms set out by the draft document, the spectrum available for use is listed as follows:

- 2×14.8MHz paired blocks (frequency division duplex, FDD) in the 1964.9MHz-1979.7MHz and 2154.9MHz-2169.7MHz frequency bands; and
- One 5MHz block (time division duplex, TDD) in the 1909.9MHz-1914.9MHz spectrum band.

The ANRCETI has indicated that the assigned frequencies will be authorized for 3G UMTS, and CDMA2000 use. According to a press release, the 3G license will be granted through a public auction open to domestic and foreign companies; however, network operators already holding authorization for spectrum usage in the 1900 MHz and 2100 MHz frequency bands will not be allowed to participate in the tender. The license fee will be determined following the auction; the starting price has been announced as MDL6.2 million (US$494,195). The watchdog has announced a deadline of August 23, 2013 for interested parties to post their comments on the topic, while the 3G tender is scheduled to start on September 16, 2013.
(August 5, 2013) telegeography.com

European Union

EU telecom Chief Neelie Kroes has scrapped a draft proposal to cut wholesale roaming fees by as much as 90 percent. The plan, which would have affected the wholesale prices that telecoms operators pay to access their rivals' networks, was a key element of her efforts to create a single market for telecom services in the 28-country European Union. They are also part of the Commission's push to create jobs, boost the region's competitiveness and help Europe catch up with the United States and Asia in mobile and broadband networks. In an earlier draft of her proposals seen by Reuters, Kroes proposed a cap of 3 cents per minute for voice calls from July, 2014 to June 2022, a 70 percent reduction from the 10 cent cap which came into effect in July this year. She also wanted to slash the wholesale cap for data to 1.5 cents per megabyte from the current limit of 15 cents. Kroes' latest draft plan seen by Reuters does not mention the issue at all. Her spokesman Ryan Heath said: "We've made several technical improvements over the summer that will help us reach our ongoing objective of a real telecoms single market." People familiar with the matter said the chief executives of Orange, Telecom Italia, Telefonica and a senior official from Deutsche Telekom met Kroes late last month to express their concerns about her plans. Kroes will unveil her proposals on September 10. She needs approval from the 28 EU members countries and European Parliament before they can be made into law. (August 28, 2013) in.reuters.com

The European Commission (EC) is reportedly planning the establishment of a single telecommunications regulator for all 28 EU member states. A leaked document from European Commission for Competition Joaquin Almunia claims that a single body is needed in order to effectively remove "national divergences". James Robinson, telecoms regulation analyst at Ovum believes an EU-wide telecoms regulator would face issues with spectrum allocation and differences in national infrastructure: "A move away from the present scenario of 28 individual authorities would pose significant challenges for a pan-European regulator. Firstly, spectrum that is currently auctioned on a national basis could fall under the jurisdiction of this new, super-regulator. Governments would certainly be reluctant to let this happen as such auctions have provided valuable revenue in recent years. "A single regulator would also face issues with the inherent differences of national markets. For example, EU member states are at varying stages with the rollout of next-generation broadband networks. The regulation of these networks also varies considerably: Fiber unbundling has been mandated in Denmark whereas this obligation does not exist in France where next-generation broadband rollout has been relatively slow. When imposing remedies NRAs have taken into account the conditions of their domestic markets and sought to encourage investment in superfast broadband while simultaneously guaranteeing competition. "In Ovum's opinion establishing of a single EU telecoms regulator is a logical proposal given the EC's aim to establish a common market within the region. But doing so would require the EC clearing difficult hurdles such as spectrum auctions and national differences. We will watch with interest, however, when a new draft regulatory framework is published in September to see the proposals in further detail and how they intend to overcome these obstacles." (August 15, 2013) cellular-news.com

A new European Commission study has found that people are flocking to use Wi-Fi internet and the trend is set to continue. 71% of all EU wireless data traffic in 2012 was delivered to Smartphones and tablets using Wi-Fi, possibly rising to 78% by 2016. The results show how the cheaper cost to consumers of using Wi-Fi hotspots is changing behavior, and the study recommends extra spectrum be made available across the EU to support this rising demand. European Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes said: "Wi-Fi is a huge success. It's a win for everybody involved. I will make sure the European Commission helps to spread use of Wi-Fi through extra spectrum and lighter regulation." "Systems where you share your Wi-Fi network with others are a great example of how we can crowd-source a better internet for everyone. Everyone in Europe should be able to benefit from internet when they are away from home and work," Neelie Kroes added. According to the study, wider use of these technologies could allow operators to save tens of billions of Euros as they go about upgrading networks to meet customer demand. Consumers would save money by

using Wi-Fi instead of paying for mobile data when they are actually near a Wi-Fi hotspot. Small cells can also extend network coverage into hard to reach places, including inside large buildings. The study recommends that spectrum from 5150 MHz to 5925 MHz is made available globally for Wi-Fi services. It also recommends continuing to making the 2.6 GHz and the 3.5 GHz bands fully available for mobile use and to consult on future licensing options for 3.5 GHz and other potential new licensed mobile frequency bands.
(August 2, 2013) cellular-news.com

United Kingdom

Telecoms regulator OFCOM has notified the European Commission (EC) of its draft decisions following a review of the country's fixed narrowband market in which it examined the retail and wholesale markets for voice calls. Having initially called for submissions from interested parties on the matter in May 2012, the regulator published a consultation document in September that year on possible approaches to cost modeling for the Network Charge Control for the period 2013-2016. February 2013 then saw another consultation launched in which OFCOM set out our proposals on market definition, significant market power (SMP) and remedies to address its proposed SMP findings. In outlining its draft decision the watchdog said that the fixed voice retail calls markets in the UK, excluding the Hull area, 'remain effectively competitive, as no company holds a position of SMP'. In the Hull area meanwhile OFCOM said that, although KCOM Group's market share remains high both in retail residential and retail business fixed calls, it considers that 'ex post competition law is sufficient to address any competition concerns at the retail level'. As such, the regulator confirmed plans to remove all remaining ex ante regulation in the relevant markets at the retail level. However, fixed line incumbent BT has been marked as holding SMP in the provision of wholesale call origination in the UK, to which end OFCOM is proposing to impose access and non-discrimination remedies, including charge controls, although it has said it will remove BT's obligation to offer carrier pre-selection (CPS) and indirect access (IA) where the telco's retail arm provides the retail access line. In the Hull area, the draft decision cites KCOM as holding SMP in the provision of wholesale call origination, a situation which has prompted OFCOM to impose 'a requirement to provide network access on fair and reasonable terms'; the regulator has, however, said that it does not consider a charge control to be necessary in this instance. Similarly to BT, KCOM's obligation to offer CPS and IA where its retail arm provides the retail access line is to be removed. In setting charge controls for wholesale call origination and termination, OFCOM said it had estimated the forward-looking cost of providing wholesale services based on a Next Generation Network (NGN) model using the internet protocol (IP). The charge controls for the provision of wholesale call termination, meanwhile, will be based on long run incremental costs (LRIC) of providing the service from January 1, 2014. Such an approach, the watchdog has said, will lead to fixed termination rates (FTRs) falling from an average of GBP0.00219 (US$0.0034) per minute in 2012/13 (in 2012/13 prices) to GBP0.034 by January 1, 2014 (in 2012/13 prices). A reduction in the maximum permitted FTR will reportedly be achieved via a charge control to limit rates for BT, and a control for other designated communication providers to offer fixed call termination at a fair and reasonable rate. In relation to wholesale call origination OFCOM has concluded that charge controls should be based on LRIC plus an appropriate mark up for common costs. This approach, it claims, will lead to wholesale call origination rates increasing from an average of GBP0.00245 per minute in 2012/13 (in 2012/13 prices) toGBP0.00400ppm by January 1, 2014 (in 2012/13 prices), before falling to GBP0.372 (in 2012/13 prices) in the final year of the charge control (2015/2016).
(August 22, 2013) telegeography.com

Telecoms regulator OFCOM has announced the launch of a consultation in which it aims to 'develop a better understanding of the role that spectrum accessed on a shared basis could play in the mobile broadband and machine-to-machine (M2M) sectors alongside cleared spectrum bands'. Further, the watchdog has said it is particularly interested in understanding the role that spectrum sharing could play in opening up access to more frequencies and helping to support innovation, while also examining any possible disadvantages, such as making it harder to manage interference between different spectrum users. The four key spectrum sharing topics addressed by the consultation are: supporting future Wi-Fi use; increasing the future supply of spectrum for mobile broadband and M2M using spectrum shared on a geographic basis; using dynamic spectrum access technology to improve sharing between devices; and shorter term access to shared spectrum to support research and development. Meanwhile, although the consultation focuses predominantly on the use of shared spectrum access in the mobile broadband and M2M sectors, OFCOM has recognized that 'this approach also has wider applicability to other sectors' and as such it 'would welcome stakeholder views on other service types where spectrum sharing could potentially deliver significant benefits to citizens and consumers'. Submissions from interested parties must be made before the November 7, 2013 deadline set by OFCOM.
(August 13, 2013) telegeography.com

The average residential UK broadband speed reached 14.7Mbps in May 2013, OFCOM research reveals. OFCOM's latest report into fixed-line residential broadband speeds shows that the average actual UK speed has risen by 22% (2.7Mbps) in the six months to May 2013, and 64% (5.7Mbps) in the year since May 2012. The report also shows that the average broadband speed has more than quadrupled since OFCOM first began publishing speeds data in November 2008 – an increase of 309% (or 11.1Mbps). Take-up of 'superfast'1 services and providers' automatically upgrading customers on to faster broadband packages continued to drive the increase in the national average speed.
(August 12, 2013) legitreviews.com

OFCOM published a research report on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) schemes. ADR schemes act as an independent middleman between communications service providers and their customers when a complaint cannot be resolved. The research looks at awareness of ADR among consumers. OFCOM introduced regulations in 2011 (under General Condition 14) requiring communications providers to ensure that consumers, who have an outstanding complaint of over eight weeks, are aware of their right to use an approved ADR scheme, free of charge, to settle their complaint. The purpose of the research is to inform OFCOM's understanding of the effect of these regulations and decide whether further action is required to ensure their effectiveness in the future. In parallel, OFCOM's Own-initiative General Condition 14 Monitoring and Enforcement Programme regarding Complaints Handling has been extended for a further six months. Further information can be found here. (August 9, 2013) ofcom.org.uk

OFCOM has published a consultation on the role that spectrum sharing could play in meeting the future capacity demands of mobile broadband and machine-to-machine communications. Spectrum sharing is the principle of allowing multiple users to exploit the same band of spectrum – rather than it being allocated to a dedicated single user. While not suitable in all circumstances, a key benefit of this approach is that spectrum, the vital but finite resource that underpins wireless communications services, can be used more efficiently. OFCOM is seeking to understand how enabling more spectrum shared on licensed, licence-exempt and a dynamic-access basis could increase spectrum availability in the future and encourage innovation. As part of this, OFCOM is considering how to best sustain the important role Wi-Fi is already playing in providing wireless connectivity. (August 9, 2013) ofcom.org.uk

