Towards a Sustainable Internet Business Model

Mohamed Elmandjra
Chief Executive Officer
Meditel

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EDITORIAL

New Sustainable Internet Economic Business Model

The desktop of most executives in the telecom operator space is full of numbers and statistics, which have begun to draw a clear picture as to how demand is soon going to outstrip supply.

The demand concerns consumption of data intense applications such as video, games and other data-rich programs, which the older legacy networks simply cannot support. The demand for high-speed data will escalate since video technology is evolving by the second. A typical streaming YouTube video in HD quality needs approximately 1.1 mbps of broadband network speed while a customer streaming a 3D video in HD quality requires 50 mbps.

In many countries, pricing schemes have been set up to incentivize consumers to control the traffic they generate. Under this model, content providers are taking the heaviest shares or portions of the overall revenue in the internet value chain in comparison to those institutions that provide internet services to the same consumers.

The construction of a sustainable business model for the Internet is now among issues commanding highest importance in telecom boardrooms across the globe. The escalating nature of data-intensive applications on the operator networks has certainly set forth new agenda for the industry. This insatiable demand creates markets, and will most definitely going to overrun supply on the part of the networks.

A question that all must ask, is the investment (CAPEX) that is being made or being mulled over worth all the effort, given that a large share of the revenue from the traffic would, ultimately, go to other stakeholders, rather than the operators themselves?

There are considerations that must be addressed, particularly on the supply side. The CAPEX requirements are steep and these costs should be economically feasible to bear with rising revenue. The issue primarily is that both revenues and margins are relatively flat. Income from so-called data package revenues are only supplanting lost voice package revenues, and sometimes not even supplanting them enough.

The current debate on the content and the Internet traffic growth can be easily displayed on a single PowerPoint slide... The relevant variables of the display are revenue (relatively flat), margins (decreasing), traffic voice (decreasing), traffic data (exponentially growing), and CAPEX expenditures (drastically increasing) versus past CAPEX to revenue and margin (historically). This type of condition simply can't continue without adjustments. It may be in pricing or in other basic or exotic business model, but the fact is, the model has to change. That is a constant. The variable is time. Pricing packages obviously are one area of concern. There are others also.

There are multiple ways and manners for industry to address the cause and effect brought about by the Internet and all things related to it. SAMENA has been addressing this situation quite actively for over eighteen months now. SAMENA's specific focus has been on the issue of how the operators, which are the real investors in the telecommunications industry, need to revamp the existing business model, currently being used to cater to connectivity needs of billions of people. Effectively, SAMENA and its membership have proposed a set of methodologies, which may potentially justify and help sustain investments into building ultra-high speed fixed and mobile broadband networks.

The challenging situation we are in today will not be handled today. However, with dialogue, debate and discussion on the part of all stakeholders, equilibrium can be reached to build the networks for the future. Competitive balance may just be in "balance" if this does not happen.

Truly Yours,

Thomas Wilson
CEO & Managing Director
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

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EDITORIAL

TOP REGIONAL & MEMBER NEWS

GBI, Mada Communications Sign Capacity Sale Agreement

Gulf Bridge International (GBI) and Kuwaiti operator Mada Communications have signed a capacity sale agreement. The GBI network is a cable system serving the Middle East. It will allow Mada to provide improved internet services in Kuwait. The GBI cable system connects all the Gulf countries with onward connectivity to Europe and Asia. The system is designed around a core ring, which can re-route traffic. With a design capacity of up to 10 Tbps on certain cable sections, the GBI cable system will have the capacity to meet the growth in demand that has been forecasted for traffic originating and terminating in Gulf. Board Member and CEO of GBI said that "I am pleased to announce the GBI's third successful partnership in Kuwait which proves our commitment to this region and the agreement also reflects confidence in our ability to deliver state of the art infrastructure and leading technology." He further added that "having launched just over three months ago, we are happy that the GBI network is already working to address the demand for capacity from Kuwait and the region as a whole."

STC won "Best Mobile Service Provider" title in Fourth Annual Poll

STC has won the title, "Best Mobile Service Provider", in the fourth annual poll, conducted by Mobile Trend, a telecommunications and information technology magazine. A large segment of citizens and residents from all parts of the Kingdom participated in the poll. Describing the achievement, GM, Corporate Communication, said STC received 71.05 percent of votes, confirming its prestigious position in the Saudi market and the trust it has gained as the first provider of 4G services in the region. He added that STC's 4G services will reach more than 65 percent of its coverage in the Kingdom by the end of 2012, and 90 percent by the end of 2014. He further mentioned that STC Group had received Best Mobile Operator of the Year Award at the 6th TMT Finance & Investment Middle East Awards Ceremony 2012 which was held in Dubai recently, as the prestigious award is recognizing STC leadership in providing the best telecommunications services in the region and its international growth strategy.

Etisalat Receives ISO14001:2004 Environmental Management System Certification

Etisalat has received ISO14001:2004 Environmental Management System Certification for adopting best practices in reduction of its carbon footprint and its overall environmental impact at the Corporation's head offices in Abu Dhabi. The certification has been awarded to Etisalat for its environmental management policy in cellular telecommunications, fixed and broadband services, which has enabled a balance between economic, social and environmental needs. It also reflects the Corporation's efforts in establishing strategic partnerships with government agencies, businesses and environment groups in support of policies that promote environmental protection. ISO14001 International Standard Project, as the first step in line with the Etisalat Group strategic initiative "green efficiencies." Key objectives of the green efficiencies initiative include improving Etisalat's environmental performance, participating in environment protection and sustaining it for future generations.

ZTE Launches TD-SCDMA Smartphone for China Mobile Users

ZTE has launched the U880E, a TD-SCDMA smartphone for China Mobile users. The U880E features Marvell's single-chip PXA920H service, an integrated 3G platform with TD-SCDMA and GSM/EDGE support designed for multimedia-centric devices. The handset features a 1 GHz Marvell CPU and Marvell's TD-SCDMA protocol stack. Armed with a 4-inch WVGA HD Screen, the U880E offers a user experience in web browsing, social networking and multimedia activities. The smartphone features Marvell PXA920H 1GHz CPU communications platform, Marvell Avastar 88W8787 Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and FM enabled; 802.11n compliant, Marvell Mobile Hotspot capacity, Marvell PM8607 integrated audio and power management. It also features Marvell RF808 RF transceiver, run on Android Gingerbread 2.3 OS, 4G eMMC ROM, 512 MB RAM and CMMB+MBBMS2.0 Mobile TV. The smartphone is available to China Mobile subscribers for CNY 1000.

du Wins the M+Health Award for the Best Health Care Initiative

A panel of industry leaders at the recently-held 2012 Hospital Build and Infrastructure Awards selected du as the winner of The M+Health Award for the Best Health Care Initiative by a Telecom Provider. Santanu Biswas, Director - eHealth Services, du, received the award on behalf of the company. Smart Health is du's strategic mobile health initiative designed to build an informative and collaborative healthcare eco-system through innovative services, smart networks and technology. In partnership with Mobile Doctors 24-7 International, which is licensed by Dubai Healthcare City, du has also launched a unique Physician Helpline. This affordable around-the-clock phone service provides indispensable support to du's customers by giving them access to quality healthcare services through experienced medical professionals at any time day or night. Chief Commercial Officer, du said that it is an honor to receive this award, and we would like to thank the panel of the 2012 Hospital Build and Infrastructure Awards for recognizing the potential our Smart Health portfolio offers.

du Signs Partnership Agreement With Quintessentially

du has announced that it has signed a partnership agreement with Quintessentially. The new association will bring a superior user experience and an exciting range of benefits to du customers, combining leading telecom services with world-class, personalized service. The strategic agreement is aimed at benefitting du's high-value customers, who will experience a range of benefits on top of the value-added telecom services they already receive. Quintessentially membership benefits include: management of time-consuming day to day activities, providing assistance and local insider information while travelling, networking access to exclusive events with private Members around the world and unlimited access to an unrivalled package of exclusive privileges, preferential rates and other bespoke services.

PTCL Wins Prestigious ESRI Special Achievement in GIS Award 2012

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has been honored by the prestigious U.S.-based Environment Systems Research Institute (ESRI) with the "ESRI Special Achievement in GIS Award 2012" for its outstanding achievements and organizational performance in geographic information systems (GIS) and programs. Founder & President ESRI, Jack Danger said on the occasion that PTCL's GIS program stood out from amongst more than 100,000 others worldwide for its outstanding use of GIS technology in the existing network, we have selected PTCL for this year's award on the basis of its innovative applications of GIS technology in Pakistan. The U.S.-based ESRI is the world's largest GIS organization with more than 0.35 million affiliates and more than 1 million users. It is the only global company with a GIS portfolio covering all sectors of life starting from health to telecommunications. It is estimated that more than 70 percent GIS users worldwide deploy ESRI products in one form or other.

Qtel Signs Contract with Huawei for FTTH Project

Qtel has extended its contract with Huawei for its Fiber to the Home (FTTH) project. Qtel is serving more than 660 million people in the Middle East, North Africa, the Asian Subcontinent and South-East Asia. Recently, Qtel selected Chinese telecom gear marker ZTE for rolling out GSM, WCDMA and LTE solutions across Qtel Group operations in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. The new technologies will benefit customers across the Group's companies including Asiacell, Wataniya Kuwait, Nawras, Tunisiana, Nedjma and Qtel. Qtel's fiber broadband roll-out will cover an additional 90,000 connections, which will bring the broadband penetration close to 100 percent of the households and enterprises in Qatar. Qtel Fiber will provide a host of benefits for Qatar as well as making an important contribution to the educational, commercial and governmental sectors. It is the largest infrastructure project of its kind to be implemented by Qtel, with Internet speeds of up to 100 Mbps, and will change the way people experience online education and entertainment.

Operator Leader's Vision

Mohamed Elmandjra
Chief Executive Officer
Meditel

Mohamed Elmandjra began his career in 1991 at General Electric Medical Systems Europe leading marketing activities for the Magnetic Resonance Imaging. In 1994, he was asked to join GE Medical headquarters in Milwaukee WI to lead product development for advanced MRI technologies which represented an $800 M business worldwide. Dr. Elmandjra left GE in 1997 to join ADAC Laboratories as Vice President of Marketing. ADAC was a publicly traded company and the world leader in Nuclear Medicine, another advanced imaging modality helping in the diagnosis of cancer and cardiac disease. In 1999, Mohamed was named Vice-President and General Manager. In December 2000, ADAC was acquired by Philips for $ 420M and he was named Senior Vice President of International Operations at Philips. He left Philips in December 2001 to take the position of President and Chief Executive Officer at ViOptix , a medical high tech company in Silicon Valley. Under his leadership, the company successfully raised venture capital, completed product development and FDA clearance and is commercialized a revolutionary technology in the US, China and Japan. In 2006, he joined Masimo Corporation as President OEM. The company conducted a successful IPO which was the 8th best IPO of 2007 in the US and the 5th largest Medical Device deal IPO in history. Since March 2008, he has been the CEO at Méditel, the second telecom operator in Morocco and one of the country's largest companies. Mohamed Elmandjra holds a Ph.D. in Bioengineering from the University of Pennsylvania, a Masters in Biophysics and an MBA from the University of Chicago. Early in his career, he taught at the University and authored a dozen scientific papers and lectured at British, American and French universities. Dr Elmandjra received numerous awards and has been featured in The Who's Who, Silicon Valley Business Journal, NBC, Moroccan TV, World Business Review, Oxford Business Group, Jeune Afrique and many other publications. In 2008, he was voted 4th "Best CEO" in Morocco.

Q.   How do you foresee the content industry in light of sustainable internet model?

A.   The content industry will continue to be under tremendous pressure as the internet community continues to grow. The online search companies, web hosting, online payment companies and others will continue to take more advantage of the internet growth. The DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act) signed in 1998 was put in place in order to keep the powers balanced between the two parties. What we have seen recently is that the content industry launched a series of legal battles and many other political actions in order to make some amendments to balance powers again.

Q.   With the current information revolution and the ongoing convergence, what is your view point on the broadband sector evolving at a remarkable pace?

A.   The broadband sector will continue to grow at a remarkable pace. The emerging countries are still lagging behind in terms of internet penetration and the demand is getting bigger and bigger. There will be also an organic growth driven by the new digital generations. The demand on data intensive applications (video and multimedia content) will continue to drive the broadband evolution.

Q.   How do you look at the alliance and knowledge sharing among different stakeholders, as appropriate, to facilitate internet governance?

A.   All stakeholders being content providers, internet service providers and end users will have to work together to facilitate the internet governance and help build sustainable models that will support the growing demand.

Q.   How do you look at broadband as a general purpose technology facilitator for society?

Broadband is more than a technology facilitator, it became the cornerstone of every initiative or action that will bring any society forward.

Q.   Despite a rapid traffic increase and generally flat relative revenues are a key economic performance challenge faced by all network operators, what strategy do you think should be followed to overcome this issue?

A.   I will address questions 5 to 9 together because they are somehow interlinked. There are few business models that could overcome the issue of increasing traffic vs. flat revenues. Each one of them has pros and cons. The regulation bodies will push more for strong net neutrality that plays against any model where the content provider has to pay for a premium in order to see their services delivered with a differentiated quality of service. While this model will drive the operator revenues up, it will put more pressure on the investment. The other model where the end user pays for the services could suit the regulator bodies. However it could be challenging to implement in competitive markets where the operators are still going after market share in a low penetrated environments. All business models could have a positive impact in the eyes of all stakeholders depending on the market and the maturity of broadband and internet penetration. This is why the regulators should not preempt any law that could eliminate one or more of the existing models that have been succesfully deployed within few markets.

Q.   How you look at the broadband industry in SAMENA region keeping in view the significance of internet policy dynamics?

A.   In the region there is a significant question of content and business model that needs to be addressed and that is specific. It would be a mistake to keep observing and waiting for the european, or american markets to develop a model that we would then adopt. An independent approach should be taken to manage the next development in our sector

Global Rank of SAMENA Countries
"Impact of ICT on Access to Basic Services"

Image Source: SAMENA Telecommunications Council
Data Source: The Global Information Technology Report 2012 by World Economic Forum

Regional Rank of SAMENA Countries
"Impact of ICT on Access to Basic Services"

Regional Rank **Data Not Available**

Image Source: SAMENA Telecommunications Council
Data Source: The Global Information Technology Report 2012 by World Economic Forum

REGULATORY NEWS

FCC Boosts Sprint LTE Plans with 800 MHz Decision

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has voted to remove technical restrictions on the 800 MHz frequency band, allowing mobile operators to utilize the spectrum for 3G and Long Term Evolution (LTE) services. According to Fierce Wireless, a five-member board made the decision, voting unanimously in favor of the plans, which will affect all holders of 800 MHz Specialized Mobile Radio (SMR) licenses. The decision alters the FCC's rules to allow geographically-based SMR licensees to operate across contiguous channels, without a rigid channel spacing requirement or bandwidth limitation. Until now, the restrictions have limited operations using the 800MHz band to 2G services.

One of the prime beneficiaries of the decision is likely to be Sprint Nextel, which has previously expressed an interest in deploying LTE services over its 800MHz spectrum by 2014; the band currently houses Sprint's iDEN network. At a press briefing hosted by senior company executives it was revealed that the company had already received 3GPP certification for 'Band Class 26' to re-use its 800MHz spectrum for LTE, placing the ball in the FCC's hands.

ARCEP Opens Net Neutrality Report to Public Consultation

French telecom regulator ARCEP has submitted to public consultation until 20 June a draft version of its report on net neutrality to parliament and the government. The authority argues that competition and transparency need to be complemented by other actions in the areas of QoS, interconnection and traffic management. ARCEP will adopt a decision this summer which specifies QoS indicators for wireline networks to be measured and made public. It finds that there is no need to strengthen the regulatory framework for the interconnection business model at this stage, but will continue to regularly collect information to keep track of trends and take action accordingly. ARCEP has taken an inventory of traffic management practices, the differentiated treatment of internet traffic streams such as throttling, blocking or priority queues being employed by operators. It has noticed a decrease in the use of such practices since September 2010, thanks to competition, especially on mobile networks. The authority has called for the steady elimination of service blocking (VoIP, P2P) on mobile networks. It can enforce its recommendations if the market fails to make sufficient progress on its own.