France

Telecoms watchdog ARCEP has opened up a consultation into the future of a handful of wireless in the local loop (WiLL) concessions issued to operators based in overseas territories Reunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique. The licenses, which encompass spectrum in the 3.4GHz-3.6GHz band, were granted to start-up firms WLL Antilles-Guyane and WLL Reunion (both July 2000) and established operator Societe Reunionnaise du Radiotelephone (SRR, December 2009); all concession are due to expire in September 2015. Submissions by interested parties are welcomed by the regulator by September 15, 2013. (August 1, 2013) telegeography.com

Germany

¬Telecoms regulator may seek to reclaim some of the radio spectrum held by O2 and E-Plus if their recently announced merger is to go ahead. It had already been speculated that they may be required to surrender one of their 3G licenses, although this is the first indication that the regulator is looking at the matter. Citing letters that it has seen, the newspaper noted that the regulator is looking at whether it should enforce the rules that under "extreme cases" it can withdraw the spectrum allocated in the 3G auctions back in 2000. The regulator has given the two companies two weeks to provide more details about their planned merger. If consummated, the merged company would overtake T-Mobile and Vodafone to become the largest network by customers in the country. (August 5, 2013) Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

Italy

The European Commission (EC) has raised questions over the handling of broadband pricing methodology in Italy by telecoms watchdog AGCOM, claiming that the current figures are outdated and could cramp the market's ability to decide prices in the local telecoms sector. In a statement released earlier this week, the EC said it had invoked the European Union's review mechanism, adding that it intends to discuss how to amend the proposal with AGCOM over the next three months. In July, the Italian watchdog tentatively approved lower 2013 fees for rivals who rent space on the fixed line copper network of former monopoly Telecom Italia (TI). The move was cheered by the telco's rivals, but drew sharp criticism from TI, which said it would reduce its annual income by EUR110.0 million (US$146.2 million). Following the decision, TI said it wanted favorable regulatory conditions before moving forward with a previously announced plan to spin off its fixed line network. (August 14, 2013) telegeography.com

Poland

Telecoms regulator UKE has launched public consultation regarding the sale of spectrum in the 800MHz and 2600MHz bands. UKE plans to offer up five blocks of 2×5MHz spectrum in the 800MHz band (791MHz-816MHz and 832MHz-857MHz) and seven blocks of 2×10MHz in the 2600MHz range (2500MHz-2570MHz and 2620MHz-2690MHz). The licenses will be valid for 15 years and cover the entire territory of Poland. Draft documentation for the auction currently limits bidders to a maximum of two blocks of 800MHz frequencies and three of 2600MHz. However, successful bidders that already use frequencies in the 800MHz or 900MHz ranges will be not be allowed to exceed a combined total spectrum holding of 40MHz in those bands. Bidding will be conducted as a simultaneous multiple round ascending auction, and the UKE has proposed a reserve price of PLN250 million (USD78.47 million) per block of 800MHz airwaves, and PLN50million per 2600MHz block. The 800MHz block on offer was reduced from 2×30MHz (791MHz-821MHz, 832MHz-862MHz) to 2×25MHz following a settlement between the Polish government and CDMA operator Sferia, which became legally binding on 5 August and under which Sferia was awarded 2×5MHz in return for withdrawing its claims against the state at the International Court of Arbitration. Sferia is not permitted to bid for further 800MHz spectrum in the upcoming auction. (August 23, 2013) telegeography.com

Belgium

Belgium's telecoms regulator, BIPT has fined Telenet Tecteo Bid Co which acquired a fourth 3G licenses in 2011 after it failed to launch its 3G network by the January 15, 2013 as was required under the terms of its license. The license holder is a joint venture between Telenet and Tecteo, who are Belgian cable network operators and jointly bid for the 3G license. The regulator said that the delay deprived possible other interested parties from the radio spectrum frequencies. As already announced by BIPT, a fine is imposed on the company which has 6 months to put an end to the infringement. Additional sanctions could follow. (August 8, 2013) cellular-news.com

Portugal

The European Commission has suspended a proposal from the Portuguese telecoms regulator (ANACOM) concerning regulatory remedies for the fixed termination market as it has serious concerns on the scope of the proposed access obligation. The Commission said that it is particularly worried that the lack of a comprehensive access obligation, including for instance interconnection through an IP network -- which is standard in most other Member States -- would not allow for a swift resolution of access problems and could leave consumers unable to make calls to other networks. ANACOM's proposal could also make it possible for fixed operators to refuse or delay access to a part of their networks in an attempt to eliminate their direct competitors from the market. Neelie Kroes, European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Agenda, said: "Consumers must be able to make the calls they wish. For this reason, where we have a monopoly situation like in fixed termination markets, we need to guarantee access to the network for all operators and all consumers." Under EU telecom rules, the access obligation requires an operator to interconnect its respective network with that of any other operator. ANACOM proposes to impose this obligation for traditional ways of interconnection but not for IP interconnection. The Portuguese regulator now has three months to work with the European Commission and the Body of European telecoms regulators (BEREC) to find a solution to this case. In the meantime, implementation of the proposal is suspended. (August 13, 2013) cellular-news.com

Norway

The Norwegian Post and Telecommunications Authority (NPT) consult on the auction rules for the auction of the digital dividend spectrum (800 MHz band) and spectrum in the 900 and 1800MHz bands. Furthermore, NPT consults on the proposed terms and conditions of draft licenses. The deadline for consultation responses is September 30, 2013. The Government announced in September 2009 that the 800 MHz band would be allocated to the provision of modern mobile communication services and mobile broadband services. 800MHz spectrum, commonly referred to as digital dividend, consists of frequencies freed up after transition from analogue to digital TV broadcasting. The last analogue TV transmitter in Norway was turned off in December 2009. In March 2013 the Government published a press release stating that 100 % of the households in Norway should have access to a basic broadband service within the next couple of years. The 800MHz spectrum is key to fulfilling this objective as spectrum in this frequency band has superior coverage reach and is therefore ideal for coverage in rural areas. Access to 800MHz spectrum is therefore important to ensure widespread availability of a basic broadband service across Norway. The Government has assigned a coverage obligation to one of the 800MHz licenses. This obligation must be fulfilled within five years after the award of the license and the licensee is required to offer a service with a minimum average access speed of 2Mbps. The Ministry of Transport and Communications (the Ministry) has assigned the task of allocating the resources in the 800 MHz band to NPT. The available resources in the 900MHz and the 1800MHz bands will be assigned in the same auction procedure. (August 15, 2013) eng.npt.no

Iceland

Telecoms regulator the Post and Telecommunication Administration (PTA) has launched a public consultation on a draft decision to reduce wholesale mobile termination rates (MTRs) from the current rate of ISK4.00 (US$0.03) per minute to ISK1.64 (US$0.01) per minute for all of the country's wireless operators from January 2014. The decision is based on the implementation of a pure Long Run Incremental Costs (LRIC) model, in accordance with recommendations by the European Union (EU) and the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA). The regulator has invited all interested parties to submit their comments by 5 September 2013.
(August 23, 2013) telegeography.com

Kosovo

Government Privatization Committee (GPC) has agreed to postpone the deadline for the privatization of a 75% stake in national fixed line incumbent Post and Telecommunications Kosovo (PTK) until September 30, 2013. ACP Axos Capital consortium was selected as the winning bidder for the telco in April this year, agreeing to pay EUR277 million (US$367.9 million). GPC notes that its decision to postpone the transaction was the result of its rejection of additional requests proposed by the consortium which were not part of the original bidding package. GPC clarified that no changes would be made to the deal: 'This postponement was approved only after GPC was ensured that the winning consortium will sign the share purchase agreement in the form and content provided in the bidding documents.'
(August 16, 2013) telegeography.com

Czech Republic

The Czech telecommunications regulator, CTU, has unveiled a new bidding process for mobile radio frequencies to allow the upgrade of current wireless data networks and a possible entry of a new cellular operator into the local market. "We're putting aside dedicated bandwidth to attract a new mobile company to offer its services here," CTU spokesman Frantisek Malina said. The regulator will launch the frequency auction in November and bidders have until the end of September to register for it, the CTU said. The CTU said it will offer 800 MHZ frequencies exclusively to new operators to boost competitiveness on the market, which is now dominated by three operators: the local units of Telefonica, Deutsche Telekom and Vodafone Group. All operators, including the incumbents, will be able to bid for 1,800 and 2,600 MHZ bandwidths which are suitable for a country-wide roll-out of new high-speed mobile networks with long-term evolution technology, or LTE, the successor to third-generation, or 3G, mobile data services. In March the CTU, led by Chairman Jaromír Novák, suspended its earlier bandwidth frequency auction when bids climbed to above 20 billion Czech Koruna ($1.03 billion), or nearly three times the minimum bid of CZK7.4 billion set at the start of the auction. At the time the regulator said that such prices were too high and would most likely hamper the entry of a new operator and costs for upgraded cellular networks would most likely be passed on to local customers. In recent months two local telecoms companies – PPF Mobile Services and Dial Telecom – have expressed interest in entering the local cellular market and bidding for the offered mobile radio frequencies.
(August 23, 2013) globaltelecomsbusiness.com

The Czech Telecommunications Office (CTU) has announced that its LTE auction will begin mid November 2013. The Czech regulator abandoned its efforts to hold the auction in March this year, when bids spiraled out of control. The regulator is auctioning 800MHz, 1800MHz and 2.6GHz spectrum. Entries to bid can be made until September 30, 2013, the CTU said. It added that it plans to grant the licenses at the beginning of 2014. A new entrant will be able to reserve spectrum as part of the new auction conditions, joining Telefonica, T-Mobile and Vodafone in the market. In the abandoned March auction, PPF Mobile Services was confirmed as a bidder for the spectrum. "The objectives of the auction are clear," said Jaromir Novak, chairman of the board. "We strive to develop new services, mobile broadband internet access and encourage competition, creating the conditions for the entry of another operator with nationwide operations, and ensure efficient use of spectrum." In March the CTU was forced to abort the auction after bids had already topped CZK20bn (€780m) and were still rising. The regulator decided to rein in spend to stop the charges being passed on to consumers. "Such excessive prices of the auctioned frequencies would have to negatively translate into excessive charges for fast mobile internet," the CTU said at the time. "We therefore consider it necessary to step in and prevent future negative consequences for the customers." (August 16, 2013) telecoms.com

Estonia

The Estonian Technical Surveillance Authority (ETSA) has granted mobile network operator Elisa spectrum in the 800MHz band following a frequency auction. With the cellco saying that it will utilize its new spectrum to offer LTE-based services, it claims to have already deployed 4G infrastructure nationwide, and it expects to launch commercial services as soon as its new concession is formally awarded. In April 2012 Elisa opened an LTE network in the 800MHz band in collaboration with the Estonian Broadband Development Foundation (EBDF) as part of 'EstWIN', the project undertaken by the Estonian government aimed at making 100Mbps internet services accessible to every Estonian citizen by 2015. That month, in launching the network in Kobela, Voruuma and the town of Haapsalu in Laane county, Mr. Seppanen suggested that Elisa would look to the 800MHz band for its LTE deployment as it offered a faster route to extending coverage. In May 2013, however, the first batch of 800MHz frequencies offered by the government was awarded to rival operator EMT. (August 9, 2013) telegeography.com

Nigeria

Nigeria ended June 2013 with a total of 120.36 million fixed and mobile telephone subscribers, up from 117.28 million three months earlier and 113.21 million at the start of the year, according to the latest statistics from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC). GSM mobile operators accounted for 97.55%, or 117.41 million, of the country's total telephony user base at the end of the second quarter of 2013 (up from 109.83 million users six months earlier), followed by CDMA mobile networks with 2.13%, or 2.57 million (down from 2.6%, or 2.95 million, at 31 December 2012). Fixed and CDMA fixed-wireless operators claimed just 0.32%, or 382,678, of the total telephony base, down from 428,768 users in the space of six months. According to the NCC, the largest mobile operator by subscribers remains South Africa-based MTN by some margin, with around 55.24 million users on its GSM network at the end of June 2013, up 7.7% quarter-on-quarter and accounting for over 46% of Nigeria's total GSM and CDMA wireless subscriber base. Its nearest rival Globacom had less than half that figure (25.02 million subscribers) at the same date.
(August 14, 2013) telegeography.com

Tanzania

Growth in Tanzania's mobile market remains slow for a country with penetration rate of less than 60%, according to a study, which puts the blame on poor rural phone coverage. Although some operators plan to invest in network deployment in rural areas, Business Monitor International (BMI) cautioned that low ARPUs and the high cost of network maintenance due to poor social infrastructure are major disincentives to expansion. Furthermore, there is a strong case to pursue revenue growth by providing advanced data services in urban areas, as opposed to rural roll-out, to offset the impact of declining revenues from traditional voice services. BMI reported that the mobile sector grew by just 3.25% in 2012, compared to 22.3% in 2011, owing to inactive SIM disconnections by some operators. However, mobile ARPU appreciated for the seventh consecutive quarter, after a growth of 9.7% q-o-q in Q412. M-commerce users have continued to expand, with M-PESA recording 5mn users and total monthly transaction value of around TZS1.3trn in April 2013. The fixed-line sector remains resilient despite fixed to mobile substitution, with growth of 4.9% in 9M12. Tanzania also dropped two places to 16th position this quarter on BMI telecoms Risk/Reward Ratings (RRR) table for Sub-Saharan Africa. Although Tanzania's aggregate score of 40.8 was an improvement from the previous quarter, the country was outperformed by other countries in the region this quarter. Tanzania's weakest rating is in the industry rewards category, reflecting a sharp slowdown in mobile subscriptions growth and downgrade to our five-year forecast.
(August 14, 2013) cellular-news.com

Kenya

Kenya's Safaricom has won a long running legal dispute over the price it paid for its 3G license back in 2007. The dispute stems from a later decision by the telecoms regulator to award 3G licenses to its rivals, Airtel and Telkom at a lower fee. Safaricom paid Sh2.2 billion (US$25 million) for its license, but the other networks paid Sh800 million (US$10 million) for their licenses. Under the terms of the settlement, which was agreed earlier this year and only revealed in the company's 2013 annual report, Safaricom will reduce its overall license fee payments over the next three years to recover the difference. The regulator had argued that the later licenses are technically different and so the prices could be set at a lower rate to stimulate competition in the market. It not unusual for late entrants to be offered a lower price on licenses as they have lost the early mover advantage in the market. Safaricom has launched legal action over the license fee dispute in late 2011. However, the two sides settled out of court earlier this year. (August 1, 2013) cellular-news.com

Russia

The Communications and Press Ministry has abandoned a proposal to remove national roaming, agreeing with mobile phone operators and analysts that the add-on options that customers can turn on while roaming already provide sufficient savings. State Duma deputies and market analysts reviewed the matter and came to a conclusion that the existing pricing is competitive enough. The market will regulate itself, Denis Sverdlov, advisor to Communications and Press Minister Nikolai Nikiforov, said at a round-table discussion Thursday. The proposal to remove national roaming mobile phone connectivity in a location different from the region where the service is registered was put forward by Nikiforov as one of the development goals to be achieved by 2018. National roaming is "some sort of tax on travel that you, business people, pay when you travel between regions in the same country, within the same economic space," Nikiforov told experts at a May meeting. Vitaly Solonin, head of the wireless department at the IT and telecom research company J'son & Partners Consulting, said the existing add-on options for tariffs already had the effect that the ministry wanted to achieve. The amendments put forward to the federal law on telecommunications require mobile operators to notify customers with a text message each time they enter a new region. The text message must include information about options that reduce roaming costs. Mobile phone penetration in Russia reached 160% last year, with most people having more than one phone subscription, according to the data from AC&M research group. Earlier this year, Vedomosti reported that SIM cards sold from portable kiosks concentrated around train stations and tourist areas account for up to 15% of all mobile subscriptions sold in Russia annually.
(August 26, 2013) themoscowtimes.com

Azerbaijan

Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies (MCIT) plans to allocate mobile spectrum in the 790MHz-862MHz band to mobile operators for the provision of LTE services. While no timeframe for the allocation of 4G frequencies has yet been given, the MCIT said the spectrum first needs to be freed up from broadcasting services through the switchover from analogue to digital TV. TeleGeography's GlobalComms Database notes that the country's mobile market leader Azercell launched an LTE network in the 1800MHz frequency band in May 2012, with commercial mobile broadband services made available the following month. At launch, coverage was present in the downtown area of Baku, including the Seaside National Park. (August 12, 2013) News Agency Trend

Australia

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) published a consultation paper in which it invites comments regarding a proposed program for the monitoring and reporting of broadband performance. Under the regulator's plans it envisages testing data transfer rates and other indicators of broadband service quality experienced by 'a representative sample of consumers in real world conditions'. Results from these tests would then be made available to both consumers and service providers on a periodical basis. In outlining its plans the ACCC said that it believed such a program would 'provide significant benefits for both providers and consumers of broadband services in Australia'. Consumers, it has suggested, would be able to ensure they choose the right service for their needs, while operators would be able to compare their services against those of their competitors and market their products 'in a way which reflects investments in infrastructure and capacity'. Submissions to the consultation paper must be made by the September 13, 2013 deadline.
(August 16, 2013) telegeography.com

T-Mobile Austria has filed a challenge to change the terms of the country's forthcoming 4G spectrum auction. The company has objected to the auction as it says that some of the radio spectrum being offered for sale is still in use by the company. Some of the spectrum is being made available to bidders from 2016, but T-Mobile argues that its license for them doesn't expire until 2019. A T-Mobile Austria spokesman also confirmed that the complaint had been filed. The company had already secured a review of the way radio spectrum was being allocated following the merger of the local Orange and Three networks. That matter has now referred the issue to the European Court of Justice.
(August 5, 2013) Reuters

Japan

Japan's telecoms regulator the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications has granted a temporary license to local broadband operator eAccess to trial a 1700MHz Long Term Evolution (LTE) network in the city of Takamatsu, situated in the Kagawa prefecture. According to a press release, the company has already been assigned 2×5MHz paired blocks in the 1744.9MHz-1749.9MHz/1839.9MHz-1844.9MHz bands and 2×15MHz paired blocks in the 1749.9MHz-1764.9MHz/1844.9MHz-1859.9MHz bands to conduct its field trials, which will run until mid-October 2013. eAccess plans to use carrier aggregation (CA) technology to achieve downlink speeds of 150Mbps and 300Mbps with 2×2 multiple-input and multiple-output (MIMO) configuration and 4×4MIMO configurations, respectively.
(August 27, 2013) telegeography.com

Thailand

Telecoms regulator is considering a plan that would let the state-owned networks and their private concessions continue to operate a GSM network while it prepares an auction of the spectrum they are currently using. The two private networks, True Move and Digital Phone are due to shut-down their GSM networks next month, but have still not managed to migrate all their customers over to replacement services. The regulator, the NBTC is considering a plan to grant them a one-year leave to continue operating on their 1800MHz spectrum. The spectrum is due to be sold at auction next September, which gives the networks time to migrate their customers before surrendering the spectrum to the winners of the 2014 auction. However, the networks would have to operate the service for the next year on a not-for-profit basis, with any profits being passed directly to the government. They would also be required to maintain a minimum level of payments to the state-owned networks they lease capacity from during the transition phase. The NBTC aims to pass the proposal by the end of this month.
(August 9, 2013) cellular-news.com

Telecoms regulator, the NBTC has approved plans to auction off blocks of 1800MHz spectrum next September for use by LTE based services. The auction will take place in September 2014, with the winners announced a month later and the licenses formally awarded in November 2014. The spectrum being sold off is currently used by True Move and AIS under their concession agreements with CAT Telecom. Those concessions expire next month and the spectrum returns to the regulator, although it has drafted a rule permitting the networks to continue to use the spectrum for another year as they migrate the customers over to their own 3G networks. The regulator plans to issue the final tender details for the auction early next year, although it faces a possible legal challenge from CAT Telecom which is unwilling to surrender the spectrum. (August 5, 2013) cellular-news.com

Thailand's National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) has approved an auction plan for 1800 MHz spectrum. The regulator plans to hold the 4G auction in September 2014 with the winners officially announced one month after the auction. The licenses will then be awarded in early November. The spectrum is currently in use by TrueMove and Digital Phone Co (DPC) on a concession from CAT Telecom. The concessions will expire next month and the spectrum will be returned to the regulator. A consulting team will start working on the details for the spectrum auction next month and provide finalized conclusions in February. Meanwhile, the regulator will draft an information memorandum for the 1800MHz auction in December, with the finished version due next March.
(August 5, 2013) The Bangkok Post

China

China's State Council has issued a new 'Broadband China' strategy to develop the nation's broadband networks; including establishing new targets for coverage and timetables to achieve those goals. Under the new plan, coverage, access speeds and subscriptions were set new targets for 2013, 2015 and 2020. Fixed broadband household coverage should reach 40% by the end of the year, 50% by 2015 and 70% by 2020, whilst urban coverage is set to grow to 55%/65% in 2013/2015; whilst 20% and 30% of rural homes should be covered in 2013 and 2015 respectively. Augmenting China's fixed broadband networks, 3G and 4G wireless coverage is set to reach 25%, 32.5% and 85% of households by the target dates. Fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) networks are set to pass 130 million homes by 2013, 200 million by 2015 and 300 million by 2020. In terms of access speeds, the Council intends to make 20Mbps broadband available to 80% of urban users by the end of 2013, increasing to all urban users by 2015. By 2020 however, the government aims to increase that speed to 50Mbps, although 100Mbps and 1Gbps speeds are set to become available to a minority in 'developed cities' in 2015 and 2020 respectively. Rural broadband accesses will lag someway behind cities however, with 4Mbps due to be made available to 85% of users by end-2013, increasing to all rural connections by 2015, and expanding to 12Mbps by 2020. Meanwhile the Council aims to reach 210 million subscriptions to fixed broadband products by the end of the year, split 160 million/50 million between urban/rural users, including 30 million FTTH subscribers and in addition to 330 million 3G/4G users. This target will grow to 270 million by 2015, with a 200 million/70 million split, 70 million FTTH users and 450 million 3G/4G customers. The council's 2020 target envisages a total of 400 million fixed broadband users and 1.2 billion 3G/4G users. (August 19, 2013) telegeography.com