Taiwan: Govt Launches Mobile Internet Speed Tests

Taiwan's government has opened a mobile internet speed testing program. The cabinet's Board of Science and Technology has established a testing website where mobile internet users can log on and take part in the program by downloading an application. The move is part of a cabinet initiative to improve mobile internet speed around the country. The speed testing program will be carried out over four years with a pilot to run in two stages between May and July and from August to November this year. The results will be used as a reference by the National Communications Commission to carry out further testing in the future. Users will also need to download an application developed by the center onto their smartphones to enable the testing to be carried out. The application is only available at present for Android phones.

UAE Launches 'My Number, My Identity' Campaign

The UAE's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has introduced the 'My Number, My Identity' campaign, as part of efforts to register mobile subscribers. Run with operators Etisalat and Du, the campaign aims to increase awareness of the new registration procedures. The newly launched campaign highlights the importance of the mobile subscribers' role in protecting their SIM cards, which are national resources that should be used responsibly. These should not be given out to other users to avoid any misuse that may occur, as the registered owner of the number will be legally and financially accountable. The new procedures require the licensees to fully update the personal data of all mobile subscribers to ensure the accuracy of information provided to the regulator.

Afghanistan Issues 3G License to MTN

The Afghanistan telecommunications ministry and the Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority (ATRA) have issued a 3G license to MTN, which paid USD 25 million for the spectrum license. This is the second 3G license that has been issued in Afghanistan. In March, Etisalat secured a 3G license and other operators have expressed an interest in 3G licenses as well. The communications ministry said it hoped to increase the number of internet users in the country to 50 percent of the population within the next two years, with help of 3G services.

Kuwait Government to Regulate ISP Licenses

Kuwaiti Minister of Communications Salem Al-Othaina has issued an order to regulate the licenses of ISPs. The ministry said that there are seventeen clauses regulating the licenses of ISPs in Kuwait. The minister said the decision invalidates all previous licences. Interested companies and establishments that are technically and financially competent should re-apply for licenses. The statement added that applicants should present documents to prove the claim of prior experience, which will be necessary when their applications are presented to the relevant committee. This committee will review all applications for onward presentation to the minister for approval or rejection. The cost of administering a temporary license is KWD 75,000, which is non-refundable.

Colombia to Award 4G Spectrum in September

Colombia's ICT Ministry and the National Spectrum Agency (Agencia Nacional del Espectro - ANE) have announced they will soon launch a spectrum tender for provision of 4G services. According to the tender schedule, published on the ANE website, interested parties will be invited to submit their bids starting 4 July. The spectrum is expected to be awarded in September. The tender will include 225 MHz of spectrum in the 1850-1990 MHz, 1710-1755 MHz, 2110-2155 MHz and 2500-2690 MHz frequency bands. Additionally, Oscar Leon, head of ANE, announced that Colombia will increase the spectrum caps. Thus the amount of frequencies to be assigned to one operator will now be limited to 85 MHz for high frequency bands and 30 MHz for low frequency bands.

Morocco to Get 4G Licenses in Early 2013

Morocco's telecoms watchdog, the Telecommunication Regulatory National Agency (ANRT), says it is looking to launch a tender for 4G cellular licenses later this year. The head of ANRT, Azdine el-Mountassir Billah, told that the concessions will be awarded to winning bidders at the start of 2013, following a process set to start in autumn 2012, and with LTE networks possibly being launched by late-2013. The Moroccan wireless market is currently home to three players: market leader Maroc Telecom, Medi Telecom (Meditel) and Wana. According to TeleGeography's GlobalComms Database, Maroc Telecom claimed 47 percent of the country's 36.55 million mobile users at the end of 2011, while Meditel claimed 33 percent and Wana accounted for around 20 percent of all subscribers.

Kenyan Govt to Arbitrate Over Mobile Termination Rates

The Kenyan government says it will intervene to resolve a row about mobile termination rates. Information and Communications Permanent Secretary Bitange Ndemo said that his ministry will convene a meeting at the earliest opportunity to give the operators a chance to listen to one another and agree on an acceptable cost for mobile termination rates. Ndemo said the operators are now divided into two groups of two each. Ndemo said the intervention is an international practice where operators come together and agree on a way forward. It comes at a time when the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) has commissioned a new study that it says will inform the decision of the direction of the rates. Safaricom and Orange Kenya called for a new study to determine rates whereas Airtel and Yu say that the sector should continue on the reduction glide path adopted in 2010.

A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN SAMENA REGION
Active Consultations & Invitations for Feedback

UAE

The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued a public consultation on the Spectrum Band Plan (790-862 MHz and 694-790 MHz). In keeping with its values of transparency and sector engagement, the TRA wishes to study and plan these frequency ranges expected to be vacated by the Broadcasting after digital switch over from analog television broad-casting. As the data traffic is growing on mobile networks and there is an increasing demand to offer more spectrum for mobile broadband to enable higher data rate ser-vices, the TRA strives to meet the needs of the sector and seeks the views and feed-back from the sector for the planning of these bands. The purpose of this document is to invite comments from all concerned stakeholders regarding the TRA's intention to review and plan the spectrum allocations in the bands 790-862 MHz and 694-790 MHz. The last date to submit responses to this consultation has been fixed as July 5, 2012. (May 31, 2012) www.tra.gov.ae

The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) intended to develop a new policy regarding the Space Telecommunications and has issued a public consultation paper on the Outline for a new TRA Policy on Space Telecommunications. The consultation has been issued to keep abreast of developments to better involve all stakeholders. The purpose of this public consultation is to invite comments on the outline of the proposed TRA Policy-Space Telecommunications, in accordance with the Telecom Law. The comments which are contained in any response to this consultation should be clearly identified with respect

to the specific question in this consultation to which such comments refer. The last date to submit responses to this consultation has been fixed as July 5, 2012. **(May 31, 2012)** **www.tra.gov.ae**

Bahrain

Bahrain's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued an invitation for expressions of interest in paired and non-paired radio spectrum within the band 1900 MHz–2170 MHz. Its purpose is to collect information to use in its analysis of the market demands for spectrum comprising 55 MHz within the band. The TRA proposes to offer unassigned spectrum in the band to the three existing licensed public mobile operators (Batelco, Zain and Viva). This spectrum amounts to a total of 55 MHz comprising 15 MHz of unpaired spectrum suitable for TDD applications and 40 MHz of paired spectrum with a separation of 190 MHz, suitable for FDD or TDD applications. It is intended that this spectrum will be included in a future tender for public mobile system licenses, which together with additional spectrum should be capable of facilitating advanced, post third generation mobile systems. Therefore the current planned release of un-assigned spectrum will be for a period of six months. The license may be renewed for further periods (currently of unspecified duration), expiring on the date that the future license award process commences, which will assign this spectrum to a successful bidder. This is envisaged to be within the period from Q4 2012 to mid-2013. **(March 2, 2012)** **www.telegeography.com**

Country-Wise Policy & Regulatory Developments

Afghanistan
Board Chairman: Mr. Abdul WakilShergul
[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)]
In a meeting with his Afghan counterpart, the Iranian Telecoms Minister Reza Taqipour has expressed Iran's readiness to provide Afghanistan with technical assistance and increase the level of cooperation between the two nations. Taqipour met with the head of Afghanistan's Ministry of Communications and IT (MCIT) Amir Sangin to discuss professional cooperation between the two authorities. Amongst the projects proposed, Iran offered to provide its neighbor with equipment and software and aid in the establishment of a training centre. (May 9, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

Algeria
Chairperson: Ms. Zohra Derdouri
[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]
Orascom Telecom said on that an Algerian court had confirmed fines against its Algerian subsidiary Djezzy but had suspended a jail sentence on a member of the unit's senior executive team. The court of appeal confirmed a judgment against Orasom Telecom Algerie (OTA) that consisted of fines of about US$ 1.3 billion. OTA said it still maintains that its senior executive has acted in compliance with the law, and OTA is taking the necessary steps to file an appeal with the Algerian Supreme Court. It said the lodging of the appeal will provisionally suspend the judgment. The criminal custodial sentence previously ordered against a member of OTA's management has been suspended. However, OTA has been ordered to pay the whole amount of the fines. (May 28, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Bahrain
Chairman & General Director: Mr. Mohamed Bubashait
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has announced that over 28,000 people have used Mobile Number Portability since it was introduced last July. The country's implementation of MNP is 'recipient-led', where subscribers only need to contact the new operator. In addition, once a subscriber decides to move, the old operator may not directly contact the subscriber, with the purpose of trying to convince the subscriber to return, for a period of 3 months. SystorIntereurope Systems is managing the Number Portability Central System, which is the component of the process responsible for coordinating the exchange of messages between Licensed Operators as well as maintaining the authoritative database of ported numbers and performance metrics of all Licensed Operators. (May 21, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued an order setting 'fair and reasonable' charges for regulated wholesale access and interconnection services offered by Batelco to alternative operators, modifying the incumbent telco's previously published terms in its Reference Offer for 2012. Amongst the charges being reduced are: bitstream and wholesale DSL broadband access (by between 2% and 26%); interconnection links (30%-50%); domestic leased lines (up to 46%); international leased half circuits to Gulf countries (28%-68%), and to Southeast/East Asia, Europe and the USA (41%-45%). Interconnection service charges will remain static, as will duct access charges. The TRA is also introducing a maximum price that Batelco can charge.

(May 15, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**
Bahrain is set to appoint a consultant to help the telecom authority in designing and detailing the 4G long-term evolution (LTE) licensing process on July 12, an official from the country's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority told. TRA will be inviting tenders for 4G LTE spectrum on October 12, and will receive bids in January next year. The kingdom is preparing for the post 3G mobile services to deliver ultra-high speed broadband communications over mobile networks. The 2.6 GHz frequency band is the preferred spectrum for most public mobile operators in the MEA (Middle East and Africa) and European regions and would become available in two tranches. (May 4, 2012) **http://gulfnews.com**

Bangladesh
Chairman: Maj. Gen. Zia Ahmed
[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]
According to data from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) country ended April with 90.64 million mobile subscribers, up from 89.47 million in February. Grameenphone led with 37.748 million subscribers in April, up from 37.63 million at end-March, followed by Banglalink with 25.00 million customers, up from 24.74 million a month earlier. Robi Axiata raised its subscriber base to 18.24 million from 17.66 million, and Airtel Bangladesh ended April with 6.54 million customers, up from 6.33 million in March. Citycell had 1.80 million subscribers, up from 1.78 million in March, and Teletalk ended April with 1.30 million customers, up from 1.28 million in the previous month. (May 29, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

The regulator BTRC is set to impose a fine equivalent to US$50 per SIM card that is used for illegal VoIP services. The regulator said that it had observed an increase in VoIP traffic for international calls from people using unregistered SIM cards. According to the regulator, 41% illegal VoIP traffic was routed over the Banglalink network followed by state owned Teletalk (38%), Airtel (18%), BTCL and Robi Axita both with 1% each. The regulator will be imposing the fine on the mobile networks, who should be verifying the identity of each SIM card purchaser prior to activation. It is estimated that the country receives almost 55-60 million minutes international call a day, of with 50 million minutes comes via licensed connections and the rest via illegal SIM Boxes and VoIP traffic. The regulator is just waiting final approval from the government before it starts imposing the fines. (May 22, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

The regulator BTRC is considering building a common platform for call interconnections to reduce connectivity problems following the issuance of new gateway licenses. At present ANS (Access Network Service) operators, including mobile, public switched telephone network (PSTN) and Internet Protocol Telephony Service Providers (IPTSP), take interconnection exchange (ICX) services from three operators, while four international gateway (IGW) operators are responsible for international call transmission. Recently, though, the BTRC has issued new gateway licenses, raising the number of ICX operators to 25 and the number of IGW to 26. ANS operators fear that there could be a call connectivity problem as they have to enter agreements with all the ICX operators, which could cause technical difficulties and extra expenditure. BTRC Chairman said that the commission is

sitting with the ANS, ICX and IGW operators in phases to solve the interconnection problem. (May 7, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Bangladesh's four GSM mobile operators are going to re-arrange their frequencies in 1,800 MHz band in bid to have continuous bands instead of the existing split bands. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (BTRC) has initiated the process to make Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi and Airtel more efficient. The spectrum re-arrangement process is expected to start at midnight on May 4. The frequencies had been distributed among the operators in a scattered manner, which rendered a significant amount of them unusable. (May 3, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Egypt
Executive President: Dr. AmrBadawi
[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]
Ministry of Communications has said mobile phone subscriptions in the country climbed 19% to 112.67 million in March 2012, compared with the previous year, putting mobile penetration at 113% in a population of 82 million. The number of internet users also rose 28% to 31 million, the ministry said. Internet penetration is now at 38% of the population, it said. (May 22, 2012) **www.ameinfo.com**

Egypt looks set to see a fourth mobile phone services firm after the country's telecoms watchdog said it would begin taking tenders for a virtual network license. The National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA) made the announcement at a meeting chaired by Minister of Communications and Information Technology. The NTRA will form a committee and define the regulatory framework for the services within three months, the regulator said in statement. The details will then be presented to telecom companies interested in the tender. The MVNO license will grant the eventual owner the use of one of Egypt's three licensed mobile operators – Vodafone Egypt, Etisalat or Mobinil. The firm will essentially buy mobile services from the existing firm then resell them to customers. The NTRA's decision comes after much debate in the Egyptian telecoms market. State landline monopoly Telecom Egypt (TE) has announced its aim to obtain the license to the chagrin of the country's three mobile operators. The latter believe TE's potential to offer mobile services while being the only telecoms company with the right to establish landlines gives it an unfair advantage in the marketplace. (May 7, 2012) **http://english.ahram.org.eg**

Iran
Minister of Communications & Information Technology: Dr. Reza Taghipour
[Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC)]
Iran has the highest amount if people using internet in the whole Middle East, Iranian Communications Minister said. He said that over 34 million of people in Iran are using internet, adding that currently there are 1400 online services that monitor both governmental and civilian internet activity. Two months ago Minister said internal networks would be separated from internet by launching national information network. The issue of security would be resolved through running the national network, Minister said adding the national information network needs all-out cooperation of the public and private sector, since it will not work like internet at the beginning. (May 18, 2012) **Trend News Agency 2012**

MTN Irancell has been ordered by the Iranian government to expand coverage of its mobile network to Abu Musa and other disputed islands in the Persian Gulf. The company has an agreement with Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat), to provide coverage in some areas of the Persian Gulf that are out of Irancell's footprint, resulting in Iranian visitors to Abu Musa receiving SMS messages from the Etisalat network welcoming them to the UAE. Iran and the UAE both claim sovereignty over Abu Musa and two other islands, the Greater and Lesser Tunbsm, near the Strait of Hormuz. MTN Irancell is the country's second largest wireless operator by subscribers, with a market share of 44.0% at the end of March 2012, behind market leader Mobile Communication Company of Iran (53.7%). (May 18, 2012) **Dow Jones Newswires**

The National Data Network will be launched within three months, Minister of Information and Communications Technology Reza Taqipour told. The infrastructure for the National Data Network has almost been completed, he said. According to Iranian officials, the National Data Network has been developed to increase the speed of access to the net and enhance the security of computer networks. (May 15, 2012) **www.zawya.com**

In a meeting with his Afghan counterpart, the Iranian telecoms minister Reza Taqipour has expressed Iran's readiness to provide Afghanistan with technical assistance and increase the level of cooperation between the two nations. Taqipour met with the head of Afghanistan's Ministry of Communications and IT (MCIT) Amir Sangin to discuss professional cooperation between the two authorities. Amongst the projects proposed, Iran offered to provide its neighbor with equipment and software and aid in the establishment of a training centre. (May 9, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

Iraq
CEO: Dr. Buhan Shawi
[Communication & Media Commission (CMC)]
Telecomm Regulator CMC held a technical meeting with country's WLL operators (Kalimat, Fanoos, and Itisaluna) to discuss issues faced by the companies including interconnection, high speed WiMAX services. The operators raised the issue of EVDO channels and clarified that it was necessary to increase the capacities with one extra channel through using (RIV.B), which provides greater capacity and more services. CMC demanded the three companies to provide it with a detailed study on the subject that includes the possibility of changing the channels allocated to them, and the negative impact left on the citizens as a result of such change. (May 15, 2012) **www.cmc.iq**

Jordan
Chairman & CEO: Mr. Fadi Kawar
[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]
Jordanian cellcos have warned that a planned increase in electricity prices would have a negative impact on the telecoms sector, the Jordan Times reports. Spokesmen from all three of the Kingdom's cellcos – Jordan Telecom Group (Orange Jordan), Zain Jordan and Umniah – have protested against the planned pricing change, which would see costs for power increasing by between 8% and 40%. Due to the intensely competitive nature of Jordan's wireless sector, operators are reluctant to raise tariffs to recoup the additional expenses, and the costs could instead eat into funds earmarked for future developments, to the detriment

of the sector as a whole. Alternatively, the trio have considered infrastructure sharing as a possible solution, as well as converting base stations to cheaper energy sources. The providers added that they were already beset by taxes and could not absorb further levies. (May 18, 2012)
www.telegeography.com

Kuwait
Minister of Communication: Dr. Mohammed Al-Baseeri
[Ministry of Communication (MOC)]

Kuwait's Ministry of Communications (MoC), which acts as both the country's telecoms regulator and monopoly fixed line telephone operator, says it is owed KWD112.8 million (US$400 million) in unpaid bills. According to a report the Ministry has no clear mechanism for the collection of unpaid bills, which is why outstanding debts are accumulating. Government departments owe the MoC almost KWD12 million, the report suggests, while one ISP owes around KWD3 million and a satellite service provider owes KWD2 million. (May 31, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

Minister of Communications has issued an order to regulate the licenses of ISPs. The ministry now offers one-year temporary administrative licenses to enable ISPs to continue serving their clients. The ministry said there are seventeen clauses regulating the licenses of ISPs in Kuwait. The minister said the decision invalidates all previous licenses. Interested companies and establishments that are technically and financially competent should re-apply for licenses. The statement added that applicants should present documents to prove the claim of prior experience, which will be necessary when their applications are presented to the relevant committee. This committee will review all applications for onward presentation to the minister for approval or rejection. The cost of administering a temporary license is KWD 75,000, which is non-refundable. (May 17, 2012) **Daily Al-Seyassah**

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

The Telecommunication Regulatory National Agency (ANRT) says it is looking to launch a tender for 4G cellular licenses later this year. The head of ANRT, Azdine el-Mountassir Billah told that the concessions will be awarded to winning bidders at the start of 2013, following a process set to start in autumn 2012, and with LTE networks possibly being launched by late-2013. The Moroccan wireless market is currently home to three players: market leader Maroc Telecom, Medi Telecom (Meditel) and Wana. Maroc Telecom claimed 47% of the country's 36.55 million mobile users at the end of 2011, while Meditel claimed 33% and Wana accounted for around 20% of all subscribers. (May 21, 2012) www.telegeography.com

The Telecommunication Regulatory National Agency (ANRT) has unveiled plans to float a tender in the autumn to sell 4G licenses, in a move that may allow the entry of a fourth operator to the market. The country's telecoms market is currently dominated by Vivendi's Maroc Telecom, France Telecom's affiliate Meditelecom and Wana, owned by a holding controlled by Kuwait's Zain and Moroccan conglomerate ONA. ANRT plans to award the licenses at the start of 2013 and expects they will be operational by the end of that year at the earliest, the regulator said. (May 20, 2012) www.ameinfo.com

The Telecommunication Regulatory National Agency (ANRT) conducted a study to develop a national action plan for the development of high and very high speed data networks in the country. The main results of the said study includes: coverage of all national population by the second generation mobile networks and the back bone operators have only covered the commercially viable urban areas. (May 15, 2012) www.anrt.net.ma

Nepal
Chairman: Mr.Bhesh Raj Kanel
[Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTR)]

Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA), Nepal has a teledensity of about 62%, largely due to the fast growth of mobile phone services which alone contributed about 54% to the overall teledensity. The number of mobile customers in the country has seen a growth from 14.22 million in mid-March to 14.50 million in mid-April. Of the total, 13.65 million are GSM users, up from 13.37 million a month earlier, the telecom service regulator's report stated. The remaining 0.28 million consumers use CDMA popularly known as Sky Phone — of Nepal Telecom. The private telephone service provider Ncell led the market with 7.70 million GSM subscribers, up from 7.46 million in mid-March, followed by a public limited company Nepal Telecom with a customer base of 5.95 million, up from 5.90 million a month earlier. Earlier, Nepal Telecom was leading the market but with its aggressive expansion Ncell took over, the report showed. Similarly, the number of CDMA users stood at 0.85 million from 8.48 million a month ago, it said, adding that the growth of fixed line telephones has, however, slowed down as the number of fixed telephony users in Nepal rose to 0.85 million in mid-April, from 0.84 million in mid-March. Of the total, 0.62 million are PSTN users and 0.22 million are WLL users, the figures of the authority revealed, adding that Nepal Telecom's PSTN base increased to 6.23 million from 0.62 million in a month. The subscriber base of STM Telecom has, however, remained stable at 5,181 and Smart Telecom has 598 PSTN subscribers. Nepal Telecom also has 0.14 million WLL users while United Telecom Ltd (UTL) has 71,247 WLL subscribers until mid-April. (May 29, 2012) www.thehimalayantimes.com

Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) has approved a regulation to ensure quality of equipment and mobile handsets that will control the import of the sub-standard mobile handsets in the country. The type approval is based on a test report and certificate of conformity issued by the manufacturers. The regulator will also have to approve equipment of those manufacturers approved by it, the equipment and mobile sets of the NTA-approved international standardization bodies or regulatory inspection and certifying bodies will also have to be approved again. The new regulation has also made the telecom service providers liable to provide the IMEI and ESN number of mobile handsets of their consumers, if the security agencies need it. Similarly, the mandatory provision of approval of equipment will stop the import of illegal equipment related to the telecom sector, the authority added. (May 14, 2012) www.thehimalayantimes.com

The Nepalese government is set to approve the unified licensing proposal and the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) has stepped up efforts for the new regime. The regulator proposed a licensing fee of NPR 295 million, a license renewal fee of NPR 20 billion, royalty of 4% of income, and has set 2% of income for the Rural Telecommunication

Development Fund. All six telecom service providers — Nepal Telecom, Ncell, UTL, Nepal Satellite, Smart, and STM — would acquire the license with the same provisions after the unified licensing scheme takes effect. However, an unnamed ministry official told that it is not practical to set the same license renewal fee for the new license when the regulator cannot collect the fee currently from providers. Furthermore, the unified license proposal is silent on the contentious GSM spectrum issue. The NTA cannot provide GSM spectrum to all six providers under the new provision. (May 3, 2012) T**he Himalayan Times**

Oman
Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Hamed Al-Rawahi
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]
Though Oman has taken huge strides in the way it uses information technology, there remains a need for proper strategic planning on improving connectivity and proper application of the solutions available, according to a visiting Lithuanian official. "A strategic plan on how to use the latest communication solutions is important for Oman to excel in the IT field, and Lithuania is in a better position to provide both, the strategic plan and solutions needed," Vytautas Vitkauskas, President of the Association of Information Technology, Telecommunications and Office Equipment of Lithuania, said. (May 7, 2012) **www.zawya.com**

Pakistan
Chairman: Dr. Muhammad Yaseen
[Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)]
The Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) has published draft broadband quality of service rules. Under the draft regulations, broadband service providers will need to meet a number of parameters such as network availability; bandwidth; download speed, which must be at least 60% of the advertised speed of the broadband service plan and this must be experienced at least 70% of the time; upload speed; upload/download speed ratio; packet loss; and more. The rules also provide for non-technical standards such as customer service and outages. (May 29, 2012)
www.telecompaper.com

Pakistan has seen its broadband user base hit one million. Pakistan's Prime Minister was the one millionth customer as he subscribed to PTCL's broadband service. On the occasion, PTCL President Walid Rishad said that Pakistan would have over 5 million broadband users in the next five years. (May 21, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

According to figures from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), country's wireless local loop subscriber base increased to 2.98 million in March from 2.70 million in February,. Wireless local loop (WLL) teledensity was stable at 1.6%. PTCL led in WLL customers with 1.43 million, the same as in February. Telecard's customer base was stable at 744,685 customers while WorldCall increased its subscriber base slightly to 390,414 versus 390,023 in February. Wateen grew its customer base to 286,747 from 278,889 customers a month earlier while Sharp ended the month with 71,599 subscribers, up from 67,475. Link Direct's customer base shrank to 39,648 from 41,192 subscribers, and NTC's base was stable at 11,823 customers. (May 10, 2012)
www.telecompaper.com

Pakistan ended March with 118.32 million mobile subscribers, up from 116.21 million in February, and total mobile teledensity stood at 68.2% versus 67.2% a month earlier,

according to figures from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). Mobilink led the market with 35.79 million subscribers, up from 35.30 million million a month earlier, followed by Telenor which had 29.35 million customers, compared with 28.84 million in February. Ufone's subscriber base grew to 23.12 million from 22.42 million, and Warid ended the month with 14.40 million customers, down from 14.69 million a month earlier. Zong grew its customer base to 15.66 million from 14.95 million customers in the previous month. (May 10, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Figures from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) show Pakistan ended December 2011 with 3.10 million fixed local line subscribers, up from 2.98 million in September 2011. PTCL led the market with 2.96 million fixed customers, up from 2.85 million in the September quarter, followed by NTC with 106,502 subscribers, up slightly from 106,027. Brain ended the year with 13,307 fixed customers versus 13,861 in September, and World Call's subscriber base slipped to 9,924 from 9,963 in September. Union Communication grew its subscriber base to 4,175 from 4,150 and NayaTel increased its customer base to 2,294 from 1,839 in September. Fixed teledensity stood at 1.8%. (May 10, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

The reportedly delay in the auction of much-awaited 3G spectrum has created uncertainty amongst potential buyers as they have not been invited yet in the bidding process. The Finance ministry has estimated to generate Rs.75 billion from the auction of 3G license during ongoing financial year 2011-12. Earlier the government was planning to launch the auction of 3G licenses on March 29,2012 in which potential bidders were due to submit expressions of interest from January 21, but they have yet not been invited to do so. Pakistani cell phone subscribers will be able to transmit and receive high speed data through their mobile phones through 3G. All the dates announced earlier have been put on hold and no official notification has been issued yet. The Government has estimated to generate $ 630 million from the auction of 3-G, having set a base price of US$210 million for each license but failed to do so yet. The failure of launching of the 3G spectrum till the end of June 30 this year will leave influential negative impact and will further swelling the already widen budget deficit of the country. Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) is the third-ranked mobile operator, with a 19% market share, behind Norway's Telenor and Mobilink, a unit of Egypt's Orascom Telecom, which respectively claims 25 and 30% of Pakistan's 116 million mobile subscribers. At a senate standing committee specially convened at the Cabinet Secretariat in Islamabad, the senate voted against relaxing the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Rules so that the 3G license auction could go forward as planned. The official of PTA states that, "The current schedule of Mobile Cellular Auction is under review. Fresh dates will be posted in due course of time." Rather regrettably, the constant delay has given the auction the façade of a joke than anything else. Since myriad factors have been involved in the auctioning, the reasons for the delay are not very clear cut either, nor could one say that only the cabinet, or only the stakeholders or only the relevant government body are responsible for the delay. Each has its own point of view, and is trying to introduce the 3G licenses in a manner in which, they feel, that it will, eventually, help to benefit the country in the best possible manner. Chairman PTA had requested the government to wave off the PPRA rule to allow a quick transaction of the 3G licensing but no development in this

relation has been done yet. Pakistani mobile operators have been contemplating the launch of 3G Technology, for at least the past 3 years. It is pertinent to mention here that after the multi-billion corruption scandal in India, authorities in Pakistan are hesitant to launch the 3G licensing. (May 8, 2012) **www.onlinenews.com.pk**

Qatar
Executive Director: Ms. Christa Cramer
[The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR)]

Telecoms regulator, ictQATAR has launched a campaign to ensure that health and safety standards are fully met for radio frequency emissions from 2G and 3G mobile network base stations. In 2010, the regulator and the Ministry of Environment developed comprehensive emission standards for mobile network base stations based on standards set forth by International Commission for Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), which are recognized and adopted by World Health Organizations (WHO). The tests will be conducted across the country, with more than 70 sites having already been tested in 2012. ictQATAR recognizes that there is considerable concern about the safety of emissions from mobile network base stations located on towers and buildings and has worked with the Ministry of Environment to ensure the highest international standards are met in Qatar. The tests are being carried out by an unnamed international firm to ensure that the findings are independent and not biased in any way. There are currently 1,300 mobile base stations in Qatar and numbers are growing. ictQATAR aims to test all sites within four years. The emission testing includes a wideband testing, and at some sites a comprehensive narrowband testing where individual frequencies and field strengths of each emission present are measured individually to ensure overall measurement accuracy. Results of the site testing will be published upon completion. (May 2, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

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

The Saudi Arabian telco Etihad Etisalat, which trades as Mobily has awarded India-based software vendor Xius a mobile virtual network enabler (MVNE) management contract. With the Saudi government preparing to offer its first mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) licenses, network owners such as Mobily need to be ready to host resellers. Mobily has therefore contracted Xius to deploy its Mobile Services Platform infrastructure and framework. Mobily is the second largest cellular operator in Saudi Arabia, with 21.3 million subscribers and 37% of the overall wireless market at the end of 2011. (May 16, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

In line with the directive of Communication and Information Technology Commission (CITC) to end the practice of sale of SIM Cards without acquiring customer identification, the Riyadh governorate has warned of punitive measures against violators. The governorate has directed mobile operators to strictly adhere to the directives and do not sell SIM cards without identification. CITC Governor recently reiterated that the commission is firm in enforcing its decision. The Governor said that anonymous SIM cards are posing a severe threat to national security. (May 7, 2012) **www.saudigazette.com.sa**

At nearly 200% mobile penetration, the Saudi mobile market should be close to maturity, but surprisingly it is still growing, despite possible slowing in H212, Fitch said in a study. The main growth engine is demand for mobile broadband services, which has offset the expected decline in voice services, mainly for the leading companies, STC and Mobily. The increase in mobile revenue is also due to a continued increase in the number of post-paid subscribers due to increasing data use, and increase in business sector revenue due to strong private investment. The main catalyst is domestic subscriber growth in mobile broadband driven by LTE network expansion and the widespread adoption of Smartphones and tablets. Saudi operators still have pricing power because the market still looks like a profitable duopoly despite the entry of Zain in 2008. Zain has struggled to establish itself partly as a result of limited flexibility caused by its heavy debt burden. Data revenue rose by 25 to 30 percent during Q112 compared with Q111, and data revenue as a percentage of total mobile revenue is rapidly approaching 25 percent after a robust 2011 and Q112. Smartphone penetration is still low in the Kingdom (estimated at 25 percent) compared with the UAE (estimated at 47 percent), but it is catching up fast due to favorable demographics. A strongly growing and young population represents strong pillars for future growth. Fitch estimates that Zain only has a market share of 14 percent, and its revenue share is lower at 9 to 10 percent. Its planned financial restructuring will grant the company more financial flexibility; Fitch expects this to be carried out in Q212. The restructuring will support the company's coverage in the market, and also improve its reputation after years of weaker performance. Zain is also to begin providing mobile phone number portability, mimicking the leaders. However, Zain will have to introduce various offers to gain subscribers and thereby boost its revenue. The main differentiator may be price per minute, but Fitch does not expect the leading operators to enter into price war in the short term while there is still growth in mobile broadband. Innovation that will provide customers with more sophisticated services will be the main area of competition. The top-ranked operators are striving to maintain their core advantage by investing heavily in new technologies. KSA is the first country in MENA where LTE services have already been launched, with all companies involved to some extent, mainly in big cities. Regulation risk may be rising, however, as CITC, the regulator, is considering awarding three MVNO licenses in the medium term. The regulator is considering the experience of other countries in introducing MVNOs into their markets, where they have bolstered competition to provide better-quality services at more favorable prices. This will mean more choice for customers, and better service coverage. (May 3, 2012) **www.zawya.com**

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

The Ministry of Information Technologies and Communication has awarded 3G and a landline operator licenses to Qatar Telecom (Qtel) its Tunisia based subsidiary Tunisiana. The Ministry announced the award of the licenses back in March, but they have now been formally handed over. Tunisiana is the country's largest mobile network by subscribers but unlike its rivals was not able to offer landline or 3G services. The additional licenses were purchased for a combined consideration of 205 million Tunisian Dinars (US$135 million). In line with regulatory guidelines, the 3G network will be launched in July 2012, with fixed-line services launching at the beginning of 2013. (May 7, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