Taiwan

National Communications Commission (NCC) will review the initial public offering (IPO) carried out by Taiwan Broadband Communications (TBC) in Singapore this past May in order to determine whether the operator violated the Cable Radio and Television Act. Local press reports have claimed that TBC may have exploited a loophole through the IPO in order to help attract funds from Chinese investors, a move which in turn has been claimed could undermine Taiwan's national security. It is understood that NCC chief secretary has said that the IPO should have been reviewed and approved by the Commission before it was held, and the regulator is reportedly planning to pose a number of questions regarding the offering to TBC's management. (August 26, 2013) The Taipei Times

Having concluded an initial review of the seven companies looking to take part in the country's upcoming auction of LTE-suitable spectrum, Taiwan's National Communication Commission (NCC) has said it now expects the sale process to be concluded in November. All applicants received high enough scores to qualify for the bidding process, which will begin on September 3, 2013. At the start of July 2013 it was confirmed that the companies that would vie for LTE-suitable spectrum included all four of the country's 3G licensees Chunghwa Telecom, Taiwan Mobile, Far EasTone and Asia Pacific Telecom. The other three companies that will participate in the auction are: Foxconn Group subsidiary Ambit Microsystems; a mobile telecom company newly established by the Ting Hsin International Group; and another new company set up by the Shinkong Group. In total the government will make available a total of 270MHz of spectrum in the 700MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands, and having outlined the starting prices for the 4G-suitable spectrum in May 2013, should the government sell all the frequencies at the lowest price, it would raise some TWD35.9 billion (US$1.2 billion) in total. (August 14, 2013) Focus Taiwan News Channel

National Communications Commission (NCC) has revealed that it will hold an examination session today for those companies seeking to acquire a 4G concession. The regulator will use the session to help decide which would-be bidders are qualified to take part in the auction that begins on September 2, 2013. Following the examination of those companies that have submitted application to take part in the sale process, it is understood that the NCC will announce a final list of qualified bidders on August 15, with an auction rehearsal to take place on August 20. At the start of July 2013 it was confirmed that seven companies would vie for LTE-suitable spectrum, including all four of the country's 3G licensees Chunghwa Telecom, Taiwan Mobile, Far EasTone and Asia Pacific Telecom. The other three companies looking to participate in the auction are: Foxconn Group subsidiary Ambit Microsystems; a mobile telecom company newly established by the Ting Hsin International Group; and another new company set up by the Shinkong Group. In total the government will make available a total of 270MHz of spectrum in the 700MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands, and having outlined the starting prices for the 4G-suitable spectrum in May 2013, should the government sell all the frequencies at the lowest price, it would raise some TWD35.9 billion (US$1.2 billion) in total. (August 12, 2013) China Post

Myanmar

Parliament has approved a bill to boost the country's telecoms sector. The bill is aimed at clearing the way for more private sector firms to enter the telecoms market, with foreign companies now able to hold a communications license for a maximum 20 years. The new bill is part of the government's scheme designed to boost teledensity to 23% in fiscal year 2013-14, 50% in 2014-15 and between 75%-80% in 2015-16. (August 28, 2013) Xinhua

India

In a bid to check monopolistic practices of content distribution companies in television, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has floated a consultation paper on restriction of their role. Distribution agencies or 'content aggregators' usually bundle channels of one or more broadcasters and strike distribution deals with cable operators and Direct-to-Home (DTH) service providers on behalf of the broadcasters. The regulator said that the distribution business of 75% of the total pay TV market was controlled by four agencies. "The channels being distributed by these authorized distribution agencies include almost all the popular pay TV channels. These agencies wield substantial negotiating power, which can be and is often misused, leading to several market distortions," it said in a statement. TRAI said besides the multi-system operators and cable operators who have complained against the practice, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has also asked the watchdog to look into their roles. The consultation paper suggests that the broadcaster, and not its distribution agent, will publish the reference interconnect offer and enter into distribution agreements with platform operators, such as cable and DTH companies. The reference interconnect offer defines the prices at which broadcasters make their channels available to platforms. It also said that these distribution agents should not be allowed to change the composition of bouquets formed by the broadcasters. Also, if these agencies represent more than one broadcaster, it will not link offerings of the broadcasters they represent. TRAI said its proposals were an attempt to amend the regulations in a manner that clearly demarcates the role and responsibilities of the content distribution agencies for the revenue share deals that they strike with DTH and cable players. (August 7, 2013) thehindubusinessline.com

Sector regulator the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has issued new Unified License (UL) guidelines in a bid to prepare the sector for future growth and clarify a number of contentious issues. The Economic Times writes that the UL rules allow for cellcos entering into roaming agreements, although companies are forbidden from signing up subscribers in areas where they do not hold the requisite license. The new guidelines also ban cross-holding, replacing previous rules that allowed a licensee or its promoters to hold up to 10% equity in another cellco in the same service area. The decision may force UK-backed Vodafone to offload its roughly 5% stake in rival operator Bharti Airtel. UL licensees will be required to pay a yearly fee of 8% of annual gross revenues. In terms of implementing the new norms, incumbent operators will migrate to the UL standards upon the renewal of their concessions, whilst the likes of Sistema Shyam TeleServices (SSTL), Videocon and Uninor that recently repurchased their licenses will shift to UL immediately. (August 5, 2013) telegeography.com

India's Telecom Commission, the nation's highest decision making body in the Ministry of Communications and IT (MoCIT) is set to create two new regulatory agencies to coordinate security-related initiatives in the sector, the Economic times reports, citing an internal missive from the Department of Telecommunication (DoT). The Commission is expected to approve the formation of a Telecom Security Directorate (TSD) and a National Telecom Network Security Coordination Board (NTNSCB). The former will coordinate and execute security policy, whilst the latter will be an oversight body that will monitor the implementation of policy and suggest appropriate amendments. The creation of the two bodies is intended to minimize overlapping jurisdictions, and consolidate the relevant responsibilities of the MoCIT, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the PM's office. The creation of the two authorities may serve to further complicate the management of security policy in the telecom sector, however. The creation of multiple regulatory bodies with similar roles has not served India well in the past: the often-turbulent relationship between the DoT and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has led to prolonged delays in determining and implementing policy, whilst muddying the waters and creating regulatory uncertainty for providers. (August 1, 2013) telegeography.com

Javaid Akhtar Malik
Director Regulatory Affairs
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

HOW TO REAP THE ECONOMIC REWARDS OF DIGITIZATION

By Bahjat El-Darwiche
Partner
Booz & Company

Milind Singh
Principal
Booz & Company

As countries struggle with the prolonged global slowdown, one of the most promising means of boosting economic activity is the increasing use of digital technologies. The mass adoption of digital applications through connected services and devices, known as digitization, is proving to be a powerful means of delivering services, highly disruptive of multiple industries, and a wealth and jobs creator. In 2011, digitization added $193 billion to world economic output and created 6 million jobs. In the same year in the Middle East and North Africa alone, digitization resulted in an extra $16.5 billion in output and nearly 380,000 new jobs.

Digitization is not, however, a panacea for economic woes. Rather, the closer you examine digitization, the more you discover the subtle differences in its impact across countries and sectors. For policymakers, perhaps tempted to push digitization across the board, this more detailed level of understanding is critical. It allows them to shape policies to maximize the benefits of digitization.

What is striking is that advanced economies enjoy large economic benefits from digitization, such as growth and productivity, but gain less in terms of jobs. In Germany, increased digitization provided approximately 8.7% of the rate of change in GDP between 2010 and 2011, but just 7.7% of new jobs. In some sectors, such as financial services and manufacturing, developed economies can even lose jobs.

By contrast, emerging markets have significant employment gains from digitization, but advance less in terms of output and productivity. We calculate that 94% of all the jobs created by digitization in 2011 were in developing economies—but these countries, where the vast majority of the world's population lives, took just 71% of the increase in economic growth.

The best way for policymakers to channel digitization's impact to their advantage is to become digital market makers. This means more involvement in the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector. Many policymakers are presently engaged in

Emerging markets have significant employment gains from digitization, but advance less in terms of output and productivity

The best way for policymakers to channel digitization's impact to their advantage is to become digital market makers

Policymakers have to examine the ICT ecosystem as a whole to develop the capabilities and enablers for sector digitization plans to succeed

policy setting and regulatory design. By contrast, as digital market makers they will have to foster digital economic activities that benefit enterprises and society, and that have a clear competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

In the role of digital market makers, policymakers should concentrate on three areas: drawing up plans for the digitization of target sectors, promoting the capabilities and enablers required for these plans to succeed, and animating the broader ICT ecosystem to encourage the uptake and usage of digital applications.

Sector plans depend on policymakers prioritizing those economic activities that provide national competitive advantage and knowing how digitization bolsters that competitive position. That also means understanding trade-offs between productivity and jobs, and mitigating any potential reduction in employment. In recent years, as financial services and manufacturing in the U.S. became more productive, they lost jobs because they transferred support activities to Mexico. Between 2002 and 2009, the net impact of this trend was a 6% drop in employment in U.S. tradable sectors and a 15.2% growth in such jobs in Mexico. This means that as manufacturing digitizes further, its productivity will improve and jobs could be lost. In Singapore, the approach is to accelerate digitization to make key sectors more competitive, but also to enhance social protection.

Policymakers have to examine the ICT ecosystem as a whole to develop the capabilities and enablers for sector digitization plans to succeed. Looking at ICT in terms of basic infrastructure and connectivity will not suffice. Instead, by grasping the ICT ecosystem's multiple layers, governments can decide whether they want to be developers, financiers, or facilitators of capabilities.

In areas where there are gaps in the incentive structure for private companies to invest, policymakers may have to get involved in the market as developers. In places where the risks to the private sector are excessive, the government can provide finance for capabilities. As a facilitator of capabilities, the government can regulate the ICT ecosystem and can promote digital services, such as through open data initiatives that allow developers to access non-sensitive government databases.