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

According to the figures by the UAE Telecoms Regulatory Authority (TRA), around 293,000 people subscribed to mobile phone services in the UAE in February to boost the total users to a record high of 12.36 million at the end of the first quarter, Emirates 24-7 has reported. This represents a GSM penetration ratio of 153.8% at the end of March. Most of the users are subscribers to pre-paid GSM services, while around 1.4 million are on post-paid plans. Fixed line subscribers totaled 1.88 million at the end of March, an increase of around 18,000 over the previous month, the data showed. (May 26, 2012) **www.ameinfo.com**

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) exemplifies its unwavering commitment to cyber security through its participation in the First International Cyber Security Forum. The TRA initiative, aeCERT- the UAE's Computer Emergency Response Team, is a sponsor of this vitally important event. Protecting national critical infrastructure such as energy and utilities is a primary concern of governments in the region. Ensuring security from physical threats and increasingly of cyber threats due to the vast networks in which these systems operate is essential to safeguarding society. The TRA, through aeCERT, has put in place several contingencies to safeguard the UAE. Many industrial sectors use the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) Systems; it was created for efficiency in business and operations and this forum aims to address the growing need for further security to protect the vital data that the systems hold. aeCERT aims to support the ICT infrastructure and protect it from cyber-attacks by building a secure and safe cyber culture in the country. The team also seeks to fight cybercrime as well as raise information security awareness in the nation, and build national expertise in information security, incident management, and computer forensics. (May 23, 2012) **www.tra.gov.ae**

The UAE delegation at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2012 has the opportunity to highlight its significant achievements during the country workshop held on May 15, the second day of this prestigious international event, in Geneva. The UAE has achieved several milestones with regard to the implementation of the WSIS action lines. Covering a spectrum of development from education to capacity building, the UAE has moved upwards in the ranks to reach its current elevated status on several different fronts. As a strategic partner for the WSIS Forum 2012, we are leading our region by example. Through our participation and strategic partnership, other Arab nations are coming forward and will continue to do so to join this global initiative to lessen the gap between the developed and developing nations with regard to the information society. (May 16, 2012) **www.tra.gov.ae**

As part of its ongoing work to better understand the views of the consumers of telecommunications services in the UAE, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), supported by the Nielsen Company, is to survey around 2,000 households in 2012. The fieldwork, to be conducted by Nielsen will involve face-to-face interviews with residential consumers. Interviews will be held in all Emirates. The TRA and Nielsen appreciate and welcome the support of those residential consumers who are selected to participate in the 2012 residential survey. The survey questionnaire includes a range of questions which will provide the TRA (and Etisalat and du) with important feedback regarding the views of residential consumers on: the usage of services, the prices charged, the range of services provided, the quality of services provided, and the extent to which the UAE licensees are meeting the needs of residential users and providing value for money. On completion of the survey, the TRA will publish a full report to detail its results and findings. (May 9, 2012) **www.tra.gov.ae**

Regulatory Activities Beyond the SAMENA Region

ITU

The 2012 edition of the International Telecommunications Union's regulatory report calls for national plans to speed up broadband roll out and stimulate the development of new digital services. The report, "Trends in Telecommunication Reforms," also calls for national policies to counter emerging legal complexities in the sector. Africa is serviced by more than four international undersea cables including Seacom, EASSY, WACS and Sat-3, with connectivity costs coming down as a result of competition. But affordable Internet services will only be realized once clear-cut broadband policies create an environment that encourages the private sector to deliver access to homes, corporate organizations and rural areas, according to the ITU. Broadband penetration in most African countries including Zambia, Botswana, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of Congo is still very low compared to most parts of the world. According to the ITU, the huge volume of data generated by fixed and mobile broadband applications means that most countries are now facing a critical ICT infrastructure deficit. "Given the importance of broadband to each country's ongoing development, this deficit is fast becoming a major public policy issue requiring the formation of a new cross-sectoral broadband policy framework," according to the report. "Fixed broadband penetration of 26% in industrialized countries contrasts dramatically with penetration of just of just 4.8% in developing nations." Mark Simpson, CEO of the Seacom cable, seems to agree with the report by the ITU. "There is a lot of work to be done before internet services is accessible and affordable to every person on the continent," Simpson said recently. The Seacom cable alone is responsible for more than a 10-fold increase in bandwidth penetration in several under-served countries in Africa. Simpson added, however, that African regulators and operators must focus as much on access networks as they are on submarine cables and back haul connectivity to drive growth.
(May 22, 2012) **ww.pcadvisor.co.uk**

SAMENA

SAMENA Telecommunications Council (SAMENA) and European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO) hold the annual SAMENA Chairmen and CEOs seminar in Hong Kong under the theme "Internet Policy Dynamics: Shaping the Future - How consensus between The Policy Makers, Content Providers and Operators can lead us to Sustainable Digital Economies". More than 65 chief executives and chairmen from leading telecom operators discussed and debated the importance of collaborative efforts in building sustainable Internet business models. HKT, Hong Kong's premier telecommunications service provider, and PCCW Global, an operating division of HKT which provides international connectivity to enterprises and service providers worldwide, are co-sponsors and hosts. SAMENA and ENTO stress that generating additional income is important for global telecom operators, considering flat revenues from traditional services, ever-increasing competition, very high CAPEX costs, and regulatory pressures. Telecom operators need to rethink their Internet business models in light of the recent trends which illustrate that Internet traffic has experienced exponential growth and is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. SAMENA Telecommunications Council's Content Committee has been exploring a number of possible future models that can assist operators to potentially offset the great imbalance between their CAPEX and ROI. The Council released a position paper on "Perspectives on Meeting Massive Growth on Bandwidth Demands" to provide operators with a collective framework conducive to building a sustainable Internet business model jointly. Mr. Sheikh Mohamed Isa Al Khalifa, Group CEO of Batelco and Chairman of SAMENA Telecommunications Council, said, "The ICT ecosystem is very dynamic and the telecom operators should unite to address the changing elements in the industry, specifically in areas such as international telecommunications regulations (ITRs) as well as the building of the new sustainable Internet business model. The telecom operators are facing a critical point in the evaluation of requirements for additional CAPEX investment versus the potential realistic timely return on the same investment from broadband margins." Luigi Gambardella, Chairman of ETNO's Executive Board, said, "It is essential that both SAMENA and ETNO work together to encourage the development of policies that support investment in new infrastructure by stimulating the emergence of a new Internet eco-system that encourages commercial agreements on specific quality of service levels in order to meet customers' needs. Differentiated offers based on QoS would foster investment by telecoms operators while providing for a better user experience for Internet services." Mr. Alex Arena, Group Managing Director of HKT, said, "Telecom service providers face commoditization in their core access businesses, and have therefore looked to content, applications, and other transactional services to find new revenue growth opportunities. Simultaneously, many content providers are seeking other means of distribution using OTT ("Over-The-Top") Internet hoping to maximize their revenues." Mr. Arena added, "The SAMENA Telecommunications Council is actively working towards the development of a viable framework which contemplates a number of forward looking collaborative business models to achieve a successful and mutually valuable working relationship among the parties. HKT is much honored to be hosting this year's SAMENA Chairmen and CEOs Dinner in Hong Kong, bringing a significant number of key telecommunications executives from around the world to discuss and debate these framework proposals. HKT welcomes everyone to participate in the event while leveraging Hong Kong's global ICT leadership position as a platform for new business." (May 27, 2012)
www.samenacouncil.org

GSMA

The GSMA stated that the TRAI's recommendations on the "Auction of Spectrum" will set India back in its goal to deliver "Broadband on Demand" to the citizens of India. The GSMA says that the proposals disregard international best practice in spectrum policy and jeopardize the investment of billions of US dollars in new mobile infrastructure in a sector that either directly, or indirectly, employs almost 10 million people and serves more than 900 million consumers. Reducing the ability of mobile operators to invest in network upgrades and expansion would undermine the ability of India to leverage its telecom infrastructure to empower citizens and businesses, especially those in rural communities, to participate equitably in the Internet economy. For example, the TRAI's proposed reserve prices

for upcoming spectrum auctions are so prohibitively high that they will inevitably curtail mobile operator investment in Mobile Broadband infrastructure and increase prices to consumers. Given the strong correlation between mobile penetration and socio-economic development with a 10% increase in Mobile Broadband penetration delivering as much as US$80 billion of extra revenue for India's transport, healthcare and education sectors by 2015, the GSMA added that the TRAI's recommendations will not serve the interests of the broader Indian economy. "Efforts to squeeze money out of mobile operators for some perceived short-term gain will only reduce investment in networks, inhibit growth of mobile services and drive up consumer prices -- limiting the value the public will derive from the spectrum resource in the long term," said Franco Bernabe, Chairman of the GSMA and Chairman and CEO of Telecom Italia Group. TRAI's recommendations would not only drive up the cost of the mobile spectrum, but would also create artificial scarcity of this critical resource. In advance of license renewal, TRAI has proposed to force current 900 MHz licensees out of the band into the 1800 MHz band. As a result, TRAI would limit the available spectrum in the upcoming 1800 MHz 2G auction and leave the remainder under-utilized for a significant period, creating unnecessary scarcity at a time when India has an opportunity to shape the future of the mobile industry. Earlier this month, the GSMA announced that India was positioned to surpass the US as the second largest Mobile Broadband market in the world within the next four years. In recognition of the threat to this potential, Anne Bouverot, Director General, GSMA, commented, "The GSMA's member operators in India have invested heavily and worked hard to deliver innovative services to consumers and positively impact the broader Indian economy. They are naturally very concerned about the TRAI recommendations, which have the potential to stifle investment in India's mobile sector. The GSMA and its members are seeking an open dialogue with the Government of India on the licensing of the critical spectrum with the aim of finding a solution that will drive investment and growth in mobile communications and more broadly in the Indian economy." (April 27, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

United States

The FCC announced the members of its Open Internet Advisory Committee, which will advise the US regulator on application of its net neutrality rules. Jonathan Zittrain, a Harvard law and Computer Sciences Professor as well as co-founder of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, will serve as chair of the OIAC. David Clark, a scientist at MIT, will serve as vice chair. In addition to other academics and non-profit groups, industry members on the committee include Harvey Anderson from Mozilla, Neil Hunt at Netflix, Charles Kalmanek of AT&T, Kevin McElearney from Comcast, Elaine Paul at Disney, Dennis Roberson representing T-Mobile USA, Chip Sharp from Cisco Systems and Marcus Weldon, CTO at Alcatel-Lucent. The OIAC will hold its first meeting this summer, and the meetings will be open to the public. (May 31, 2012) W**ww.telecompaper.com**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a public notice on May 25, 2012 seeking updated comments on the privacy and data security practices of mobile wireless service providers, focusing in particular on how such practices affect customer-specific information stored on mobile handsets, Smartphones, tablets and other wireless devices. This inquiry follows recent revelations that major

wireless providers use software created by carrier diagnostics firm Carrier IQ. Several carriers have acknowledged that they use the software to capture certain network and end user device information for network diagnostic purposes. That, in turn has spurred litigation, Congressional inquiries, and regulatory inquiries regarding the privacy implications of the use of such software. The FCC had previously looked at privacy protections for wireless customers when condemning "pretexting" practices whereby unauthorized individuals and entities attempted to mislead carriers so as to gain access to subscribers' personal information stored in the carriers' databases. The FCC is stepping into this new debate and asking mobile wireless service providers to describe their practices related to the collection and storage of customer-specific information on mobile devices themselves. The inquiry seeks responses to numerous questions, including those related to: The degree of notice and choice afforded to customers; How current information storage practices serve the needs of both carriers and customers; Whether current practices create risks or vulnerabilities for data security; and, How the current statutory protections afforded to "customer proprietary network information" under 47 U.S.C. § 222 apply to customer-specific information stored on these devices. A number of large wireless service providers have already revealed certain information concerning their use of Carrier IQ software in response to inquiries from Congress. For example, in a letter to Congress AT&T explained that it uses the Carrier IQ software only for the purpose of collecting diagnostic information about the carrier's network in order to improve customer experience. AT&T further explained that it does not use the software to obtain the contents of customers' communications, to track customers' location on the Internet, or to track customers' locations. Other wireless service providers offered similar explanations. In addition, the FCC Staff also released a report on May 25, 2012 on issues arising from the increasing use of location-based services. (May 29, 2012) **www.dwt.com**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has voted to remove technical restrictions on the 800 MHz frequency band, allowing mobile operators to utilize the spectrum for 3G and Long Term Evolution (LTE) services. The decision alters the FCC's rules to allow geographically-based SMR licensees to operate across contiguous channels, without a rigid channel spacing requirement or bandwidth limitation. Until now, the restrictions have limited operations using the 800 MHz band to 2G services. (May 28, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

The Federal Communications Commission has outlined the details for competitive bidding procedures for Phase I of the Mobility Fund, the first-ever reverse auction for Universal Service support. Winning bidders must deploy either 3G services within two years or 4G services within three years of the award. The Mobility Fund will award up to US $300 million that was reserved out of savings from the Commission's Universal Service Fund (USF) reforms. As part of last year's reform and modernization of USF, the Commission for the first time made universal mobile service an express universal service goal, and created the Mobility Fund to help close the nation's gaps in mobile wireless service. In this reverse auction, bidders will indicate the amount of one-time support they need to deploy service meeting rigorous performance standards in un-served areas within the required timeframe. Bidders will compete not only against other carriers that may be seeking support in the same areas, but also against carriers bidding for support in

other areas nationwide. Support will be awarded based on the lowest bid amounts submitted, but will not be awarded to more than one provider per area. Successful bidders will be awarded support for an area at the price they bid. The one-time support offered under Phase I of the Mobility Fund is in addition to any ongoing support provided under existing high-cost universal service program mechanisms. The Commission will offer an additional $50 million in one-time support to Tribal lands through a Tribal Mobility Fund Phase I. Phase II of the Mobility Fund will provide $500 million annually for ongoing support of mobile services. (May 3, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

Colombia

The ICT Ministry and the National Spectrum Agency (ANE) have announced they will soon launch a spectrum tender for provision of 4G services. According to the tender schedule, published on the ANE website, interested parties will be invited to submit their bids starting 4 July. The spectrum is expected to be awarded in September. The tender will include 225 MHz of spectrum in the 1850-1990 MHz, 1710-1755 MHz, 2110-2155 MHz and 2500-2690 MHz frequency bands. Additionally, Oscar Leon, head of ANE, announced that Colombia will increase the spectrum caps. Thus the amount of frequencies to be assigned to one operator will now be limited to 85 MHz for high frequency bands and 30 MHz for low frequency bands. (May 28, 2012)
www.telecompaper.com

Chile

Three Chilean mobile networks have submitted bids for the country's 4G radio spectrum auction, local media is reporting. The regulator SUBTEL, the compliance scores for the three bidders is Clear (98.52), Movistar (98.11) and Entel with 99.6. The compliance scores cover issues such as indoor coverage, support for MVNOs and network infrastructure sharing. In addition, deployment will be favored in the regions and areas currently lacking 3G services. The regulator noted that the Department of Telecoms will now evaluate the bids and check legal compliance. (May 14, 2012) **CanalCL**

Argentina

Telecoms regulator CNC will investigate the possibility of imposing sanctions on mobile operator Claro, following an outage on the America Movil-owned company's network in parts of Buenos Aires earlier this month. The outage in mobile service was a result of a cut in an underground fiber-optic cable, caused by works by Buenos Aires city government, Claro was reported as saying in a statement. The firm also said that it is considering offering compensation to the affected subscribers. Spanish telecoms company Telefonica was last week ordered to pay a fine of around ARS185 million (US$41.6 million) after an outage on its wireless network left its subscribers without service for several hours early last month. Argentina ordered Movistar to pay ARS10 to each of its roughly 18 million customers, in addition to a fine of around ARS6 million to the state. (May 15, 2012)
www.telegeography.com

European Union

The European Commission has recommended fines for five countries that have yet to transpose the new telecom rules into national legislation, a year after the deadline. The EC asked the EU Court of Justice to impose daily fines against

Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and Slovenia until full transposition of the rules into national law. The fines based on the size of the country, range from EUR 13,000 per day for Slovenia to EUR 112,000 for Poland. (May 31, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

EU Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes has announced plans to create new recommendations on net neutrality for ISPs, requiring they provide more details to consumers on the quality of internet services. The announcement comes alongside the release of the EU telecom regulator BEREC's survey of over 400 fixed and mobile internet providers on net neutrality issues. It found that at least 20 percent and potentially up to half of EU mobile broadband users have contracts that allow their provider to restrict services like VoIP or peer-to-peer file sharing. Around 20% of fixed operators (across virtually all EU member states) apply restrictions such as limiting P2P at peak times. However, in nearly all EU states, most if not all ISPs offer some form of unrestricted access, Kroes said. According to the BEREC figures, 85% of all fixed ISPs and 76% of all mobile ISPs propose at least one unrestricted internet offer. The EU commissioner said she still wants to provide consumers with more transparency and choice in their internet services. She plans three recommendations: for ISPs to require clear information on actual, 'real-life' broadband speeds, more detailed information on limits to the service, such as quantified data ceilings rather than 'vague' fair-use policies, and restrictions on marketing 'internet' service that gives access to less than the full internet. BEREC has opened three public consultations to help form the proposals.
(May 30, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

The EU Council of ministers has approved the new regulations passed by parliament earlier this month, allowing lower rates to take effect from July 1. The roaming regulations should be published in the EU Official Journal of June 30. In addition to extending wholesale and retail regulation of roaming prices, the new legislation adds structural measures aimed at opening up the roaming market to new service providers and expanding consumer choice. The regulation also lays down rules aimed at increasing price transparency and improving the provision of information on charges to roaming customers. The new regulations will run until June 30, 2022. The European Commission will review the functioning of the regulation by mid-2016. (May 30, 2012)
www.telecompaper.com

The European Commission is considering further action against Dutch regulator OPTA if it does not adjust its cost calculations for fixed and mobile termination rates, Euro Commissioner Neelie Kroes (Digital Agenda) said. According to Kroes, Dutch consumers pay twice with OPTA's calculation method than they would with the Commission's method. The Commission announced last February that it was beginning with a phase 2 procedure concerning OPTA's proposal. OPTA said that it has to follow ruling from the Dutch Corporate Appeals Court CBb. OPTA made a proposal in 2010 covering cost issues around termination rates for fixed and mobile telephony, submitted in accordance with the recommendation of the Commission in 2009, in accordance to EU telecoms rules. OPTA's proposal was overturned however by the CBb. The ruling prescribed another methodology, which includes costs not directly related to call termination. The European Commission said in February that it had "serious doubts" about OPTA's revised proposal for fixed and mobile termination rates. The

Commission said the proposal would be detrimental to the Dutch consumer. The end of the current regulatory period for fixed and mobile call termination will end in July 2013. OPTA will therefore have to begin a new market analysis in the second half of this year. The analysis will be separate from the additional FTA MTA-3b decision and the phase 2 procedure launched by the Commission. (May 16, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

The European Parliament has voted in favor of supporting a new mobile roaming policy. This will extend EU mobile roaming regulations to include price caps for data downloads from 01 July. For a typical businessman travelling in the EU, this will mean savings of over EUR 1,000 per year. family taking an annual holiday in another EU country can expect to save at least EUR 200, according to EU calculations. Overall, the improved EU roaming regulation – taking into account calls, SMS and data - will deliver consumers savings of 75 percent across a range of mobile roaming services, compared to 2007 prices. Europeans will spend around EUR 5 billion on roaming services in 2012, a saving of around EUR 15 billion compared to what the same services would have cost under 2007 prices. The new roaming caps from July will be EUR 0.29 per minute to make a call, EUR 0.08 per minute to receive a call, EUR 0.09 to send a text message, and EUR 0.70 per MB to download data or browse the internet (plus VAT). To help avoid bill shock from July, people travelling outside the EU will get a warning text message, email or pop-up window when they are nearing EUR 50 of data downloads, or their pre-agreed level. From 01 July 2014, customers will have the option to shop around for a separate mobile roaming provider – either through a contract or by choosing a provider at their destination. (May 10, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

United Kingdom
The UK government has unveiled a list of 27 cities which are eligible for a share of funds amounting to GBP50 million (US$81 million) to aid the deployment of high speed broadband infrastructure. More detailed bidding guidance will be published by 18 May with the winning cities announced in autumn. The move follows an earlier funding announcement of GBP100 million for ten of the largest cities in the UK. The government wants to ensure all homes and business have access to a minimum 2Mbps broadband connection by 2015, with 90% able to achieve speeds of 25Mbps or above. The 27 cities are: Aberdeen, Brighton & Hove, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Coventry, Derby, Dundee, Exeter, Gloucester, Kingston upon Hull, Leicester, Londonderry / Derry, Newport, Norwich, Oxford, Perth, Peterborough, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Preston, Salford, Southampton, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Swansea, Wolverhampton and York. (May 8, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

Ireland
Telecoms regulator, COMREG has published the details of its planned radio spectrum auction following a public consultation into the proposals. This auction is offering spectrum rights of use across these three critical bands - 800 MHz, 900 MHz and 1800 MHz for the period 2013 to 2030. COMREG said that in total, 280 MHz of sub-2 GHz spectrum (i.e. 140 MHz of paired spectrum) will be made available, more than doubling the currently licensed assignments in these particular bands. Spectrum rights of use in these bands shall be subject to a minimum price of €20M per lot

of 5 MHz of paired sub-1 GHz spectrum, and €10M per lot of 5 MHz of paired 1800 MHz spectrum for a 15 year license. (May 28, 2012) **www.cellular-news.com**

Netherland
The Dutch broadband market grew by almost 48,500 connections or 0.8% during the first quarter of 2012, to a total 6.43 million lines. A 2.1% quarterly decrease in DSL connections to 3.21 million was offset by 2.8% growth in cable broadband connections during the quarter, to 2.86 million. The number of FTTH/B connections also grew by almost 13% during Q1, giving the technology a 5.5% market share. KPN, including its XS4ALL and Telfort brands, was still the largest broadband provider in the Netherlands with a 39.15 market share at the end of March 2012, after losing 0.8% points over the previous 12 months. Ziggo was number two with a market share of 26.4%, and UPC came third with 15.3%. (May 29, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Dutch spectrum regulator Agentschap Telecom (AT) has started looking at the rollout obligations for the 2.6 GHz band, a regulator spokeswoman said. KPN, Tele2 Netherlands, T-Mobile Netherlands, Vodafone Netherlands and Ziggo-UPC joint venture ZUM should have met rollout obligation on May 11, for spectrum they have had for the past two years. All five set up networks earlier this month, albeit on a small scale. The regulator will make its check with SIM cards obtained from the operators. The measurement protocols will be adopted in June, with measurements taking place after that. The regulator has begun requesting information from license holders and monitoring different frequencies on the 2600 MHz band. The AT has put a number of fixed listening posts on tall buildings across the Netherlands, supplemented by mobile equipment vans. The regulator is expected to inform license holders by the end of the year if they have met spectrum conditions for phase one. (May 24, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

France
Telecom regulator ARCEP has submitted to public consultation until June 20 a draft version of its report on net neutrality to parliament and the government. The authority argues that competition and transparency need to be complemented by other actions in the areas of QoS, interconnection and traffic management. ARCEP will adopt a decision this summer which specifies QoS indicators for wireline networks to be measured and made public. It finds that there is no need to strengthen the regulatory framework for the interconnection business model at this stage, but will continue to regularly collect information to keep track of trends and take action accordingly. ARCEP has taken an inventory of traffic management practices, the differentiated treatment of internet traffic streams such as throttling, blocking or priority queues being employed by operators. It has noticed a decrease in the use of such practices since September 2010, thanks to competition, especially on mobile networks. The authority has called for the steady elimination of service blocking (VoIP, P2P) on mobile networks. It can enforce its recommendations if the market fails to make sufficient progress on its own. (May 21, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Spain

The telecom regulator CMT has announced the launch of a public consultation examining proposals for the future regulation of the country's mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) sector. The regulator notes that it is aiming to adapt existing regulations to take into account conditions applied to spectrum that were issued by the Ministerio de Industria, Energia y Turismo (Minetur) in mid-2011. With the CMT reiterating that current MVNO legislation – which was adopted in 2006 – stipulates that network operators should allow access to their respective infrastructure at reasonable prices, it also highlighted Minetur's approval of Royal Decree in mid-2011, which stated that those operators holding spectrum in the 900 MHz band would be required to provide wholesale access to those operators not holding any frequencies. The public consultation is expected to last for a month, and alongside seeking the views of all stakeholders, the regulator has revealed that it will also include a request for a report from the competition watchdog, the CNC. On completion of the consultation the draft measures are expected to be submitted to the European Commission (EC). In announcing its plans to re-examine legislation governing virtual operators, the CMT also confirmed that today there are 23 active MVNOs in Spain, together accounting for an approximate 6.8% market share of the country's wireless voice sector. It also noted that since the introduction of MVNOs in 2006 the average price of domestic mobile-to-mobile calls had fallen from EUR0.161 (US$0.20) to EUR0.089 (US$0.11) per minute. (May 16, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

Romania

The National Authority for Management and Regulations in Communications (ANCOM) has published a set of regulatory guidelines to pave the way for the introduction of mobile virtual network operators (MVNOs) into the Romanian wireless market. The new document explains the practicalities of authorization, the allocation of numbering resources and the conclusion of agreements with mobile network operators, within the context of the current regulatory framework. Access agreements concluded between the existing operators and any prospective MVNOs must allow for an 'efficient economic use of the network', and contain non-discriminatory conditions in terms of quality of service (QoS). Further, terms must not limit the commercial autonomy of the MVNO, nor its capacity to change host operators, nor conclude agreements with several operators. Since the MVNOs will not hold frequency usage rights in view of the provision of mobile communications services, they will not pay fees for the use of the radio spectrum. Interestingly, ANCOM says that a total of 17 operators currently authorized to provide electronic communications services have expressed an interest in operating as MVNOs, suggesting that an influx of internet service providers (ISPs) into the mobile market could be on the cards. In addition, earlier this year it was reported that any international companies unsuccessful in buying Long Term Evolution (LTE) frequencies in ANCOM's imminent spectrum auction will be encouraged to negotiate deals with the winning bidders and enter the local market as MVNOs; the likes of US-based AT&T Inc, China Mobile and Norwegian giant Telenor have all been linked to the LTE tender. On August 21, 2008 ANCOM opened up non-geographic numbers in the 0ZA = 070 sub-domain for the allocation of MVNOs, which was expected to pave the way for the introduction of virtual operators in the country. Numbers were expected to be allotted in blocks of 100,000, but the scheme never

came to fruition. Last year, citing the 15th annual report by the European Commission (EC), ANCOM suggested that of all current EU member states, only Romania and the Czech Republic do not allow MVNOs to operate in their respective wireless markets, although the Czech Telecommunication Office (CTU) is currently believed to be in the process of implementing similar legislation. (May 8, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

South Africa

The number of internet users in South Africa accelerated in the past year, due to the impact of both Smartphones and ordinary mobile phones, according to a study by World Wide Worx. South African internet user base had grown from 6.8 million in 2010 to 8.5 million at the end of 2011, no less than 25% growth. This strong growth would continue during this year, and the internet user base would pass the 10 million mark by the end of the year. A total of 7.9 million South Africans access internet on their mobile phones. Of these, 2.48 million access it only on their mobile phones, and do not have access on the computers. The remaining 6.02 million users access the internet on computers, laptops, and tablet computers. However, 90% of this number, 5.42 million, also access it on their mobile phones. This means that almost 8 million South Africans sometimes or regularly access the internet on their phones. While Smartphones are the main driver of internet growth, the cost of data use is being driven down by the proliferation of undersea cables connecting sub-Saharan Africa. The undersea cable capacity to South Africa at the end of 2011 was 2.69 Tbps, and due to rise to 11.9 Tbps by the end of this year. This capacity will double again in 2013. (May 23, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Kenya

The Kenyan government is pushing ahead with plans for a shared 4G network, despite opposition from the country's dominant mobile network, Safaricom. The government plans to spend upwards of US$500 million with the deployment due to start next year. The government said that the deal was set, but were awaiting financing. Approval from the Ministry of Finance is awaited. Safaricom recently said that it will withdraw from the plans for a shared LTE network for all the mobile networks if the government insists that it operate in the 2.6 GHz spectrum band. Safaricom wants the network to be built using the 700 MHz spectrum band as it requires far fewer base stations, especially in rural areas and is hence cheaper to deploy, at least initially. However, the regulator has rejected that demand and said that will continue with plans for a network in the 2.6 GHz bands. (May 21, 2012) **Reuters**

Telecoms regulator has rejected calls for a new study into its plans to cut Mobile Termination Rates and will push forward with previously announced reductions from July. Mr. Francis Wangusi, the acting Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK) director, said that MTRs will drop to Sh1.44 per minute from the current Sh2.21. The rates have fallen sequentially from Sh4.42 in June 2009. The country's largest network operator, Safaricom has opposed the cuts, saying that they are based on out of date modeling for the mobile market. It is also the operator that would lose the most as it terminates the most calls in the country. "We have always maintained that the previous cost study was flawed to the extent that the methodology used by CCK was not fit for purpose and produced a result that was inconsistent with the economic realities in Kenya, hence the current slump in the industry,"

said Bob Collymore, the CEO of Safaricom's told the Business Daily in a statement. Mr Wangusi is currently waiting for final approval from the regulators board of directors before the technical adoption of the MTR cuts can be implemented. (May 2, 2012) **Business Daily**

Nigeria

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has said that there will not be any spectrum auction for broadband deployment in the country until 2015. Speaking at a broadband discussion forum in Lagos, the Executive Vice Chairman of the commission, Dr Eugene Juwah explained that nothing much can happen in the wireless broadband arena until that time when the frequencies for its deployment are freed up. Juwah said, "spectrum frequency will be available to telecoms operators by 2015 when broadcast stations would have migrated to digital. We have not done very well in broadband because of challenges like high pricing, monopoly, and little distribution, inland and huge capacity. There is needed to start a regulatory action that will facilitate the growth and usage of broadband in the country." He also added that organizations like intercellular, Visafone and Prestel have been urged to upgrade from 790-860 bands to long term evolution, LTE. "We are trying to persuade operators in the coded division multiple access, CDMA, to leverage on LT, which will further allow release of more spectrum broadband," he said, adding that NCC is currently conducting a survey to determine existing availability of broadband infrastructure and where they are in Nigeria, their characteristic so as to guide the commission's direction in national wireless infrastructures project as well as determining the cost of deploying such facilities. Corroborating the EVC's position, the Minister of Communication Technology, Mrs Omobola Johnson, earlier in her address said that wide deployment of broadband internet in Nigeria will drive the economic growth in the country. Johnson also informed her audience that broadband spectrum will be ready on or before July 2015. (May 7, 2012) **http://allafrica.com**

Uganda

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has ordered telecommunications operators to improve the quality of services instead of focusing only on expansion. The UCC Executive Director said instead of focusing on expansion, the operators should concentrate on service improvement, ending dropped calls and sorting out the SMS sending and receiving failures. ED said the country has been stuck with the problem of quality of service for the last couple of years, and this has worsened in the last few months. This, he said, is something that must be addressed. ED said customers have criticized operators for continuously offering poor services, as they focus on growing subscriber numbers with no investment to support the growth. The Warid CEO said efforts to address such challenges have been done, however, power outages, high fuel prices and the cost of doing business remain a major obstacle in the delivery of good services. (May 7, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Russia

The national telecommunications regulator Roskomnadzor plans to launch a map of nationwide mobile coverage by August 1. The map will be published on the portal of the regulator. Roskimnadzor also prepared a map of motorways mobile coverage in 2011. (May 16, 2012) Tass-Telecom

According to reports Russia's Ministry of Communications (MinSvyaz) is considering a plan to hold separate Long Term Evolution (LTE) tenders in at least ten regions. The tenders which are expected to take place in mid-April 2013, will see the watchdog auction off spectrum in the 2570 MHz-2620 MHz band. (May 16, 2012) **www.telegeography.com**

The national telecommunications regulator Roskomnadzor has announced the conditions for the tender for providing LTE services in the 791-862 MHz band across the country. The tender, planned for 12 July, will offer four lots of 2x7.5MHz nationwide spectrum. The conditions of the tender aim to avoid any operator winning more than one block of spectrum and will give extra points to bidders who agree to work with MVNOs. Operators will need to complete their network roll-out within seven years, offering services in all towns with at least 50,000 people. (May 3, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Malaysia

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission hopes to award licenses for 2.6 GHz radio spectrum soon. MCMC Chairman said the commission had received network collaboration plans from the telcos and would award the spectrum after evaluating them and once concluded, it'll take some time to do site identification, order equipment and agree on the areas to cover. Chairman also said that consumers should stop trying to play a game of one-upmanship in technology stakes. He said the key thing in technology was whether it improves people's lives and the country's economy. (May 14, 2012) **Business Times**

Thailand

The telecommunications regulator has rejected Real Move's request for 1.75 million mobile phone numbers. Real Move is a subsidiary of communications group True and offers 3G services under the TrueMove H brand. The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) rejected the request as CAT Telecom, which is in partnership with Real Move, did not pay its overdue mobile number fees for THB 6 million for the first lot of 1.75 million numbers. The payment was due in April but CAT held back on the payment pending the probe into the legality of CAT-True 3G-service partnership deals. Real Move is targeting 4 million customers this year, up from more than 1 million at present. (May 21, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

The NBTC has approved the new Universal Service Obligation (USO) tax rate. The rate is set at 3.75% of a license holder's annual revenues. This compares with a previous USO rate of 4 percent, which was set by the NBTC's predecessor, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC). The NBTC is targeting a USO fund of THB 20 billion within five years. The USO draft regulations are set for publication in the Royal Gazette within the next fifteen days. Under the new rules, the USO tax will be required for all license holders except companies earning less than THB 20 billion in annual revenues. (May 17, 2012) **The Nation**

A committee of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) approved Thailand's draft license auction framework for the 2100 MHz 3G mobile frequency band. Under the draft, the regulator will divide available 2100 MHz bandwidth into nine 5 MHz blocks, scrapping an earlier framework based on the 'N-1' model which would have made available a

number of licenses equal to the number of bidders minus one. The NBTC said the removal of this condition is aimed at promoting a level playing field under the Frequency Allocation Act. Another condition that would require the winners to list on the Stock Exchange of Thailand three years before entering the auction will also be scrapped under the draft. However, a reserve price for licenses has not yet been agreed on. The draft will be submitted to the NBTC board for approval next month, ahead of a public hearing within the next two months, with the auction scheduled for around September. (May 16, 2012) **The Bangkok Post**

The telecom committee of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) has finalized some of the 3G auction details. The regulator plans to auction off nine blocks of 5 MHz spectrum in the 2.1 GHz band. The NBTC will auction the spectrum using the simultaneous ascending bid method, which allows participants to bid for all spectrum lots at the same time. Bidders can continue to place higher bids until the auction ends. Each bidder is limited to 20 MHz. The committee is still considering whether winning bidders will be required to pay the license fee in one go or in installments. The committee plans to complete all the details for the auction soon and submit the plan to the board. The auction is expected to take place around October this year. (May 15, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

India

The cabinet approved a new telecom policy that proposes to abolish roaming charges on mobile phones and allow users to retain the same number across the country. The cabinet approved the National Telecom Policy (NTP) 2012, a senior minister told reporters after the meeting of the cabinet. The NTP 2012 aims to provide free roaming to telecom users and allow them to retain the mobile number even outside their circles without having to pay any extra charge.
(May 31, 2012) **timesofindia.indiatimes.com**

Telecom Commission has decided to provide more spectrum in the upcoming auction and is planning to ease the roll-out obligations proposed by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). The inter-ministerial panel, however, stayed clear of any decision on the reserve price for the spectrum proposed by TRAI. Telecommunication Secretary said that a decision on the price will be taken in a meeting on May 26, after which the recommendations will be passed on to the empowered group of ministers, headed by finance minister. The panel suggested that at least 10 MHz of spectrum in each circle should be auctioned against TRAI's proposal for 5 MHz. In addition, operators who are already in business can bid for a maximum of two blocks of 1.25 MHz each, giving the incumbents total spectrum of 5 MHz. Those opting for CDMA technology will have to bid for 2.5 MHz of spectrum. The Telecom Commission also said the existing rural roll-out obligations should be maintained, instead of getting multiple operators to reach every village. The Commission agreed that spectrum should be liberalized in future to allow operators to use spectrum for any kind of service.
(May 25, 2012) **www.telecompaper.com**

Despite mounting opposition from operators and diplomats, the Telecoms Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has stood by its controversial recommendations to raise the reserve price for spectrum. The TRAI in a 'strongly worded' letter requested that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) support the TRAI's proposals and reject demands from industry players. Defending the price hike, the TRAI said that the recommended cost levels would ensure that the government got the full value of the spectrum without compromising the industry's profitability or adversely effecting costs to end users. A growing number of operators, including Telenor and Sistema, are considering quitting the Indian market if the proposals are accepted, and future foreign investment in the sector has been called into question. (May 17, 2012) **The Hindustan Times**

Javaid Akhtar Malik
Director Regulatory Affairs

SAMENA Telecommunications Council

ITRs Watch

SAMENA Council Submits its Contribution to ITU's Council Working Group on ITRs

In response to the ITU's open invitation to submit feedback and contributions in support of the ongoing International Telecommunications Regulations (ITRs) revision process, the SAMENA Telecommunications Council presented its Contribution to the Council Working Group on ITRs.

As an ITU-D Sector Member, the SAMENA Council has made its contribution on behalf of the telecoms operator community of South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Views expressed in the SAMENA Council's Contribution, which consists of qualitative representation of 12 key industry goals that the SAMENA Council believes the ITRs Treaty should be attentive to, have been aimed at drawing the ITU's kind consideration on various dimensions of the ITRs Treaty in a qualitative manner.
Having played an integral role in the global telecommunications industry in critical times of transformation over two decades ago, the existing ITRs treaty is being revised potentially to act as a sustainable and effective guideline in the Internet-driven communications environment of the 21st century.

The revision of the 1988's ITRs serves as an opportunity for both the governments and the telecom community to embrace change by treading through the process of exploration and deliberation. According to Mr. Thomas Wilson, CEO and Executive Managing Director of SAMENA Council, "It has been an accomplishment for the SAMENA

Council and its membership to have deliberated on the ITRs issue. Our operator members have been very active with us during this ITRs contribution submission process. Our work on this issue is not yet over, for there remains much to accomplish and do up till the December WCIT meeting in Dubai".

Wilson also believes that "SAMENA Council's activities on ITRs have truly brought together our operator members, giving us the opportunity to serve and to represent their interests, in accordance with SAMENA's mandate. We have reasons to believe that our contribution to the ITU will augment existing efforts on the ITRs issue, and we are proud to be part of the process on behalf of our membership." In addition, the SAMENA Council listened actively to other industry stake holders, having taken an active participative role in regional WCIT related meetings.

The SAMENA Council's issuance of its viewpoint on the ITRs Treaty's revision process, and its long-term impact on the future of the communications industry, is the result of extensive participation and insight-sharing by its operator members and legal advisory associates. Active in the monitoring of the ITRs revision process since the end of 2011, the SAMENA Council participated in several ITRs preparatory activities across continents.

On behalf of its membership, the SAMENA Council is hopeful that its Contribution to the ongoing work on the ITRs will provide additional feedback to the ITU as final preparations for the Dubai WCIT-12 are made.

Etisalat ready to implement TRA's "My Number, My Identity" campaign

Following the launch of the "My Number, My Identity" campaign by the UAE Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA), Etisalat today announced the near-completion of all procedures to begin SIM card registration for its mobile customers. Starting 17 July 2012, Etisalat's customers can choose from over 100 points of sale across the UAE to process their mobile registration.

As per the directive of the TRA, mobile customers in the UAE are required to update their profile in the operator database and ensure all SIM holders are the same as the registered owner of the SIM card. Customers will need to register their SIM cards by submitting an application form along with valid identification document including Passport with valid residency, Emirates or GCC ID card. For business and government customers, the requirement is a valid establishment card.

Registration of the SIM card is only required once and all unregistered SIM cards will be cancelled once the registration period expires.

Commenting on the registration campaign, His Excellency Eng. Saleh Abdulla Al Abdooli, Chief Executive Officer, Etisalat, said: "The My Number, My Identity campaign aims primarily at providing the necessary protection to subscribers and enabling them to procure all services easily. Etisalat has fully harnessed its resources to complete this process successfully for its customers through its points of sale. This campaign is particularly important for subscribers because it prevents any unauthorized or criminal usage of SIM cards and helps in curbing legal or social violations besides reducing frauds that have been noticed during few last years."

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SAMENA Council officially represented in the newly formed Arab Multi stakeholders Advisory Group (AMAG) for the Arab IGF

SAMENA Council is officially selected as a member of the newly formed Arab Multi stakeholders Advisory Group (AMAG) for the Arab Internet Governance Forum. The advisory group's mandate is to set the theme for the Arab Internet Governance Forum (AIGF) in a way that maintains transparency and inclusion.

A Public Consultation Conference was held to Establish the Arab Internet Governance Forum with support from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) and the League of Arab States (LAS).(Beirut, 31 Jan. – 1 Feb. 2012)

The Public Consultation Conference convened representatives from number of different stake holders of the ICT industry. All the participants supported the idea of the establishment of the Arab Internet Governance Forum (Arab IGF), and the formation decision was then endorsed by the 31st meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers (ATICM Bureau) (Beirut, 2 Feb. 2012). The Conference welcomed the offer made by the Kuwait Information Technology Society (KITS) to host the first annual Arab IGF in Kuwait this year (provisionally planned for on 9-11 October 2012), and also welcomed offer by Egypt's National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA) to host the IGF Secretariat. The Conference also agreed to establish the Arab IGF Multi stakeholder Advisory Group (AMAG) as a key component of the Arab IGF's structure, according to the following:

"A Multi stakeholder Advisory Group comprising representatives of Arab governments, regional organizations, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders. The MAG shall make decisions related to the Arab IGF, specify topics for the IGF program of work, consider the issues and proposals associated with the organization of IGF sessions, all in light of its members' experiences and in a manner that ensures optimal IGF output and positive effect on all stakeholders." The Arab IGF aims at serving as a multi-stakeholder platform, where all players can have the opportunity to exchange views and share experiences around Internet public policy issues. Embedding the very unique characteristic of a non-decision-making, non-binding global IGF, the Arab IGF shall strive to raise awareness among community members, build bridges across various stakeholder groups, and ensure informed policy making and effective implementation of initiatives that can stimulate investments and cater for end-users needs.

The Arab IGF is a forum where:

- Internet users to voice interests and concerns with regard to developments that may impact their using of the Internet;

- Governments to hear from all stakeholders and to share vision as to plans and initiatives that may take place at national and regional levels in partnership with other stakeholders;

- Private sector to bring the business perspective to the dialogue and to inform participants of new business models and potential opportunities;

- Civil society to present consumer and public interests and to develop partnerships with other stakeholders in relevant areas;

- Technical community to engage in policy discussions and ensure such discussions are keeping pace with, and not going against, technology developments;

- Academia to highlight relevant research areas, and help with education and capacity building programs in cooperation with other stakeholders.

(For more info: http://www.igfarab.org)

SAMENA Telecommunications Council has been actively involved in the development of telecoms and ICT, with special emphasis on the key enabler of ICT and its growth across the region that is Internet. The Council since its inception has been playing a strategic role and has come up with various initiatives to help bring the social and economic benefits of telecoms & ICT to the public of this region. SAMENA in this regard is playing a decisive role by providing a platform for its member regions for promoting and uplifting telecoms & ICT.

SAMENA has a membership comprising over 100 leading regional and international organizations. With an expanding member portfolio, the Council collaborates with leading non-profit international organizations, including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the European Telecom Network Operators' Association (ETNO), and FTTH Council among others.

SUSTAINING
THE INTERNET ECONOMY
THROUGH ITRs

Today's communication environment is conversely different than it was 24 years ago when the ITU's International Telecommunications Regulations ("ITRs"), were adopted. This 1988 Treaty shaped the global telecommunications sector at a time when communications between countries increased significantly due to intensifying socio-economic relations; state-owned telecommunication monopolies became liberalized and major advancements were underway in the private sector.

Over 10 years into the 21st century, however, we are in an entirely different and more dynamic global communications environment. The Internet alone, which reaches over 2.4 billion people worldwide has not only created a cosmos of innovation, but has been a key enabler of both social and economic development around the world. In today's Internet economy, it is pertinent to re-examine and revise this 1988 ITRs Treaty in a more forward-looking context.

While it is essential that the ITRs Treaty preserves the endurance and intent of its Basic Texts and key principles to facilitate the technological transformation in the industry, the revisions present an opportunity to polish the Treaty's vital role as a catalyst in encouraging feasible growth of the ICT sector.

Starting at the end of 2011, SAMENA Council's Policy Board began preparations of the contribution on behalf of the operator community in the South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa region. This collaborative contribution consists of 12 key industry goals which aim to promote open market practices and industry cooperation. We believe that the contribution will act as one of the main pillars in supporting policy transformation in the industry and a market driven economy.

We know that this can only be accomplished through the promotion of the growth of the ICT industry in a sustainable manner, by removing artificial economic barriers to entry, providing investment incentives where needed and enabling pro-competitive market practices.

A decisive factor that has granted the ITRs to accommodate future technological advances for the last quarter of a century has been the Treaty's technology neutrality. Avoiding detailed technology specific regulations has concretely contributed to innovation and growth in the telecoms industry for the past 24 years. This is why instead of addressing technology specific issues; the ITRs must be a global effort to help establish guidelines for governments to set investment incentives and enable continued development.

As an international treaty spanning 193 countries, it is crucial that that the ITRs continue to facilitate global cooperation on telecommunications matters. The revised regulations should advance closer co-operation between Member States and operators. When it comes to bilateral and commercial agreements between operators, the ITRs should maintain their flexibility and foster operator independence in dispute resolutions and refrain from forcing specific dispute resolution mechanisms. This is critical for the longevity of the industry as it will provide an enabling environment to encourage incentives for investment and ensure that operators continue to provide connectivity to their increasingly technology and service-savvy customers.

In this enabling environment, the ITRs should also open the door for infrastructure investment to avoid measures that would hinder traffic and restrict market-driven innovation. The dynamics of free market economics can only be sustained by maintaining Internet openness and growth. The revised ITRs, therefore, can act as a framework but should not cover or address specific, detailed and technical areas relating to the Internet as these details fall beyond the Treaty's intended scope. In order to ensure that all countries benefit from the Internet, the ITRs revisions should leverage the industry's desire to maintain flexibilities that have enabled the Internet to flourish. The revisions therefore, should be based on policy and strategies that allow for flexibility and accommodate future technological advances.

As a high-level framework, the ITRs need to encourage healthy competition while avoiding additional regulation and complex strategies to ensure business continuity. In other words, the revised ITRs should acknowledge the challenges of the new Internet economy and accommodate the rapidly changing technology environment. Through collaboration, the ITRs should remain flexible enough to encourage future growth and sustainable development of the ICT ecosystem, and make sure the entire global population benefits from an open and accessible Internet.

Mustafa AYKUT
TT Group Representative
International Institutions for Policy, Standards & Regulations

Türk Telekom

3rd Telecom Operators Chairmen & CEOs Dinner 2012

SAMENA's annual Telecom Operators Chairmen & CEOs Dinner was held at Hong Kong, drawing industry focus on "How consensus between the Policymakers, Content Providers and Operators can lead us to Sustainable Digital Economies". The event was held on November 24 in Doha and discussed the importance of 'Internet Policy Dynamics'. Over 70 operators Chairmen & CEOs from SAMENA region and beyond convened and discussed important issues of the telecoms & ICT industry including "the need for a sustainable Internet business model". The event also highlighted SAMENA's sensitivity to the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing among industry stakeholders. The CEO dinner was organized with great support from PCCW and Hong Kong Telecom. CEOs and other telecommunications leaders and experts from leading telecoms & ICT organizations attended the event and shared their thought on industry's most important issues.

SAMENA Council is a key figure in the development and promotion of telecoms & ICT, with special emphasis on the development and evolution of ICT policy and regulation in the region. The Council has implemented different initiatives for helping the Telecoms & ICT in this region. Mr. Bocar A. BA, President of SAMENA, inaugurated the event by inviting Mr. Alex Arena who is the Group MD of HKT, and Chairman SAMENA Council, Shaikh Mohamed bin Isa Al Khalifa for the traditional Hoi Gong ceremony. Tom Wilson, the Chief Executive and Executive Managing Director of SAMENA Telecommunications Council started off his speech by saying that in order to have broadband on mobile phones; personal computers, and tablets, investments are needed. He shared that SAMENA's point of view is to appropriate a proper investment policy. Mr. Wilson stated that one of the issues faced by the industry in developing a policy is the ongoing battle between service providers and OTTPs. He told the audience that one of SAMENA's committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Osman Sultan has come up with a framework which is the vehicle to understand where we are trying to move forward in the future. He concluded his speech by saying that it is important to focus on long term goals and objectives particularly trying to maintain a balance and attain ROI which can only be done by suitable policy and regulation.

The Chairman elaborated that the challenge for all of us lies in developing strategies that can help all of us learn, channelize our efforts towards making content production easy and to learn employ technology and services that will give strong ROI. The Chairman put forward the SAMENA Council's stance in this regard by saying that they aspire to continue to create more activity in this front and hope to take the discussion forward in order to develop clearly defined steps. Shaikh Mohamed bin Isa Al Khalifa concluded his speech by saying that we need to invest smartly since our smart investments and consensus driven decision making will allow the Internet to flourish.

SAMENA Council's Chairman, Shaikh Mohamed bin Isa Al Khalifa who is also the Group CEO of Batelco, addressed the audience by sharing that SAMENA is well on its way towards realizing greater unification of operators' voice over and across the region. He stated that Policy, Sustainability, Content and Consensus are the four most important areas around which the discussion is going to be built. Lots of challenges need to be tackled in order to make Internet more sustainable. New means are needed to be created to generate revenue and innovative ways need to be found for using existing revenue streams. He said that if we don't act promptly and in a coherent collaborative manner, we may experience the worst.

The Executive Chairman of ETNO Mr. Luigi Gambardella started his speech by appreciating the fact of working together. He said that it is very important that telecom operators work together and that we need to be clear that the sector is united. He also added that the new telecom market is at a decline in 2012. He highlighted the significance of the three areas including, working closely on innovative change, Net Neutrality and, Transparency. He concluded by saying that ETNO believes that we should work closely in collaboration with SAMENA.

Dr. Karim Sabbagh, Managing Partner Booz & Co, while sharing his thoughts on the subject, said that the telecom industry has reached a place where it is growing with GDP

Mr. Alex Arena the Group Managing Director of HKT welcomed the audience to Hong Kong. He drew the attention of the audience towards fixed line mobile TV for delivering new experience to the customers while referring to the Quadplay service. He said that it is all about brands and they pick the brands very carefully in terms of Fixed Line, Broadband, Mobile and Media. He also focused on the diversification of telcos. The CEO of du, Mr. Osman Sultan started of his speech by saying that through optimized investments we can go to the differentiated approach and probably more rational approach would be seen under the content committee of SAMENA. He said that success is impossible without the masses and not a single Telco can do it alone so we have to federate the local content which is a major opportunity for us.

the service providers aren't making more money. OTTPs are making money from their content and operators should do the same from their network. du's CEO, Mr. Osman Sultan said that operators and OTTPs should come together and manage to be able to get overcome the misunderstandings. Karim Taga upon Bocar's request shared his outlook about European markets compared to the SAMENA regional markets and said that operators need to rethink their IT infrastructure and the support of their front end and back end systems. He said that majority of the mobile operators have lost the mobile broadband battle with majority of the value going to other stakeholders. Building infrastructure and providing the same to the competitors as a service. In a very dramatic situation where the growth perspective is negative, operators have to rethink their business model

growth and that every industry in the long term will grow and sink with GDP. He said that we can continue to look at strategy as a foundation and that every technology that we deploy cannot be predicted in term of revenue streams the way we used to do them before. There is going to be a part of the business that will be foundationally defined from strategy standpoint. In a debate, Mr. Abdullah from Accenture while sharing his thoughts said that the operators have to monetize the data that they have. Using this data in real time is however considered to be challenging but this can help operators provide customized and localized content to the end user thus helping monetize the content. Mr. Rashid Shafi from Multinet Pakistan, we as service providers should not be more concerned about OTTPs making more money, instead we should emphasize on why

and eventually OTT could be leveraged as an opportunity. Mr. Andre Popov, partner at Peppers & Rogers Group said there are three reasons why operators have failed and that we as an industry need to change and challenge ourselves to be successful. The three reasons are capabilities, business models, and experimentation.

The event covered a very broad range of issues ranging from Internet policy dynamics, to content discussions and operators' challenges and the future of Internet. The CEO dinner was attended by a broad range of participants both in terms of geography as well as industry stakeholders group convened to discuss industry's hot issues.

One of the debates elaborated that the challenge for the operators' community lies in developing strategies that can help them learn and channelize their efforts towards making content production easy and to learn employ technology and services that will give strong ROI. The debate also highlighted the need for building a sustainable internet business model with the ubiquitous access to digital

services that has resulted in the need for more bandwidth. Telecom markets in the SAMENA region are approaching saturation level and the revenue growth appears to be a challenge for the service providers. Following the world-wide technological development, industry evolution, and its continuously increasing contribution to the telecoms & ICT sector of the region, SAMENA is committed to focus on the Internet policy dynamics, digitization and broadband investment policies, and aims to support congenial policies & regulation as well as cooperation among key ICT industry stakeholders.

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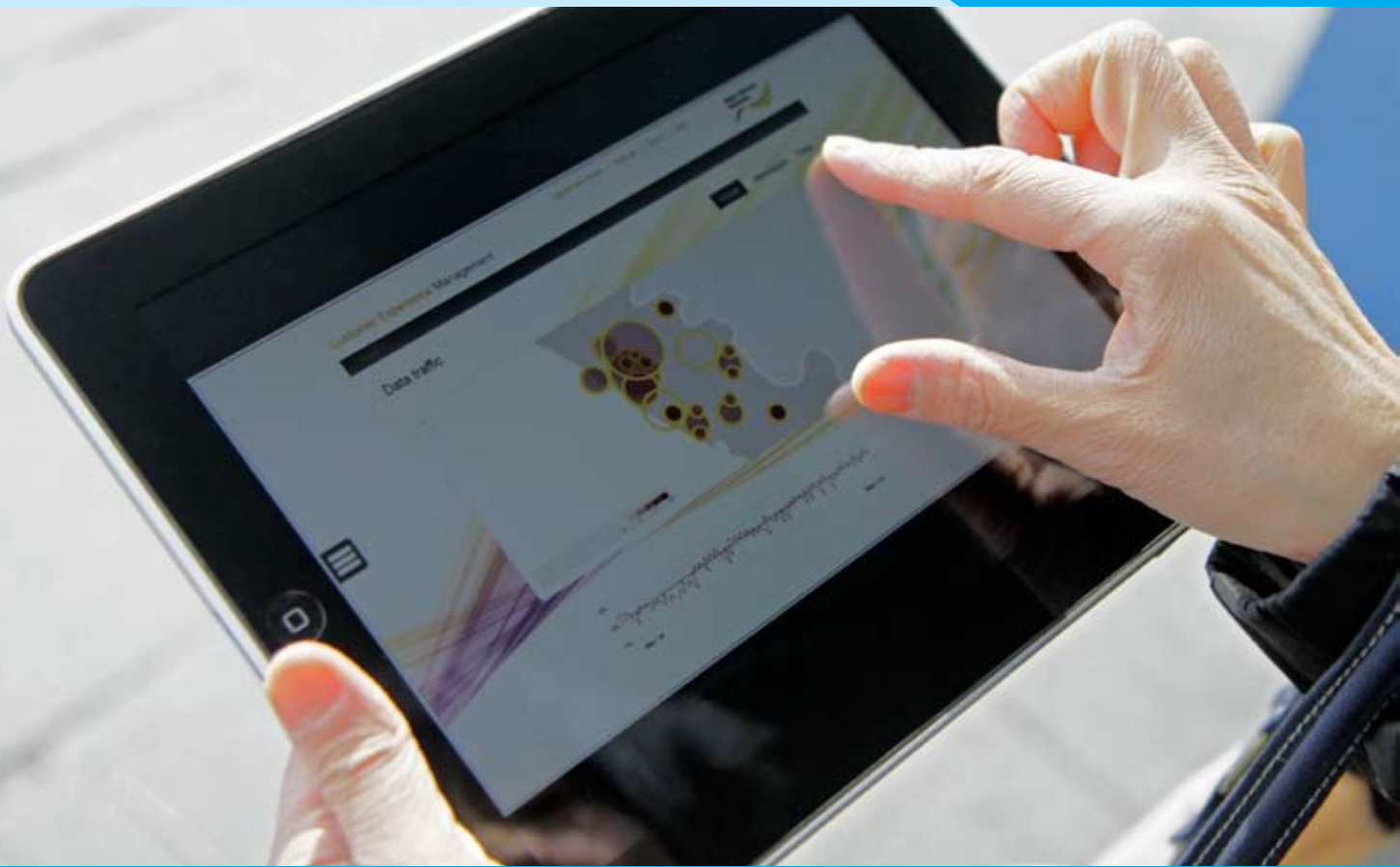
TOP TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

US Cellular Launches Samsung LTE Mobile Hotspot

US Cellular is expanding its LTE device line-up with the launch of the Samsung SCH-LC11 Mobile Hotspot. This device offers connectivity and is available on uscellular.com and will be in stores by 21 May. When on the LTE network, the Samsung Mobile Hotspot allows users to simultaneously connect up to five Wi-Fi devices to the internet at speeds up to ten times faster than 3G. Business travelers can get more done during airport layovers and taxi rides. Study groups can have a meeting in the park and connect to the internet, and family car rides are more fun when everyone can get the entertainment they want. US Cellular also offers customers the only points-based rewards program in the industry, which rewards customers for things, such as paying bills on-time, adding a line or referring friends and family. Points may be used for phone upgrades, additional lines, devices, accessories and ringtones. The LTE network builds on the 3G data services. For a limited time, the hotspot will be available for US$ 49.99 in select markets covered by the LTE network and in those scheduled to be covered by the end of this year. The Samsung SCH-LC11 Mobile Hotspot is available for US$ 199.99 in all other markets.

Sprint Rolls Out First 4G LTE Devices

Sprint Nextel has announced that it has begun taking orders for its first LTE devices. The devices will be available in Sprint stores in selected areas. The areas, which include Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Kansas City, are the first to launch Sprint's new LTE service, which will happen by mid-year. The new LTE devices include an HTC Evo 4G LTE smartphone running Android 4.0 (Ice Cream Sandwich). The phone will have a 4.7-inch HD display, a 1.5-GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon dual-core processor and an 8-megapixel camera. The phone, which will cost US$199.99 with a two-year contract, has the ability to handle HD voice once Sprint deploys HD voice support on its network. The new Evo 4G LTE will not support Sprint's WiMAX network. Sprint also announced its LG Viper LTE phone in April. Sprint also announced that the company is taking orders for the Sierra Wireless Tri-Fi Hotspot, which supports LTE as well as WiMAX and Sprint's 3G services.

Axis Brings HSPA Network to Surabaya

Indonesian mobile operator Axis is expanding and enhancing its HSPA network, providing customers with a mobile data experience whether they are at home or on the go. Offering HSPA technology network speeds across a line up of devices including smartphones, tablets, the company offers customers to get web browsing, video streaming and downloads with the internet service tariff from Axis. The Axis HSPA network performance in Surabaya was measured during an Open Network Drive Test involving reporters from national media and local. The result of the drive test showed that the Axis network performed very well, with an average data throughput of 1.17 Mbps and maximum data throughput of 3.07 Mbps, average signal strength was -71.59 dBm RSCP and average signal quality was -9.5 dB Ec/No.

Global 4G Coverage to Reach 50 percent by 2017: Report

Global 3G coverage will reach 85 percent of the world's population by 2017, according to a report from Ericsson. The 'Traffic and Market Report - On the Pulse of the Networked Society' predicted that 4G coverage will reach 50 percent of the world's population by 2017. Number of mobile subscribers is expected to reach almost nine billion by then, versus six billion at the end of 2011. In the first quarter of the current year, some 170 million new subscribers were added, to take the total to 6.2 billion. It also looked at the growth in mobile broadband services, estimating that the number of smartphone users will reach three billion by 2017, versus just 700 million at end-2011. After doubling already in past year, global mobile data traffic is expected to grow 15 times by end of 2017. Number of mobile broadband subscribers will grow five-fold over the same period, to five billion in 2017.

Sequans Delivers 4 LTE Downlink Throughput of 150 Mbps

WiMAX and LTE chipmaker Sequans Communications has achieved full category 4 LTE downlink throughput of 150 Mbps, the maximum category 4 rate during interoperability testing with several eNodeB and test equipment vendors. The tests featured a Sequans-powered LTE USB dongle operating over a 20 MHz FDD channel, providing LTE connectivity between a laptop PC and an eNodeB or eNodeB simulator. The test configuration was in complete compliance with 3GPP specifications with all Release 9 features activated, including H-ARQ recombining and encryption. The chip powering the USB dongle is the Sequans SQN3110, the baseband chip at the heart of Sequans' 2G Andromeda LTE platforms for mobile devices. It is built in 40 nm CMOS, is 3GPP R9 compliant, supports both TDD and FDD for global compliance, and comes in a very small package that includes SDRAM.

Kazakhstan Will Introduce 4G This Year

4G technology will be introduced in both Astana and Almaty later this year. Future developments in the field of information and communication technologies have been discussed at the "Connect Kazakhstan-2012" international exhibition and conference. It opened prior to the fifth Astana Economic Forum. The market of information and communication technologies is growing rapidly in Kazakhstan. By the end of the year, 60 percent of socially important public services will be provided in the electronic format. This task was set by the President in his state-of-the-nation address. Ministry also announced that Zerde holding company and the private sector will promote mobile e-government solutions together with mobile solutions of not only public services, but also among people as well as companies.

South Africa Telkom Pushes Ahead with LTE Plans

South Africa operator Telkom has been working with Korea's KT on plans to build a 4G network using LTE technology. Despite the collapse of a deal for KT to buy a stake in Telkom, the South African operator intends to forge on with plans to build the network, with commercial services possibly available to consumers as early as next year, Techcentral reports. Telkom's acting CEO of its mobile unit 8ta, Jacques Schindehutte, said that the company is planning the network, and that Telkom believes its future lies more in mobile broadband services that in legacy voice offerings. Telkom will build the network using its existing spectrum in the 1.8GHz and 2.3GHz bands. It will reform some of the spectrum it has in the 1.8GHz band, which it currently uses to offer 2G voice services. The company has already been running a limited LTE pilot, with plans to build towers across SA's urban areas next year.

Microsoft adds Skype and VoIP integration in Windows Phone 8

Microsoft has announced integration of Skype and VoIP within the next version of its smartphone operating system. Pulling in Skype contacts and making VoIP calls will be possible with Windows Phone 8, and without the need for the app already available. Making or answering a VoIP call will work in the same way as a normal phone call, making it a seamless feature. This should mean the multitasking issues levied at the app will hopefully be a thing of the past. Developers will have access to the API needed to make use of the technology within their own applications and games. Windows Phone 8 is expected to launch towards the end of 2012 alongside Windows 8.
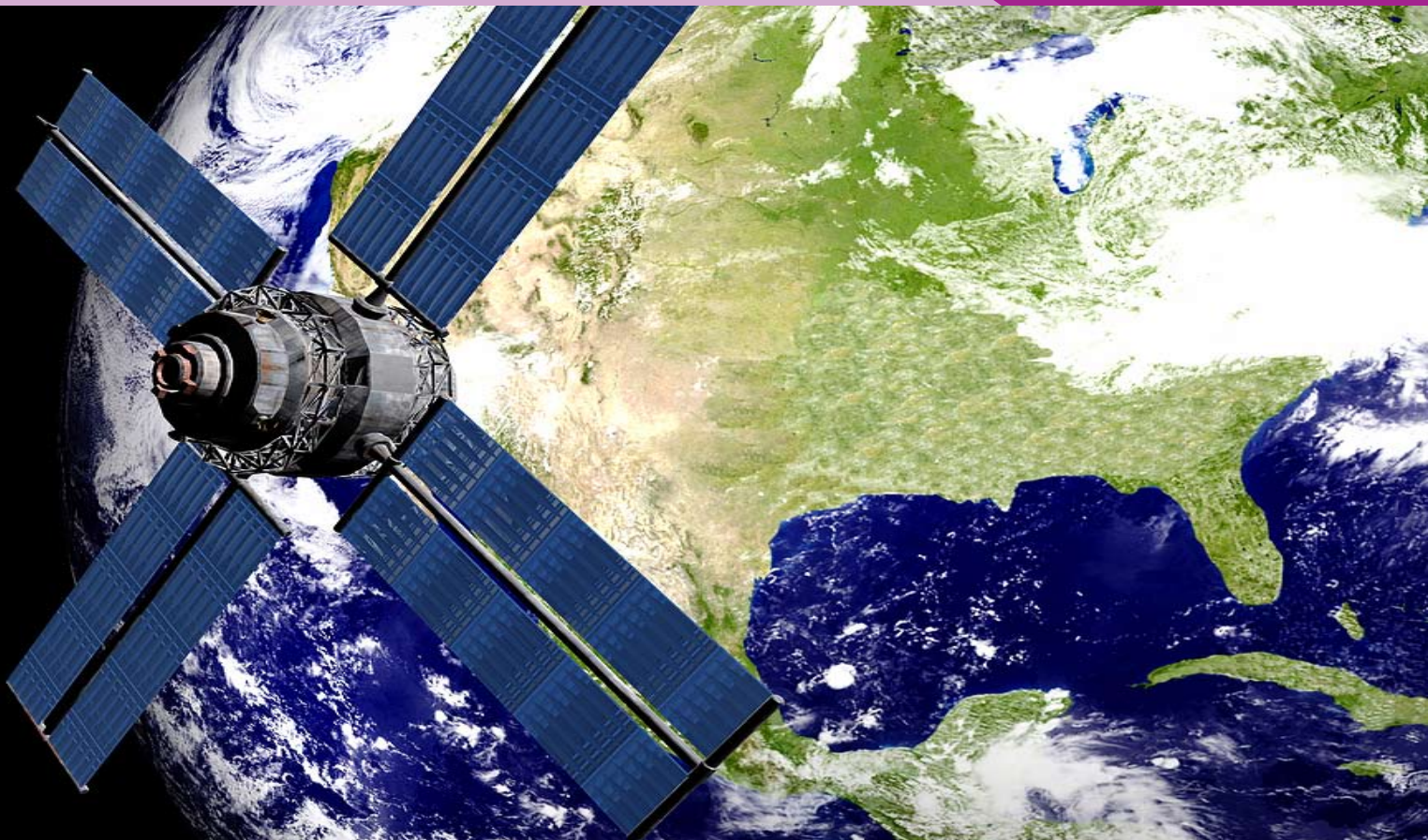
SATELLITE NEWS

Hughes, NSN Complete Testing Of Satellite Backhaul Service

Satellite equipment company Hughes Network Systems has completed verification of its HX System with Nokia Siemens Networks' GSM Base Station. GSM operators can have full confidence that the Hughes HX260 platform in combination with Nokia Siemens Networks' GSM Radio Access operating over the bandwidth optimized 'Packet Abis' interface, provides a mobile backhaul service. The Nokia Siemens Networks Packet Abis and Hughes HX260 together provide a Mobile Broadband Solution for Satellite Backhaul which improves voice quality and data throughput for customers. Supporting mobile backhaul in either star or mesh configurations, the HX System's packet processing design reduces round trip latency to approximately 600 milliseconds and one-way jitter to 20 milliseconds.

DISH Invests in Broadband Satellite Chipset for Mobile Devices

DISH announced a collaboration with Qualcomm to enable support of satellite-based communications in Qualcomm's Snapdragon S4 MSM8960 platform, the world's first dual-core solution with an integrated multi-mode 3G/LTE modem, for use in future DISH wireless devices. The new satellite air interface technology developed by Qualcomm is a 3G-based standard referred to as Enhanced Geostationary Air Link (EGAL). This initiative will enable the development of mobile handsets and devices for DISH that can operate in both terrestrial and satellite modes in the 2 GHz/AWS-4 band. DISH has called on the FCC to modify rules to facilitate widespread deployment of their spectrum for mobile use, as well as to preserve the mobile satellite service in this frequency.

Ukraine, Russia, Canada Agree Schedule for Ukraine's First Telecom Satellite

Ukrainian, Russian and Canadian participants of the international project on Ukraine's first national telecommunications satellite - the Lybid - have agreed a schedule of work on the construction and launch of the satellite in December 2013. The document was signed following a meeting of the management of the companies involved in the project in Kyiv on May 24-26, Interfax-Ukraine learned at the State Space Agency of Ukraine. The meeting participants included representatives of the customer of the satellite - the State Space Agency of Ukraine, the operator of the satellite – Ukraine's state-owned enterprises Ukrkosmos, the general contractor – Canada's MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates (MDA), a contractor for the production of the satellite's platform – Russia's OJSC Information Satellite Systems "Reshetnev Company" (ISS-Reshetnev), and a contractor for the satellite launch services – Russia's Center for Ground-Based Space Infrastructure Facilities Operation.

Thales Alenia Space España Delivers Ingenio X Band Communication System

Thales Alenia Space España announced the delivery of the X-band images communications system for the INGENIO satellite, the first Spanish Earth observation satellite. This system acts as a "voice" of the satellite, transmitting to Earth stations images and data generated on board by their instruments, thus enabling the essential function of the mission. The satellite, scheduled for launch in 2014, is owned by the Spanish Ministry of Industry. The program is managed by the ESA (European Space Agency) as delegated by the Center for Development of Industrial Technology (CDTI), and is being developed within the National Program for Earth Observation Satellite (PNOT), with a majority participation of the domestic industry. With a service life time of seven years, INGENIO will be oriented to provide to civilian users with observation services in areas such as: control of environmental disasters, monitoring of the Earth's surface, land and natural resources, urban and infrastructure planning, assessment of forest fires, border controls and increased security of our troops overseas.

Intelsat Announces Epicng Satellite Platform

Intelsat has announced their new EpicNG satellite platform, due in 3-4 years, which features a complementary overlay to their fixed satellite network. It will be fully integrated with Intelsat's existing satellite fleet and employ C, Ku and Ka-bands, wide beams, spot beams, and frequency reuse technology to provide world-wide broadband coverage. Intelsat says it is currently evaluating proposals by several manufacturers. The first two satellites, Intelsat 29e and Intelsat 33e, are expected to be operational in 2015 and 2016, and feature wide coverage and high throughput capacity. Combining Intelsat's spectral rights in the C-, Ku- and Ka-bands with the technical advantages of high throughput technology, Intelsat says the EpicNG platform will be fully open architecture. Customers will be able to use existing hardware and network topologies, and in many cases, define their own service characteristics.

Sea Launch Successfully Delivers the Intelsat 19 Spacecraft into Orbit

Sea Launch AG has successfully launched the Intelsat 19 satellite from the Equator on the ocean-based Launch Platform Odyssey, completing its eleventh mission for Intelsat S.A. and marking Sea Launch's first of three planned missions in 2012. The Zenit-3SL rocket carrying the spacecraft lifted off at 22:23 Pacific Daylight Time (PDT) on Thursday, May 31st (05:23 UTC/GMT, Friday, June 1) from the launch platform, positioned at 154 degrees West longitude in the international waters of the Pacific Ocean. One hour later, the Block DM-SL upper stage inserted the satellite, weighing 5,600 kilograms (12,345 lbs.) and built by Space Systems/Loral, into geosynchronous transfer orbit, on its way to a final orbital position at 166 degrees East longitude. Operators at the Intelsat Launch Control Center acquired the spacecraft's first signals from orbit shortly after spacecraft separation. All systems performed nominally throughout the launch mission.

Hyperia, Yahsat Rollout Satellite Broadband Service

Hyperia Limited, an Internet Service Provider (ISP), and Yahsat, a satellite communications company, have rolled out a satellite-based broadband service in Nigeria. Deputy Managing Director, Hyperia, Mr. George Opara, who spoke at the pre-service inauguration of the broadband service in Lagos, recently, said the solution would assist in reducing the high cost of broadband internet service in Nigeria. He said, "We have been working over two to three years to bring this solution into the market. Hyperia already has major VSAT product in the C-band and KU band. We have our hub in London and we service every part of Nigeria. When we saw the importance of this project and how it is going to help reduce the cost of Internet broadband, Hyperia Limited became very much interested. We have tested the C and KU bands and with emergence of KA band we have seen immense potential. This is a pre-service launch and we expect that the service will be up and running few weeks from now."

George explained that the broadband service would compete favorably with WiMAX and WiFi service in Nigeria, adding that the satellite-based broadband solution was totally independent of terrestrial infrastructure.

Telconet selects Hughes to provide HX System and broadband satellite terminals

Telconet, a telecommunications service provider in Ecuador, has selected Hughes Network Systems, a broadband satellite solutions provider, to provide an HX System and broadband satellite terminals for the Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Society (Mintel) rural connectivity project in Ecuador. Tomislav Topic, president of Telconet said that "We conducted a thorough evaluation of competing satellite broadband system providers and were convinced that Hughes not only had the best technology for this program, but also the depth of experience and the ability to deliver in a timely fashion. We are excited about this network connecting rural and underserved areas in Ecuador, bringing to these isolated communities, Internet access, data, voice, and video applications for the first time." Telconet purchased an HX System hub and HX50 and HX200 terminals, and installation of the network has been completed.

Vodafone Develops Umbrella Mobile Phone Charger

Vodafone UK has developed a prototype Booster Brolly, in partnership with University College London (UCL), to help visitors stay connected during the summer outdoor festivals. The concept umbrella comes with an environment friendly mobile phone charger, backed by a series of flexible solar panels within the canopy. The current generated from these panels will also power a micro antenna to boost a handset's 3G signal. It works with a wide range of devices and will charge a smartphone battery in less than three hours. It can charge one handset through a USB port in the handle.

ROAMING NEWS

V-Global Offers Free Roaming for International Voice and Video Calls

VoIP service provider V-Global Communications announced that it will provide worldwide free roaming and USA dial tone for international voice and video calls over smartphones with WiFi. International travelers can now make and receive calls and avoid roaming charges anywhere in the world where they have an Internet connection over WiFi and a second line on the V-Global network. V-Global customers can order as many additional phone numbers (lines) to ring to their smartphone as they wish for a small set up fee and monthly charge. USA numbers for a second line cost the least. iNum numbers, Internet country code +883, are also available to V-Global customers completely free of charge. V-Global has joined the international consortium of carriers connecting free VoIP calls to iNum numbers and providing iNum numbers to its customers free of charge. "iNum" stands for an international phone number assigned to the universal country code +883 by the ITU (International Telecommunication Union). Not all carriers connect calls to iNum numbers, requiring their callers to dial an access number first, before dialing their destination iNum.

Telenor Presents a Joint Roaming Initiative in the Nordic Region

Telenor has launched its joint roaming initiative called TravelSure in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. Telenor TravelSure offer will be launched in all Telenor Group operations in June. It includes launching new options and expanding the per day offerings for mobile data in additional countries. From there Telenor will improve the offerings for both voice and data roaming. In Norway, Sweden and Denmark, Telenor has launched slightly different roaming offers under the same Telenor TravelSure concept. All three Nordic countries will now have a voice offering and a data roaming tariff. Users in Norway can surf for NOK 49 per day for up to 30 megabyte in EU/EEA countries. With Ring EU/EØS, Telenor-customers with a Komplett or Prat subscription can use their included minutes when they travel in all EU/EEA countries. Surf outside EU/EEA with the lowest market price for USA and lower surf prices for Turkey, Switzerland, Croatia and Thailand at NOK 79 per day for up to 20 megabytes. Ring EU/EØS and Surf outside EU/EEA launched mid June.

EU Council Approves New Roaming Rules

The EU Council of ministers has approved the new regulations passed by parliament earlier this month, allowing lower rates to take effect from 01 July. The roaming regulations should be published in the EU Official Journal of 30 June. In addition to extending wholesale and retail regulation of roaming prices, the new legislation adds structural measures aimed at opening up the roaming market to new service providers and expanding consumer choice. The regulation also lays down rules aimed at increasing price transparency and improving the provision of information on charges to roaming customers. The new regulations will run until 30 June 2022. The European Commission will review the functioning of the regulation by mid-2016.

ICE Incoming Roaming to Cost Less

The state telecom, the Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad (ICE), announced a reduction in its "roaming" charges for the customers travelling outside the country. ICE roaming users can now receive calls at a cost of only US$0.60 per minute anywhere in the world. Previously the cost of receiving calls used to be US$2.91. However, outgoing calls will continue to be expensive for the roaming customers. They will cost between US$1.23 and US$2.91 per minute. These above rates are only for ICE customers who travel outside of Costa Rica. Visitors to Costa Rica who choose to "roam" in the country will be billed at the rate set by their service provider, like AT&T, Verizon, etc, which can cost up to US$3 per minute, even for a local call.

Kenyan Mobile Termination Rates to fall by 38 Percent from July

The Kenyan government has announced that mobile termination rates will fall by 38 percent to KES 1.60 a minute from July from KES 2.21. The rate had been due to drop to KES 1.44 in June 2011 before President Mwai Kibaki froze it for one year following lobbying by Safaricom and Orange. The Business Daily said the agreement was reached at a meeting of the Ministry of Information, the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) and the four mobile operators, Safaricom, Airtel, Orange Kenya and Essar's Yu. Safaricom had wanted a higher fee while the CCK and the other three operators were keen on KES 1.44. Information Permanent Secretary Bitange Ndemo has said that a new CCK study will determine the rates to be applied from 2014 onwards. Meanwhile, Safaricom CEO Bob Collymore said he was not aware that the board of the CCK has yet approved any changes to the termination rate.

Vodafone Introduces New Flat-Rate European Roaming Deal for Calls, Texts and Data

Vodafone UK has launched a new tariff option called EuroTraveller that allows customers to use their UK tariff allowances whilst in Europe, cutting the price of 'roaming' abroad. Opting in to a £3 daily charge lets consumers on a 'pay monthly' price plan use their UK voice, text and mobile internet allowance when abroad. Calls and texts received whilst in Vodafone's Europe Zone are free; additional 'out of bundle' charges are the same as in the UK. It means, for example, that a customer using Vodafone EuroTraveller to make three 10-minute calls, send 10 text messages back to the UK and use 5MB of mobile internet would pay just £3 plus their UK home price plan instead of over £17 on Vodafone's previous standard roaming prices. Customers can add EuroTraveller to their tariff by calling 5555 or texting ADD to 40506. Vodafone's Passport tariff remains as an option for 'pay as you go' customers in Europe.

CSL, SK Telecom Launches LTE Roaming

Hong Kong's CSL and South Korea's SK Telecom have launched the world's first international LTE roaming service. The operators revealed that their respective customers will be able to roam on each others' LTE networks starting from next month. The prices will be the same as 3G roaming services offered by CSL and SK Telecom. CSL CTO Christian Daigenault said the partnership with SK Telecom "is a significant milestone for the telecommunications industry, which continues to debate the feasibility of 4G LTE international roaming." According to the companies, plans to expand roaming compatibility to more LTE smartphones are in motion. CSL was the first Hong Kong operator to debut LTE services, with a launched in November 2010. SK Telecom launched LTE services at the same time as rival LG U+ in July 2011. CSL and SK Telecom were the first operators to achieve interconnection between LTE networks during a pilot trial in March.

FrenchConnection.fr Reduces International Data Roaming Costs in France

FrenchConnection.fr offers daily mobile wireless broadband internet for international travelers by providing a pocket WiFi device which can connect up to 5 devices, including laptops and smart phones, with 100MB allowance per day starting from EUR 0, 06 per megabyte or 6 EUR per day. Initially FrenchConnection.fr can be reserved online before departure, and will be delivered to your hotel or office. The small, customized packaging fits in all French post boxes and is provided with a pre-paid return envelope to ensure easy return for busy international travelers. Olivier Rousseau, French Connection founder, commented "By increasing competition, French Connection is slashing data roaming charges in France, which are on average EUR 2, 50 per megabyte at present. The offer is targeted towards tourists and business travelers spending between 1 to 15 days in France.

Roaming in South Asia Remains Expensive

South Asians continue to pay more for international roaming calls within the region, despite a promise by regional countries to cut roaming costs. LIRNEasia, a regional policy group, recommended in 2008 that heads of state meeting in Colombo work to reduce roaming costs in Asia to promote inter-regional trade. The recommendations were incorporated in the final Colombo declaration. However, call charges have been lowered just a little and remain high.