These three capability building roles of developer, financier, and facilitator are more effective if three enablers are in place: capital, leading edge thinking, and digital infrastructure. Venture capital is particularly important as it has a higher appetite for risk than traditional financing. Unfortunately, the Middle East currently only has a handful of venture capitalists. The region is doing better in terms of research, thanks to investments that seek to create top rank institutions. Saudi Arabia has the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology's research centers and the technology incubator in the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology

The third, and final, aspect of digital market making is jump-starting and monitoring the ICT ecosystem so that government agencies, enterprises, and consumers adopt digitization. To achieve this policymakers have to be able to measure the effect of their policies, which is a challenge as there is no accepted standard. They will need to agree on how to measure digitization so that there is consistency across sectors. Evidence-based successes will encourage consumers and citizens to adopt digital technologies.

By understanding the varied effects of digitization, policymakers can use digitization to acquire national competitive advantage. This is particularly important for the Middle East as it seeks to create jobs, broaden the economic base, and bring more women and young people into the economy. Policymakers cannot sit back. They must actively build digital markets if their countries are to enjoy the rewards of digitization.

SATELLITE NEWS

New SatSleeve Unveiled By Thuraya

Thuraya Telecommunications Company launched a new edition of the Thuraya SatSleeve, the world's first and only satellite adaptor for the iPhone®. The new release not only allows users to make phone calls and to send SMS messages via Thuraya's satellite network, it also enables them access to emails, as well as popular social media and instant messaging apps such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and WhatsApp among others. Thuraya SatSleeve users can now post news updates, chat via messaging apps with their contacts as well as send and receive email from the most remote locations in satellite mode. The device can be used across Thuraya's extensive satellite network with coverage in over 140 countries.Thuraya SatSleeve enables users to enjoy ubiquitous coverage even in the most remote environments. The device also serves as an important mobile communications device and security backup for users that are operating in remote locations and in areas where natural or man-made disasters can render terrestrial communications unavailable. The SatSleeve can be used across the Thuraya network either with a Thuraya SIM card or with a standard GSM SIM card available from 356 worldwide GSM operators across more than 160 countries. The Thuraya SatSleeve is available from all Thuraya Service Partners from September 10.

Italian regions provide incentives for satellite internet

Lombardy, Campania and Piedmont are the first three Italian regions to provide incentives for the use of satellite internet services. Lombardy has set aside EUR 200,000 to supply companies in the provinces of Monza and Brianza with a EUR 200 voucher per beneficiary, until 31 December 2013. The province of Avellino in the Campania region has earmarked a fund of EUR 1 million until 31 January 2014 for the delivery of up to EUR 500 per recipient for companies, organizations and associations. The Piedmont Region is providing up to EUR 400 per individual beneficiary, out of a total fund of EUR 396,415, expiring on 31 October 2013.

Ellies to launch SA satellite internet

South African-based electronic company Ellies Holdings will be releasing satellite internet for South Africa in an attempt to make broadband more accessible in the country. The service, aimed to be launched later in 2013, will have a connection speed capacity of up to 10mgps, 39 times faster than the average dial-up connection of 1 to 4mgps.Satellite internet is known to provide connection to rural areas and communities in emerging markets.The offering will be priced at ZAR500 (US$49) per month, which falls into the same category as other ADSL deals in South Africa.

Eutelsat, Es'hailSat joint satellite on course for 25.5° East

Eutelsat Communications and Es'hailSat have announced that their jointly owned EUTELSAT 25B/Es'hail 1 satellite was successfully launched by an Ariane 5 rocket and is on course for geostationary orbit. Lift-off of the Ariane rocket carrying the 6.3 tonne satellite took place at 20.30 UTC. EUTELSAT 25B/Es'hail 1's solar panels were deployed within four hours of separation from the launch vehicle and preparations are underway for the first of four firings of its apogee motor to complete its journey into orbit. Eutelsat and Es'hailSat schedule to bring their jointly owned satellite into service at 25.5° East at the end of October.

Cisco and Inmarsat collaborate to extend telemedicine worldwide via satellite

Satellite communications provider Inmarsat has announced collaboration with Cisco to make Cisco's telemedicine system, the Cisco TelePresence VX Clinical Assistant, available in the world's most remote communities. Inmarsat's global 3G satellite network will provide the communications that will enable hospitals and clinics provide quality healthcare to communities that are located in areas with little or no terrestrial telecommunications infrastructure.The system enables the delivery of virtual medical care through high definition videoconferencing and real-time transmission of key diagnostics ranging from ultrasounds to blood pressure readings.Access to quality healthcare continues to be a significant global challenge due to the shortage of skilled medical workers and the lack of healthcare infrastructure in remote and isolated communities. The World Health Organization and International Telecommunications Union have launched telemedicine-related initiatives to combat non-communicable diseases but these initiatives require fully reliable connectivity to be effective.

Megafon launches satellite hub in Krasnoyarsk

Russian mobile operator Megafon has launched its new terrestrial satellite hub in the Krasnoyarsk region. The node will serve remote base stations in Siberia, the Urals and the Far-East. The new hub will enable the operator to manage satellite traffic and regulate the load across base stations. Base stations of the operator using satellite links serve over 600,000 subscribers of the operator in Siberia and the Far-East.

Argentina offers satellite service to supplement DTT

The Argentinean government will install 1.485 satellite dishes in over 20 locations in the province of Cordoba as part of the Mi TV Digital plan that supplements with DTH the digital TV coverage in areas with no DTT access. The DTH system promoted by the government will transmit, free of charge, all channels of the Open Digital TV platform (TDA), for which set-top boxes with integrated CAS are required, reports NexTV. Mi TV Digital seeks to provide access to the TDA services in areas at risk of exclusion, as in Cordoba, due to geographic conditions or low population density. The service will be available to civil or social organizations, cooperatives and state cultural/educational entities, as well as those who are beneficiaries of social programs.

Bharti Airtel, SoftBank Mobile to provide 3G mobile phone services through satellite communications in Kenya

Bharti Airtel and SoftBank Mobile have said that they have succeeded in field trial for developing low-cost mobile service coverage using satellite communications.The technology will provide cost-efficient 3G mobile phone services using a communications satellite as a transmission line following a field trial conducted in actual environments in the Republic of Kenya. For areas where it is difficult to build facilities for fixed-line telecommunications and mobile communications, the development of communications networks using satellite transmission lines has been considered but expensive usage fees have been the primary barrier.With this trial, Bharti Airtel and SoftBank Mobile validated technologies and methods for providing communications services using a communications satellite in rural areas at a low cost. The technology to provide communications services using the spectrum of a communicatons satellite has already been developed and commercialized by SoftBank Mobile, and it was utilized when the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred in March 2011 to rebuild mobile phone networks in out-of-range areas by operating over 300 satellite base stations.

Thales Successfully Launches Amos 4 Satellite

The Amos 4 telecommunications satellite, featuring radio frequency (RF) equipment built by Thales Alenia was successfully launched. The Payload performance still to be verified during the Payload In-Orbit-Test (IOT) which is planned to start at mid-September 2013.Amos-4 will increase the operator's Ku- and Ka-band capacity, enabling it to expand its top-quality communications and broadcasting services in international markets. The satellite weighed about 3 metric tons at launch, and offers payload power of more than 4 kW. Amos-4 will be placed into a geostationary orbit, in a different orbital position than its predecessors, the Amos-1, 2 and 3 satellites.These three satellites are positioned in geostationary orbit at 4° West, allowing Spacecom Ltd. to provide communications services for the Middle East, Central Europe and the United States.Amos-4 will be positioned in 65° East, allowing Spacecom to provide services to a much wider range of customers, with higher quality, while expanding its footprint to include Asia.

Orbit Launches New Maritime Mobile VSAT Product Line in Asia

Orbit Communication Systems, a provider of mission-critical connectivity solutions for mobile satellite communications, tracking and telemetry, and communications management systems, has launched the OceanTRx maritime stabilized mobile VSAT platform for the Asian market.Designed for efficient on-board serviceability and maintainability, OceanTRx-4 and OceanTRx-7 feature a highly accessible pedestal design enabling efficient service support and field upgrade process without requiring accurate or periodic balancing. The OceanTRx product line shares common electronic field-replaceable units (FRUs), allowing lower cost of ownership, easier maintenance support, and shorter service response times.

ROAMING NEWS

T-Mobile lowers data roaming costs

T-Mobile is aiming to encourage its subscribers to use the internet more while they are abroad by lowering its data roaming charges.The UK network operator, which is a subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom, will launch the new Euro Broadband Boosters service at the start of March 2010. Its subscribers will be able to purchase one of the new bundles to use while travelling around the UK. The 3 MB, 20 MB and 50 MB packages will all give internet access at a discounted rate to standard roaming charges for a 24-hour period.Furthermore, a 200 MB bundle is also available allowing access for a full month.So that its customers are not left in the dark as to how much usage they have gotten through while accessing sites like BBC iPlayer, Twitter and Facebook, T-Mobile explained that users will be able to log onto the operator's home page to view full details of their data consumption and remaining allocation.Ralf Pearson, the senior propositions manager for mobile broadband at T-Mobile, said that it had come up with the new offer so that is customers can get the most out of their internet subscriptions with the network.

International data deal for South Africa

A new package targeting international travellers who want the convenience of retaining their number, but want to avoid data roaming charges has been launched.The Uncapped Roaming Data plan from execMobile offers uncapped data usage for R349 per day of international travel."We've had a lot of interest in an uncapped product from our corporate clients who are looking for a fixed cost product that removes the cost uncertainty for executives using large amounts of data when travelling abroad," said Craig Lowe, execMobile founder.The package offers a R99 per month subscription for a PocketWifi device that allows up to five devices to be connected simultaneously.While data rates in SA have come down significantly, international rates remain expensive.SIM card: Vodacom charges R128 per MB fordata in the US and R17.50 in the UK. Data costs in Europe on MTN are R2.70 per 25KB, and Cell C advises its customers to switch off data when roaming.Data in the US on Cell C ranges from R9.41 to R141.20 per MB and up to R199.33 in the UK.

Movile Partners with Boingo for International Roaming

Boingo Wireless, a DAS and Wi-Fi provider that serves consumers, carriers and advertisers worldwide announced that leading Latin American mobile services company Movile has selected the company to provide global Wi-Fi roaming for the 8 million users that rely on Movile mobile Wi-Fi service. Movile will receive access to Boingo's global aggregated network of more than 700,000 hotspots worldwide, including Wi-Fi networks in high traffic consumer venues such as airports, shopping centers, stadiums and arenas, mass transit stations and metropolitan hotzones."Boingo offers an unparalleled global network of hotspots that will help keep our customers connected to their favorite entertainment, social networks and productivity tools, while saving them money on costly international roaming fees," said Eduardo Henrique, head of U.S. operations and co-founder of Movile."Leading mobile service providers like

Movile are increasingly looking to provide additional value to their connected customers by expanding their wireless footprint. Our network of more than 700,000 hotspots provides a built-in roaming solution for operators, and our SDK integrates seamlessly into Wi-Fi access apps like the premium Free Zone app," said Howard Buzick, vice president of business development for Boingo Wireless.

Brussels seeking for a way to end roaming

Brussels considers implementing incentives for the disappearance of roaming, which could be possible as early as 2014. The EU no longer stands for "roaming abolition" but for "incentives to its disappearance," reports La Vanguardia , according to the details of a plan European Commissioner for the Digital Agenda NeelieKroes will unveil to national governments and the European Parliament on September 11.According to the Catalan daily, it is hoped that the plan can be implemented by 2014 as much progress has already been made on the issue. The European Commision has been willing to tackle the matter since 2007 and prices cuts were agreed in 2012. Already European Union members Belgium, Luxembourg and t

Globalgig launches low-cost international mobile data service

Globalgig, a provider of data-only mobile broadband services in Australia and internationally has expanded its reach to 40 countries, from just three - Australia, USA and UK - at its launch last December, with no lock in contracts and the freedom to change plans month by month at no extra cost. This means no more panic over data roaming or looking for the nearest WiFi when you land overseas, you simply connect to Globalgig and use your device as you would normally within Australia, whichever country you're in.The company is positioning its offering as an attractive option for domestic use, however it really comes into its own for overseas travellers -rates can be much cheaper than the standard offerings from the major mobile network operators: by several orders of magnitude, in fact.Glogbalgig Wireless HotspotGlobalgig has three data SIM-only no-contract plans and for $49 offers a pocket WiFi hotspot with a Globalgig SIM. It now offers services in 11 included 'first tier' countries - Australia, Austria, Denmark, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK, USA - and 29 other countries - Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, San Moreno, Slovakia, Slovenia Turkey and Vatican City at an additional 20 cents per MB.

Three UK drops roaming charges in seven countries

Three UK has announced a deal called 'Feel At Home' that'll see customers being charged at their standard tariff rate when they visit certain countries. The service is available automatically whencustomers use their mobile phones in Australia, Austria, Denmark, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy and Sweden; countries where Hutchison Whampoa's Three business currently operates its own networks. Calls and text messages back to the UK plus mobile broadband use will all be charged as part of a customer's price plan allowance. Additional 'out of bundle' usage will be charged at special roaming rates and 'tethering' won't be permitted.Thomas Malleschitz, marketing director at Three UK, said "We want to make sure our customers have the best possible mobile experience. By abolishing expensive roaming charges in select countries we are allowing our customers to get even more value from their minutes, texts and data abroad by removing the fear associated with staying in touch while travelling."

CRTC looking into Canadian carriers roaming rates and agreements

Since the newer carriers entered the wireless market (WIND Mobile, Public Mobile, Mobilicity, Videotron), the incumbent Big 3 carriers and their sub-brands have adjusted their monthly rate plans. When it comes to roaming, this cost has even seen some shifting over the past few months. We've seen Bell, TELUS and Rogers all come to market with cheaper rates and more talk time, texting or data. The CRTC has decided to focus part of its effort to look into the carriers roaming plans and agreements. In an email dated August 30th, the CRTC notes that "Over the past year, the Commission has been made aware of concerns with respect to the rates, terms, and conditions associated with wireless roaming." This has caused them to request numerous Canadian carriers to produce 'information that is not publicly available' about roaming rates, terms and conditions from United States wireless operators, plus detailed roaming revenue by voice, data, and text messaging from 2007 to 2012.

ExecMobile launches uncapped mobile roaming data

execMobile has launched Unlimited, a solution which gives business travellers an uncapped data solution when overseas. Relatively inexpensive, this is a first of its kind and will prevent the massive bill shock that many have experienced when returning from their travels.Craig Lowe, execMobile founder, says Unlimited is a subscription product which gives business uncapped Internet for R349 per day of usage."We've had a lot of interest in an uncapped product from our corporate clients who are looking for a fixed cost product that removes the cost uncertainty for executives using large amounts of data when travelling abroad," he says.Unlimited has a subscription of R99 per month per PocketWifi device, with a daily data cost of R349 for uncapped Internet.The great thing about the PocketWifi device is that it supports 5 Wi-Fi enabled device connections simultaneously, which means that a single user can connect multiple devices or a team of employees can get connected when travelling without having to worry about the amount of data they use, Lowe says.

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

LTE network operational in Kiribati

US-based wireless network software provider Lemko and Australian systems integrator Challenge Networks have announced the deployment of a commercial-ready mobile broadband network based on 4G LTEtechnology in the Pacific island nation of Kiribati, after successfully carrying out the first LTE-based communication for Telecom Services Kiribati Ltd (TSKL). As previously reported by CommsUpdate, TSKLsigned contracts in January with its technology partners for the rollout of 3G W-CDMA and 4G LTE infrastructure, initially to cover Kiritimati, South Tarawa, North Tarawa and three outer islands; the 700MHz LTE network will use 'Distributed Mobile Wireless Network' technology from Lemko to reach remote islands which are connected by satellite links. The rollout utilises LTE over satellite, meshed satellite networks and a distributed mobile core, which is designed to solve issues of remoteness by eliminating backhaul to a central or hosted core.

Elisa extends DC-HSPA+ coverage

Finland's Elisa has announced that its Dual Carrier HSPA+ (DC-HSPA+) service is now available in Kaavilla, Rautalammilla, Sonkajarvella and Tervossa, while it has said that its 3G network has been expanded to Iisalmessa. With the mobile network operator advertising both its LTE and DC-HSPA+ products as offering '4G' speeds, it has said that it now offers its higher downlink rates in more than 200 locations, of which more than 60 are covered by its LTE network.

O2 and Vodafone inaugurate 4G networks as Three unveils launch timetable

EE is finally facing competition in the 4G arena, after O2 UK and Vodafone UK yesterday launched commercial LTE services. With both of the second- and third-placed players having switched on their networks, O2 UK is initially providing services over a wider coverage area, having confirmed that its LTE plans are available in London, Leeds and Bradford. Looking ahead, the cellco has reiterated its previously announced plans to extend its network footprint to a further ten cities by the end of 2013, those being: Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow, Liverpool, Nottingham, Leicester, Coventry, Sheffield, Manchester and Edinburgh. For its part, Vodafone UK's LTE infrastructure will initially only be accessible to customers in the capital, London.

MTN Guinea obtains 3G license

Wireless operator MTN Guinea (Areeba) has announced that it is now authorized to provide 3G services in the country after signing a Convention de Concession de Licenses with telecoms regulator L'Autorite de Regulation des Postes et Telecommunications (ARPT) on 16 August 2013. According to the company's press release, the license will provide MTN Guinea with an 'opportunity to have a greater number of sites covered by March 2014'.

TELE Greenland launches 3G in Qaanaaq and Ittoqqortoormiit

State-owned TELE Greenland, the country's sole telecoms provider, has announced the launch of 3G services in the towns of Qaanaaq and Ittoqqortoormiit, located in the Qaasuitsup and Sermersooq municipalities, respectively. According to a company press release, the transmission is achieved via a satellite link, and the network is able to deliver download speeds of up to 2Mbps. The company also announced plans to launch 3G services in the towns of Tasiilaq and Kulusuk in south-eastern Greenland on 1 October, thus extending its 3G footprint to all settlements in Greenland.

Tele2 inks deals for 4G network deployment

Tele2 has announced the results of its network procurement for its 4G deployment in the Netherlands. Nokia Solutions and Networks (NSN) has been selected for Radio Access Network (RAN) equipment, Huawei for core equipment and Mavenir Systems for IMS equipment. The cellco says it has already begun building the network locations, and purchase orders with the vendors have been placed. Gunther Vogelpoel, EVP and CEO Tele2 Netherlands, commented: 'The completed procurement, in combination with the recently announced site sharing and [Mobile Virtual Network Operator] MVNO agreements, puts Tele2 in the right position to continue to challenge the players on the Dutch market.

Circlenet Deploys Global Flat Rate VOIP

Circlenet, a startup flat rate VOIP provider in Winchester Va, announced their new global service. This service priced at only $12 per month with their unique "all tax included" flat rate provides an excellent value to international VOIP users. Circlenet provides this service using their own in house technologies and strategic termination providers worldwide. This system allows them to provide unlimited calling to Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece , Guam, Hungary, India,Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, United Kingdom, and the United States. This includes mobile numbers in these countries as well. Customers can be sure that they will not pay more than their $12 rate regardless of the number they dial. Circlenet believes VOIP will help connect the world, and that current plans are to cumbersome complicated and restrictive.

Telenor 4G now available for smartphone users

Telenor Hungary has extended the availability of its 4G LTE service to smartphone and tablet customers, just over one year after launching the mobile broadband network for PC users. Until the end of the year the 'Hipernet 4G' service, which has a theoretical maximum download speed of 86.4Mbps and an upload speed of 43.2Mbps, is available at no extra fee to all post-paid customers with a voice and data tariff plan or with a monthly data subscription on their mobile phone, as a launch promotion.

Telekom Slovenije introduces pre-paid LTE

Telekom Slovenije's mobile division Mobitel has extended its range of 4G LTE services launched in March this year to pre-paid users, making it the first operator in Slovenia to do so. Users with existing pre-paid mobile internet packages can add Mobitel 4G LTE data transfer as a free add-on, with LTE coverage currently spanning 55 locations, 157 base stations and almost 50% of the population. Terms and conditions for using 4G data are the same as for contract customers: requiring a device which can access LTE (with a range of 21 different LTEdevices, including mobile phones and tablets, USB modems for laptops/PCs and Mi-Fi mobile hotspots), aUSIM-card, plus activating a 'Hitri' 4G internet service, the operator's press release states. Under current offers, one day of internet use (with maximum theoretical down/upload speeds of 100Mbps/50Mbps) costs EUR1(USD1.3) for pre-paid users, while they can get 30 days for EUR10 and 100 days for EUR20. Users have a choice between two packages; the first costs EUR9.90 and comes with a SIM card, and the second for EUR79comes with a ZTE MF60 uFi mobile access point. Telekom also introduced a new package, available at its online store, which comes with a Huawei E3276 LTE USB modem for EUR99.

Vodafone Spain expands 4G network coverage

Spain's first wireless operator to launch LTE-based services, Vodafone Spain, has revealed that it is extending its network footprint. According to a press release issued by the cellco, it will launch 4G in eight new cities throughout the months of September and October, those being: Santander, La Coruna and Zaragoza (September) and Cordoba, Vigo, Murcia, Gijon and Oviedo (October). Noting that it is still awaiting release of spectrum in the 800MHz band, Vodafone noted that the network will be deployed using 1800MHz and 2600MHz frequencies. As such, it has said that it will offer 58% outdoor and 27% indoor coverage in each of the new cities at launch, with those figures expected to rise to 70% and 40%, respectively, by December 2013.

Wireless Nation driving SOHO VoIP adoption

Internet Service Provider Wireless Nation has launched Smart SOHO, a new Voice over IP (VoIP) phone service and unlimited broadband bundle for small business customers. The package is designed to encourage SME adoption of a unified communications strategy with the benefits of VoIP technology. Over 450,000 businesses fall into the 'Small Office Home Office' category, defined as less than 10 employees - and they make up 25% of the total New Zealand business market. Wireless Nation's Smart SOHO package (priced at $99+GST/month for ADSL2+, $119+GST/month for VDSL2 and $169+GST/month for UFB fibre), is ideally suited to businesses of this size. A typical 4-5 person business might pay as much as $250 per month for comparable packages with other service providers.

HOW TELECOM OPERATORS CAN CUT COSTSAND GROW

Chady Smayra
Principal
Booz & Company

Telecom operators around the world are facing increasing difficulties. Their traditional sources of revenue and profit are drying up. The markets for voice, messaging, and fixed broadband are almost saturated. In the UAE, for example, there are twice as many mobile subscribers as people, the highestsuch rate globally.

To make matters worse, margins are narrowing. Operators' high-value customers can easily find better deals and faster data speeds. Customers want more data—in the U.S. in 2012 consumers for the first time spent more on data than on voice—forcing companies to invest heavily in extra capacity and new technology. Operators are also investing to fend off competition from Internet players such as Google, Skype, and Facebook.

Many operators have responded with cost reductions. Some are across-the-board, others involve deep cuts of such operating costs as customer service centers and field operations. The danger is that firms maythwart any chance of sustainable growth bycutting costs that are worth having along with spending that isn't.

A better approach is for operators to define their priorities and then take three broader reinforcing measures. These are to cultivate and invest in the requisite capabilities to implement the priorities, divest other capabilities, and reorganize within this new capability set. These steps can shrink the cost base by 25% and make the operator ready for growth.

Defining priorities means choosing a "way to play."Thisleveragesthecapabilities that make the operator different, and matches the operator's internal strengths to attainablemarket opportunities.These capabilitiesshould bedistinctto make it difficult for any competitor to copy them.One "way to play" is to be an experience player—offering a wide range of innovative products and services that provide a top-class customer experience.

Deciding what type of operator to be determines the next three measures. First, it identifies which capabilities need investment, and which need slimming down or cutting.Experience *efining priorities means choosing a "way to play*

Second, operators have to transform their cost structure, which involves understanding the connection between costs and growth

experience players can move all innovation related functions under a single overarching unit

players have to put resources into superlative customer service that keeps customers and sellsthem more products and services. Customers' every contact with experience players has to be professional, high quality, but not necessarily costly. Customized apps can be as significant in providing such quality serviceas highly trained and easily contactablecustomer service staff.

Second, operators have to transform their cost structure, which involves understanding the connection between costs and growth. As costs are related to capabilities, operator can categorize them as essential, competitive necessities, routine business capabilities, or not required.

Operators can eliminate or spend very little on capabilities they do not need. For example, connectivity players need to be leaders in network technology and coverage, while being very competitive on costs. Connectivity players do not require the capability to customize handsets, which they can divest entirely. They can also increase their efficiency in customer experience, which is a competitive necessity. For example, connectivity players can sell online and have a few high profile outlets instead of building an expensive chain of shops.

By contrast, network technology is less important for experience players, not ranking as an essential capability. Experience players can reduce network investment costs, which tend to be substantial. They can move to best-in-class cost levels by sharing their networks with other operators, thereby freeing up resources for innovation.

The thirdelement is reorganization. Unlike previous organizational changes, which disrupt and create little value, this form of reorganization sustains the cost reductions needed for growth. This is achieved through lessmanagement overhead andhaving business functions pool resources.Operators' organization charts can be rearranged to manage work more effectively and efficiently.For example, experience players can move all innovation related functions under a single overarching unit. Reorganization can also stimulate growth by empowering managers to act like owners of the business.

Getting rid of certain capabilities is not a one-off dumping of ballast. Nor is reducing resources for non-differentiating capabilities just another cost cutting technique, of which operators already have plenty. Rather the point is to make spending deliberate, linked to capabilities, and continually in search of the lowest cost operations.By doing this routinely, as part of the daily way they do business, telecom operators can position themselves for growth.

INTERNET ECONOMY URGES NEW SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS

Dr. Mustafa Aykut
International Affairs
and Policy Coordinator
Turk Telekom Group

Chairman
SAMENA Policy Board

SAMENA Telecommunication Council

Today, we live in a rapidly changing globalized world, where technology is driving markets with a greater multi-dimensional force than ever before. In these evolving markets, all ICT players find themselves looking for ways to adapt to change, and to accommodate the new sharedICT ecosystem. One way in which they are doing so is, by creating new and sustainable business models.

As we all know, legacy telecoms networks are voice-centric. With data traffic increasing 70% in just the past year and expected to increase 13-fold until 2017, telecoms operators are investing billions of dollars to develop and expand their new data networks.

New telecoms technological advancements are having an impact on the markets, particularly on future market competition, creating susceptibility to ex-ante regulation. These include the development of NGA networks, mobile platforms providing broadbandservices, smartphones, mobile applications and Mobile Instant Messaging as well as VoIP services. Thanks to the Internet, the network has become an ideal platform, a new marketplace,which enables the sharing of goods and services. In this fiercely competitive and highly fragmented marketplace, the roles of the network and content providers are intertwined.Today,anyone can sell content, or as many have come to expect, give it away for free.

We are now faced with a new economy: Network providers are offering services not only to customers but to content editors, andeven players without a network have the resources to access and serve millions of users. In this situation, not all men are created equal.

Operators are heavily burdened by regulation, taxation, spectrum and roaming rules that, in many instances, make it difficult for the industry to sustain future investments. On top of this, Internetplayers are generating heavy network traffic, leaving the operators, regulators, investors, and, ultimately, the consumers with a completely new set of issues and consequences to deal with.Nonetheless, it is important to note here that only a few of these Internet companies are actually profitable.

New telecoms technological advancements are having an impact on the markets, particularly on future market competition, creating susceptibility to ex-ante regulation

All stakeholders need to work together for the longevity of the industry as a whole, enabling each existing and newly emerging player to contribute to and benefit from the evolving ICT ecosystem

As mentioned earlier, today's status quo sets the stage to discuss new, competitive and sustainable business models. All stakeholders need to work together for the longevity of the industry as a whole, enabling each existing and newly emerging player to contribute to and benefit from the evolving ICT ecosystem.

Let me use the highway analogy to convey my point: We all know that highway toll stations charge different prices for different types of vehicles. If a vehicle weighs more, it has to pay more. Similarly, Internet players, taking up much of the traffic on telecom operators' networks, should contribute accordingly. Thus new business models, which, for instance, are being discussed within operator-interest entities such as the SAMENA Council, will need to strike a balance between traffic generated, telecoms network capacity used, services offered, and revenues generated.

In my view, both operators and Internet players should be given a level-playing field, and this is required particularly from regulation point-of-view. Both operators and Internet players should be subjected to the same regulation. As a consequence, for instance,both integral players in the Internet value-chain could contribute mutually to the cost of telecoms network maintenance.

Arguably, while it is true that Internetplayersare opening up more opportunities and creating more demand for network capacity; they are doing so through state-of-the-art networks and fast and secure connections. The existing ICT ecosystem is built on the principle of symbiosis. If it fails to be mutually beneficial to all concerned, it can lead to half a trillion in lost revenues over the next eight years, according to new research by Ovum.

Because RCS is not expected to reach the mass market before 2014, operators will have to rely on innovative pricing strategies, partnerships, and on launching operator-branded IP messaging services to keep up with the changing demand. Collaboration is one way to do so, as is evident in the US, where telecoms operators have begun to partner with Internet players at varying levels. However, this is not the case in Europe or in the SAMENA region.

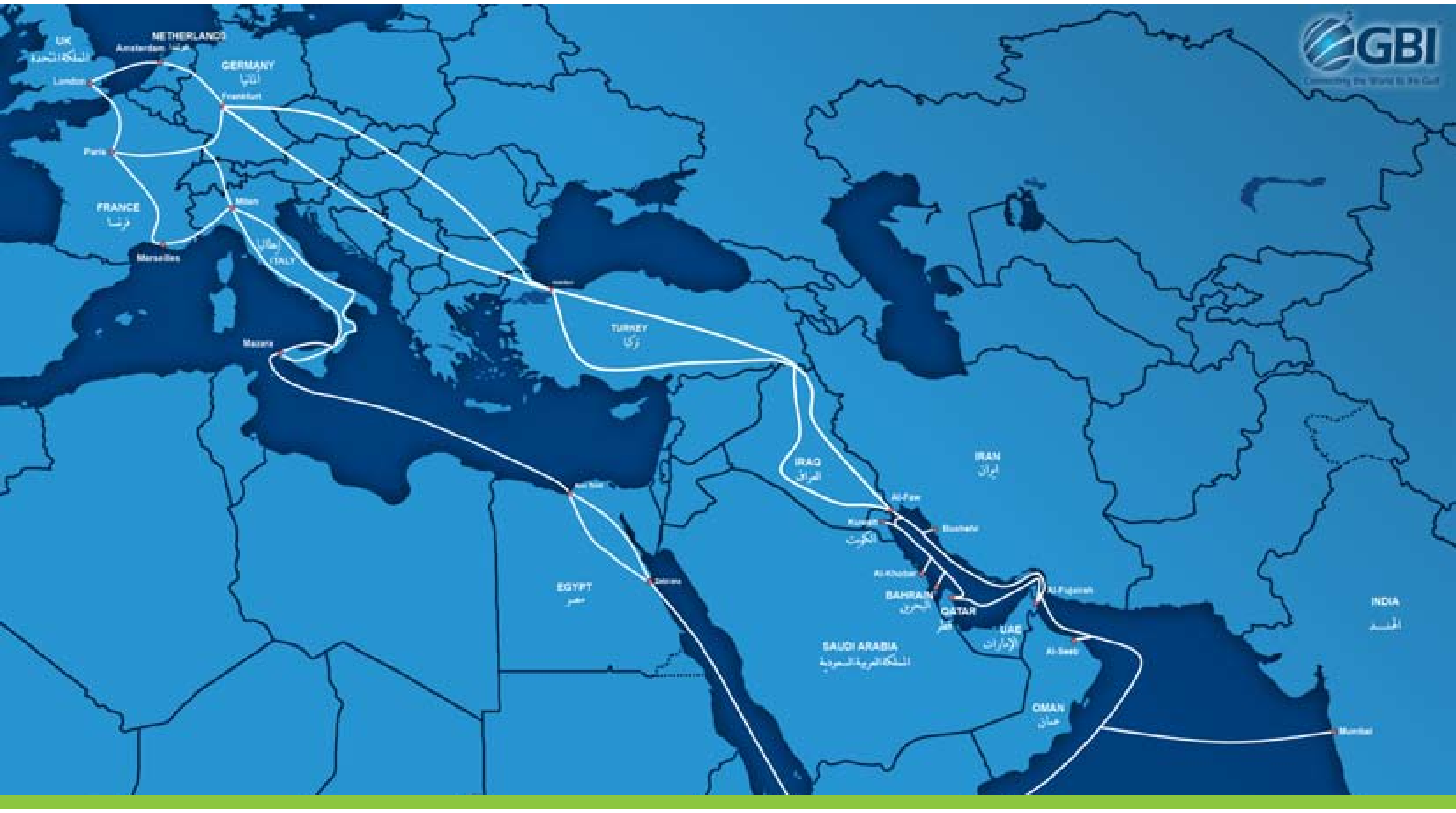
As telecoms operators — facilitators of access to the expanding world of the Internet — we need a moment to reflect. We, unfortunately, are continuing to be focused on our tangible network assets, and thus may be missing the big picture. The real innovation lies in the software. Analysis and case studies of key commercial and organizational enablers are needed in order to invest and adopt new business models, and to enter into new markets, covering network sharing, outsourcing, Fixed-Mobile Integration, Fixed-Mobile Convergence, Application Stores and Application Programming Interfaces, QoS, LTE, RCS, and traffic offload.

Arthur D.Little has recently analyzed the crucial question raised by the telecoms operators: "How should Internet Policies evolve if the opportunity linked to Internet playersis larger than the risk to legacy revenues?" For Western European countries, core revenues are continuously decreasing by 1.8% per year on average. CAGR is -2.4% in mobile and -3.4% in fixed-line.

Where, on one hand, Internetapplications are serving as the main driver of broadband demand and all-IP transformation; on the other hand, they are also a proven threat to voice and messaging revenues. The unresolved dilemma, "friend or foe", continues to prevail. To make matters more challenging, fragmentation among telecoms operators' initiatives does not help in finding more efficient and effective ways to new win-win business propositions.

In any case, we can take a number of actions to adapt to the change. We can modernize the IP interconnection value-chain and update traditional transit and peering agreements with more adequate volume-capped contracts. On the wholesale part, we can follow our claim of co-participating on NGA investments with new and innovative value propositions. There is also a role to be played by regulators to enable network users' contribution to network access. Finally, obligations such as Net Neutrality should not limit telecoms operators' commercial activities as long as an operator introduces managed services.

As an industry, I think, we owe it to each other and to our customers to find more sustainable ways for moving forward.



ABOUT GBI

Amr Eid
Chief Commercial Officer
GBI

SINCE LAUNCHING IN FEBRUARY 2012, GBI has continued to set new industry standards and challenge the traditional carrier business model. Operating a comprehensive 40G system, GBI is the highest capacity network in the Middle East, and recently became the first subsea operator to cross the Mediterranean Sea with 100G capability. GBI is also the only carrier-neutral regional network, providing highly resilient connectivity to fixed and mobile operators, and internet service providers (ISPs) of the Gulf, as well as to global operators looking to connect their customers to a region with one sixth of the world's population.

Offering increased capacity, choice, and value, the true significance of the enhanced connectivity that GBI brings is recognised by the industry. Last year, we were named as the world's 'Best Niche/New Player' at the Capacity Awards for going above and beyond our original vision. We were also recognised at the CommsMEA Awards as the Middle East and Africa's best telecoms technology investment.

In March 2012, GBI launched a new North Route, providing connectivity from our cable landing station at Al Faw, in the south of Iraq, crossing Iraq and Turkey to Istanbul, and onward to Frankfurt in Germany. This makes us the only operator to offer seamless connectivity from Europe to all of the Gulf countries via the Mediterranean, Egypt and the Red Sea, or terrestrially via Turkey and Iraq.

The new North Route gives operators true route diversity between Europe and the Gulf, and a much needed alternative to the traditional pinch points between Asia and Europe. This ensures operators can address their customers' requirements for always-on connectivity with confidence, and we are working closely with operators to meet the significant demand.

Between 2008 and 2012, international internet capacity to the Middle East rose at an annual rate of 79% to approach nearly 3Tbps. It is no stretch of the imagination to forecast that in a few years, demand will reach 8Tbps and beyond.

ECONOMIC POWER SHIFT

The telecoms landscape in the Middle East is undergoing major transformation as markets deregulate and businesses and consumers increase their use of communication-based products and services. There are a number of trends leading this transformation. Perhaps the most significant is the change in the volume and flow of international telecoms traffic.

Historically, most traffic flowed from the region to Europe and the US. However, a gradual shift is taking place as the emerging markets in Middle East and Asia grow at a much faster pace than mature markets in the West. In Africa too, growth is returning.

This shift in economic growth is mirrored by a change in the flow in international telecoms traffic, with Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East continuing to experience the highest growth. GBI is therefore well placed to provide a strategic hub for traffic between Europe and Asia, and also between the Northern Hemisphere and Africa.

FROM CARBON TO CONTENT

The second major trend centres on the internet. We are seeing a move by large content providers to create regional hubs. Until recently, most internet traffic was routed westwards through Europe to the US. As with the balance of economic power, this is changing, with the Middle East proving an attractive hub for content providers looking to decentralise their operations. Decentralisation is driven not just by the desire to reduce costs and improve operational efficiency; it also reflects the localisation of content.

Currently, only 2% of the world's online content is in Arabic, while native Arabic speakers total 7% of the global population. Yet there continues to be a rapid rise in localised internet content and use of Arabic apps and social networking. A recent study of 7,000 internet users in the Gulf revealed 61% used a mobile app every day. Similarly, social web use is soaring, particularly among 15 to 29 year olds, who make up more than one-third of the Middle East's total population and 75% of the region's Facebook community.

Some 65% of the Middle East's population is under 35 years of age and use the internet and smart phones regularly. Not only are they tech savvy, they have increasing disposable incomes and are hungry for new technology. This is manifest in the popularity of the Apple iPhone and iPad, and Google's fast emerging Android system. These platforms are hosting increasing amounts of Arabic-language apps, online video, online gaming, voice telephony, video telephony over IP, as well as a variety of other applications that demand low latency, low jitter, and consistent availability of bandwidth.

BROADER BUSINESS BASE

Growth in enterprise bandwidth demand is also forecast to result in a significant long-term rise in inter-regional capacity across the Middle East, driven by data centralisation, economic growth, and globalisation.

The growing number of broadband consumers and the rise in availability and speed of access are resulting in much greater volumes of internet traffic in the Gulf. Speeds above 4Mbps are on offer in a number of countries, including Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Most other countries in the region are promoting broadband investment, while governments are looking to lessen their dependence on carbon-based industries and diversify investments in other sectors.

Increased bandwidth and reliability are critical to supporting these broader development plans, and the GBI network is proving critical to supporting continued investment in sectors such as financial services, media, research and development, education and health. As such, GBI is building a double bottom line of economic and social benefit for the region.

FROM THE REGION, FOR THE REGION

Not only was the Gulf capacity-hungry, there was limited choice. Our open access and completely neutral business model has enabled us to address the clear appetite for change, alter the market dynamic and given our customers much greater flexibility.

The GBI network improves competition as it enables operators to serve their clients more reliably. We provide a full range of wholesale international capacity products designed to meet the current and future requirements of telecoms operators, ISPs, content providers, corporate customers, and governments around the Gulf:

- Synchronous Digital Hierarchy (SDH) – core wholesale products delivering international voice & data services.
- Wavelength – based on using the multiple wavelengths available on each fibre of the fibre-optic cable.
- Ethernet – industry standard 1Gbps and 10Gbps interfaces.

Our secure capacity enables new entrants to break into the market more easily, and existing players to diversify their routing. This is essential, given the threat of offshore earthquakes and disruption of services. The impact of cable breaks has refocused attention on proper redundancy planning for network outages and pushed up the level of demand for redundant capacity.

GETTING CLOSER TO CUSTOMERS GLOBALLY

Crucially, GBI's commercial footprint is now matching our network coverage and reach. We have over sixty team members, comprising in excess of twenty nationalities, and are a truly multi-cultural organisation. We have also continued to increase our presence on the ground globally to get closer to the markets we serve, opening offices in Dubai, Cairo, Amsterdam, and Rome.

As the Gulf region becomes an international strategic hub, so too will the GBI network. We will continue in our mission to evolve from a Gulf company to a business with global relevance. We have bold plans for growth in connectivity to Africa and Asia, as well as the introduction of Layer 2 and Layer 3 products and services.

Our network provides the capacity over which the content of the future knowledge economy can be exchanged, and the carrier-neutral business model needed to support industry growth and diversification. We aim to be the carrier's carrier of choice across the region and beyond by offering unparalleled reach, resilience, and route diversity.

In presence of H.E the Minister of Communications in Kuwait

SAMENA Council held the Regulatory Summit in Partnership with VIVA Kuwait

The South Asia, Middle East, North Africa region's SAMENA Telecommunication Council in partnership with VIVA Kuwait, held its Regulatory Summit in presence of His Excellency, Mr. Issa Al Kandari - the Minister of Communications in Kuwait. The summit took place at The Regency Hotel Kuwait and was attended by a variety of panels, media and telecommunication industry stakeholders.

Leading telecommunication companies from Kuwait met to discuss Regulation 4.0 which held a main theme of **"Toward**

a Healthy Sustainable Regulatory Environment for All Stakeholders". The discussed issues included: regulatory trends and case studies from the SAMENA region; efficient implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks digitization; opportunity to foster growth; public and private sectors partnership and an approach to accelerate broadband development. The key aspect of Regulation 4.0, therefore, is a more dynamic regulatory framework which is based on creating a more flexible environment; promoting an integrated market; granting access and designing clear net neutrality rules; shifting the focus of national regulators towards new challenges (such as quality monitoring); establishing dynamic efficiency as the center-pieces of regulatory policies; strengthening technological neutrality as a basic principle.

His Excellency, Issa Al Kandari the Minister of Communications said, "There is an urgent need to create a true solid partnership between the public and private sector as the private one has improved its major and important role in providing a quality services especially in what concerns telecommunication technologies" he added: "The Governmentstrivesto provideanattractiveenvironmentto encourage investments in the telecommunication industry as being one of the fundamental basis that indicates the level of technology and development any country obtains".

The CEO of SAMENA Council, Mr. Bocar BA, said "SAMENA region is a great market for the telecommunication industry where there are many opportunities for development but yet there are still many challenges. The summit's main goal is to find new approaches, which improve investment activities and provide more flexibility while maintaining and even fostering competition."

VIVA's Chief Executive Officer Eng. Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Badran, said: "This event aims to develop the communication industry in the SAMENA region. It has been proven worldwide that a proactive regulatory environment is essential for the growth of information & communication technology and its applications, and for the development of an information society in any country."

The successful Kuwait Regulatory Summit will have been one of the key stepping stones in the development of telecommunication and the progress of Kuwait.

SAMENA
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL
BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

#304, Alfa Building, Knowledge Village, PO. Box: 502544, Dubai, UAE.
Tel: +971-4-364-2700 | Fax: +971-4-4369-7513

Follow Us: