

# SAMENA TRENDS

EXCLUSIVELY FOR SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

**BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES**

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## Domain Name Industry Trends in Evolving Digital Economies

**Fadi Chehadé**  
President & CEO  
**ICANN**



## Domain Name Industry Trends in Evolving Digital Economies

The Internet's continued existence depends on its ability and need to expand. Developments witnessed in the digital realm over the past two decades fairly demonstrate the pace at which the Internet has expanded, causing seismic shifts in socio-economic behaviors and business strategies.

The future expansion of the Internet now has become a function of top-level domain names. That is, the Internet of tomorrow will witness the addition of new domain names in its addressing space. Such top-level domains (TLDs) will have a major impact on the end-users' ability and speed in being able to browse through the vastness of the Internet. As an example of the growth trend, in 3Q-2012, more than 246 million TLD registrations took place, reflecting a significant year-on-year growth rate of 12 percent. Country Cod Top-level Domains (ccTLDs) have also been on the rise, as have been the .com and .net TLDs. Notably, .com remains at the top while .info is the least adopted of all the major, currently-known TLDs.

The domain registration trend shows that countries in Western Europe, Asia Pacific, South America, and the Middle East regions are the most active in terms of adopting ccTLDs. In this trend, there lies a message for the countries of the SAMENA region to immediately starting opting for ccTLDs and premium domains, such as energy.com, to better project their local industries.

Similarly, for telecommunications operators, TLDs represent a potentially strong business area, whereby new business models could be supported. With the

emergence of new generic TLDs (or gTLDs), of which .com and .biz are examples, and as seen from the eyes of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), telecoms operators could better connect with their end-users, better manage their brands and customer trust, create better marketing opportunities, facilitate entrepreneurship, and, resultantly, create new revenue opportunities for themselves. gTLDs may also serve as a means to better manage users' access to content and other data, which currently is being provided and leveraged by alternative players such as OTTs.

The domain name industry is among the newest ones to emerge with a strong business case. However, there currently exist knowledge gaps and lack of understanding on this new business area, its operational and dispute-resolution aspects, and its domain assigning roles and management issues.

All stakeholders of the digital world have a better chance of successfully benefitting from this new industry if collaboration and better understanding could be aided. Regulatory authorities that have already initiated the understanding and collaboration process on the domain names industry are better equipped to enable growth of this industry within their respective markets. The SAMENA Council is pleased to be of support to this cause, and considers the domain names area, which will have implications on the understanding and implementation of concepts such as Internet governance.

Yours truly,

**Bocar A. BA**  
Chief Executive Officer  
**SAMENA Telecommunications Council**

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## EDITORIAL



# OPERATOR LEADER'S VISION



Mr. Chehadé is President and CEO of ICANN. Fadi Chehadé's career has been defined by building consensus and promoting collaborative technologies and practices. He has more than 25 years of experience in building and leading progressive Internet enterprises, leveraging relationships with senior executives and government officials across Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the United States.

Chehadé, age 50, is a citizen of Egypt, Lebanon, and the United States. He was born in Beirut, Lebanon, to Egyptian parents and left the then war-torn country in 1980 at the age of 18. He speaks fluent Arabic, English, French, and Italian. Most recently he served as Chief Executive Officer of Vocado LLC, a U.S. firm that is a provider of cloud-based software for the administration of educational institutions.

Prior to Vocado, Chehadé was CEO of CoreObjects Software, Inc., a leader in new product software development services for both large and growing companies. He oversaw the expansion of the company to include more than 400 engineers and its successful acquisition by Symphony Services.



**Fadi Chehadé**  
President & CEO  
**ICANN**

**Q.** During the last few months, ICANN has had several meetings with Middle East stakeholders regarding participation in ICANN as well as ICANN engagement in the region. What are the expected outcomes of those interactions?

**A.** ICANN has been working with the Middle East community for several years, but we realized we had to do more. When I joined ICANN last year, I got a clear mandate from the Board of Directors to strengthen our globalization and outreach efforts all over the world. Therefore, to boost our global engagement at all levels we began working with the community on strategies for their regions. In the Middle East, for instance, a working group of community members was set up earlier this year to develop an engagement strategy for ICANN in the region. The strategy was finalized and published in May, and ICANN is going to embark on the implementation right after the ICANN 47th international meeting, which will take place in Durban, South Africa on 14-18 July 2013. The strategy highlights the main priorities for the region in the coming three years and identifies three key areas to focus on: a) DNS Security and Stability; b) Domain Name Industry; c) Internet Governance Ecosystem. What we expect from this strategy, as well as from other parallel efforts that are underway, is to see more engagement from Middle East governments, business, civil society, academia and the technical community not only in ICANN but also in other global Internet Governance fora. It is worth noting that ICANN is not alone in this endeavor, as we are teaming up with partners from the region as well as from the global Internet community.

**Q.** There seems to be a big gap between the Middle East and the developing world in the domain name industry. What are the reasons for this gap in your opinion, and how can ICANN help in bridging it?

**A.** The domain name industry, similar to other Internet related business, is more advanced in countries with a strong and robust Internet economy like North America, Europe, and parts of Asia, than is the case in the Middle East and other parts of the world. ICANN is cognizant of this gap and is exploring with experts in the field how to better develop the domain name industry in the Middle East as well as in Africa and other regions. ICANN stands committed to support efforts that bridge this gap, but it is important to realize that domain names are just one part of the Internet ecosystem, and we need other actors to help with the rest of the elements. For example, we cannot expect the utilization of internationalized domain names (IDNs) to grow in the absence of an appropriate environment that promotes the development and hosting of local content.

**Q.** Can you brief us on the new gTLD program? What is the current status? What are the main challenges? When should we expect to see the first new gTLD delegated into the root?

**A.** The New gTLD Program is about adding additional choice within the Top-Level Domain space in hopes of fostering competition and innovation. Applications for new gTLDs started to be submitted nearly a year ago, with the first application window closing on 30 May 2012, and over 1,900 applications were received from around the world (such as .doha and .arab). Not only will these new gTLDs expand upon the innovative power of the Internet, but they will also be available in various non-Latin alphabets, including Arabic and Chinese. As of right now, applications are being reviewed, disputes are being resolved, and auctions for contested strings are taking place.

**Q.** Some new gTLD strings are controversial; some communities see them inappropriate while others do not. The recent GAC communiqué of the Beijing meeting has raised concerns over some names. How is ICANN going to react to all this?

**A.** ICANN's focus is on expanding opportunities, competition and consumer choice, and we are confident that the marketplace will ultimately decide what works and what doesn't work. Our mission is simply to facilitate such by giving Internet users as many options as possible. Keep in mind, ICANN does not control content nor do we censor or determine what is appropriate or inappropriate material for the Internet. We are aware of concerns pertaining to applications, yet the new gTLD application process is set-up in a way that allows for the submission of comments and objections from not only governments but from all interested parties. These comments are posted online and are available for public review, and additionally, evaluation panels may also consider this feedback when rendering their decisions on applications. Finally, the ICANN Board of Directors is currently studying the GAC communiqué and will be addressing it during the upcoming public meeting in Durban.

**Q.** What measures does ICANN undertake to deal with DNS security threats and increasing attacks on the root servers?

**A.** The security, stability and resiliency of the DNS is of the utmost importance to ICANN, as it is at the core of what we do as an organization and it is central to ICANN's mission. ICANN facilitates the security, stability and resiliency of the Internet's unique identifier systems through coordination and collaboration with other root server operators, and ICANN has operational responsibilities for the: L-root;

DNSSEC key signing operations for the root zone; IANA functions; operation of the new generic top-level domain program; and Time Zone Database Management.

ICANN maintains world-class L-root operations, now at 143 instances worldwide, and continually works with partners in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East to expand L-root capacity. Using geographically dispersed locations for name servers strengthens the global Internet and increases speed and connectivity for local users. ICANN also collaborates with the operational security community to identify DNS security threats and acts as a facilitator in the responsible disclosure of DNS security threats and mitigation techniques. Our security team regularly provides DNS capability training to and technical engagement with ccTLD operators, law enforcement and regional organizations. This work helps to build greater capacity and expertise in the global Internet community. We also regularly speak at conferences, and encourage thought leadership on and discussion around DNS security issues, to encourage a healthy, sustainable, resilient and global Internet.

**Q. From the outside, it seems that private sector engagement in ICANN is mainly of Registries and Registrars. Is this a wrong perception?**

**A.** Why should other businesses get involved and how can they get involved?

Registries and Registrars are indeed very important, and

they hold contractual relationships with ICANN. Essentially, they are the distribution chain to domain name consumers and registrants, so their interest as stakeholders is very clear. Beyond these contracted groups, we have formal business constituencies, and even some constituencies-in-formation, which include diverse groups representing small business, Internet service providers, and even brand-holders that have applied for generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs). As the Internet expands and becomes more global, the voices of even more diverse categories of business need to be heard, and ICANN recognizes this. For example, we will have a working session with African entrepreneurs during our public meeting in Durban in July. We are also working to make it easier for businesses to understand and follow the work of ICANN without necessarily having to come to our meetings. Via new social media tools and content that we are sharing in business-friendly formats and languages, arguably everyone that uses the Internet has a stake in our work. Our role is to help others learn more about us through platforms like myICANN.org or through more personalized channels like the ICANN blog. And we are adding even more options in the near future.

**Q. What is the role of ICANN in supporting and promoting the multi-stakeholder Internet Governance model?**

**A.** ICANN's mandate is to ensure the security and stability of a single, interoperable Internet. To that end, ICANN is designed to operate in a multistakeholder, bottom-up manner that incorporates all parties in the



policy development process. The multistakeholder model is an integral part of the evolution of the Internet and its governance, and is in the DNA of many institutions and fora that constitute the Internet ecosystem. ICANN, being a part of this ecosystem, works hand-in-hand with leading actors in Internet policy and standardization activities, such as the Internet Society (ISOC), the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). ICANN has also been actively participating in global Internet Governance processes, including the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and supports the regional IGFs by working closely with communities around the world to promote the multistakeholder model at national and regional levels.

**Q. What are the key challenges you foresee that ICANN may face in next five years?**

**A.** In the coming years, it is anticipated that more than one thousand new Internet extensions (gTLDs) will be operational in the root. This is a significant development in the Internet naming system that comes with opportunities as well as challenges. At the same time, we also expect to see nearly two billion more Internet users over the course

of the next five years, a majority of who will come with new aspirations. Connected mainly via smartphones in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, and using apps customized to their local needs and languages, will gTLDs, and IDN gTLDs, be able to meet the needs of these next two billion users? How relevant will domain names be in an apps-centric world? How should ICANN evolve to address the realities of this changing Internet landscape? These are the type of questions that my leadership team and I are considering, and our mission is to ensure that ICANN continues to operate effectively for the benefit of the public interest and for the furtherance of a single, interoperable Internet.

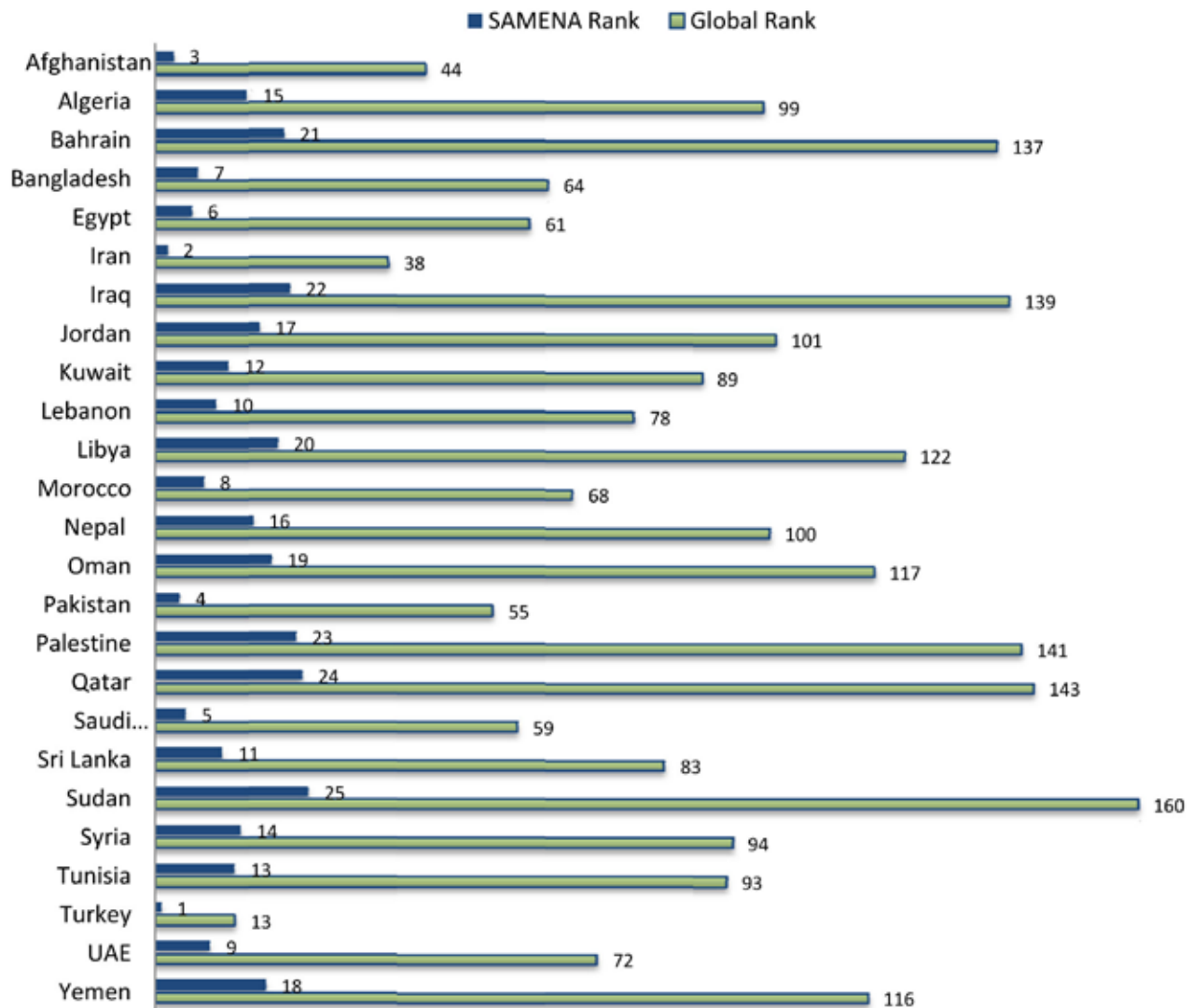
**Q. How can ICANN and SAMENA cooperate?**

**A.** ICANN and SAMENA could partner in business engagement activities in the Middle East, and as a leading business association, SAMENA could facilitate for ICANN to reach out to ISPs and telecom carriers in the Middle East and North Africa in order to better inform them of work taking place in the field of domain names and numbers. Likewise, at ICANN, we have a variety of business groups, under several constituencies, which could be a place for SAMENA to expand its reach and to engage more actively in ICANN's processes.



## Number of cTLD in the SAMENA Region Regional & Global Ranking

**Research Note:** The focus of this month's KPI is the total number of top level domains (TLD's) in the SAMENA countries. A top-level domain (TLD) is the highest level domain in the hierarchical Domain Name System of the Internet e.g. ".tr, af, .ae, .pk, sa". For all domains in lower levels, it is the last part of the domain name, that is, the last label of a fully qualified domain name. Responsibility of management of most top-level domains is delegated to specific organizations by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which operates the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), and is in charge of maintaining the DNS root zone.



The chart show regional as well as global ranks in terms of the number of country- Top Level Domain (cTLDs). Within the SAMENA region, Turkey is at number 1 with almost 1.3 million cTLDs registered so far. Its corresponding Global rank is 13. The lowest ranked country in the SAMENA region is Sudan with only 547 cTLDs registers so far. Sudan's corresponding Global Rank is 160.

Regionally, within South Asia, Afghanistan is the highest ranked country in the region with SAMENA rank of 3 and Global rank of 44. In the Middle East, Turkey is the highest ranked country with SAMENA rank of 1 and Global rank of 13. In North African, Egypt is the highest ranked country with regional rank of 6, and Global rank of 61.

**Analysis:** SAMENA Telecommunications Council's Strategic Research Team.

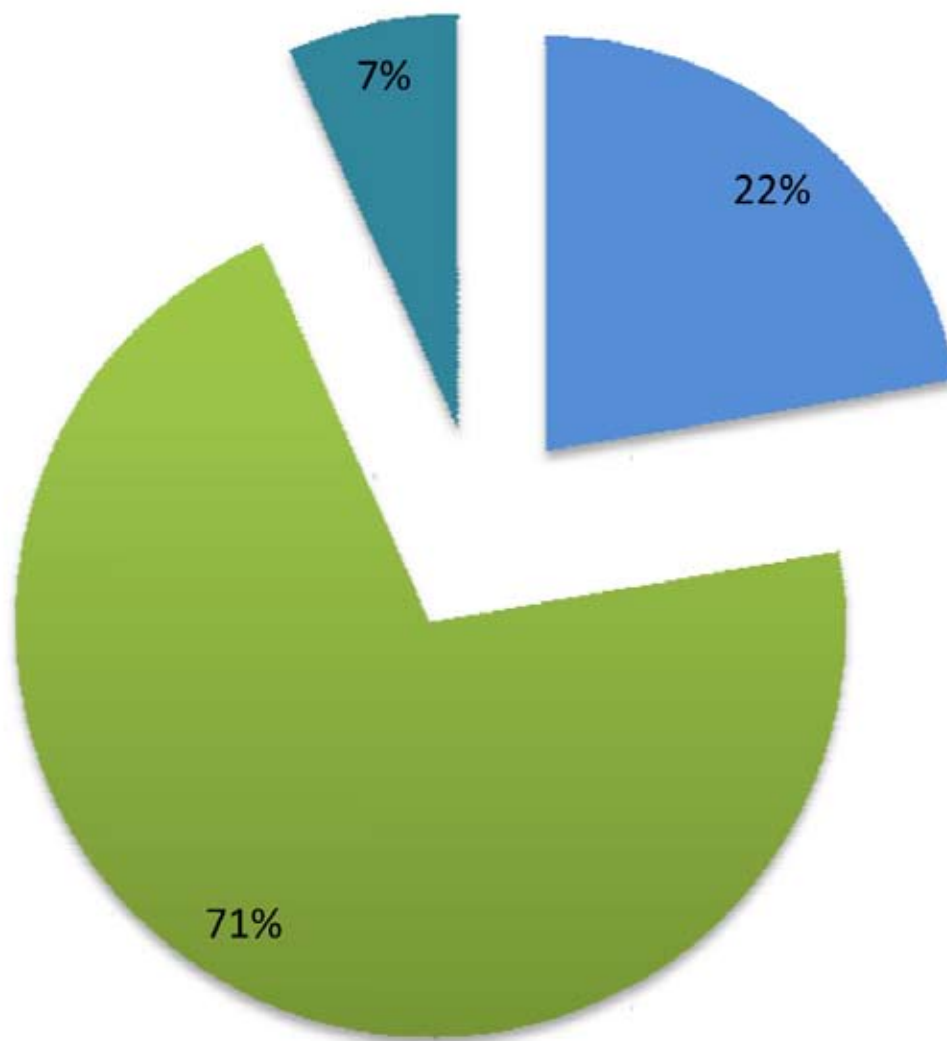
**Image Source:** SAMENA Telecommunications Council.

**Data Source:** ICANN, Web Hosting Info (WHI), Regional NICs and Registries.



Percentage of the total number of cTLD within the SAMENA Region

■ South Asia   ■ Middle East   ■ North Africa



**Image Source:** SAMENA Telecommunications Council  
**Data Source:** ICANN, Web Hosting Info (WHI), Regional NICs and Registries.



## REGIONAL NEWS

### PTCL holds Leadership Excellence Conference

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited held the concluding session of its leadership conference 'Broadening Learning Horizons', which is a continuation of the company's Leadership Excellence Program, kicked off early this month. Designed to enhance the leadership capabilities of PTCL senior management in-line with the strategic business vision of the company, the event brought together business leaders and industry experts from both private and public sector, who shared their valuable experiences and distinct leadership ideologies with the audience, in the context of PTCL Leadership needs. Walid Irshaid, President & CEO PTCL was also present at the occasion along other senior management of the company. The interactive platform allowed PTCL leaders to gain insights into the successful leadership styles of business icons and also led to discussions based on the stimulating questions regarding business solutions critical for transforming the organization and creating sustainability.

### Etisalat launches Managed DDoS Mitigation Service to protect businesses from DDoS attacks

Etisalat, one of the leading telecom operators in the Middle East and Africa, launched a security solution to prevent cyber-attacks through Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) management. Etisalat will offer this service to its business,

government and hosted data center customers. The security solutions being offered as part of the service include a cloud based security service (whereby DDoS attack identification and mitigation occurs proactively within Etisalat's IP backbone before it reaches the customer's network), and the hybrid DDoS protection approach, which combines the advantages of cloud based and network perimeter base solutions for the customer's equipment and offers the best protection from DDoS threats. The perimeter-based protection solution will be deployed with a CPE at the customer site to protect both the services offered by the organization and the digital infrastructure – such as load-balancers and firewalls which can be targeted by state-exhaustion DDoS attacks.

### STC embraces the biggest international internet portal in the region

STC embraces King Khalid National Network Control Center "NNCC" in Riyadh which is the biggest integrated performance control center in the region for monitoring the overall network performance. It also monitors the performance of the biggest international internet portal in the region which adds a strategic dimension of the company making it a world internet provider in the Middle East (International DSP). This gigantic systems and services that surpassed the boundaries of the Saudi Arabia were there to put STC in a unique leading. This enables the company to control over 90percent of internet and data traffic in the kingdom where the volume of data transmission is close to

3000 terabytes daily through the gigantic gateways with capacities of up to 500 gigabyte/s. these gateways are linked with marine cables spread east and west: SMW4, SMW3, IMW, FLAG in addition to the new continental cable JADI built by STC in conjunction with its strategic partners. The NNCC also tracks Domain Name Systems (DNS) that house the most up-to-date specialist world equipment accredited by major world websites. It also hosts Root DNS servers to provide domain rerouting service to internet users inside and outside Saudi Arabia.

## du partners with Encloud to deliver a new Business Cloud service

du has announced the expansion of its managed services portfolio with the launch of its newest enterprise solution, Business Cloud Platform in partnership with Encloud. The Business Cloud Services Platform provides du enterprise customers with access to a broad range of flexible cloud services, covering infrastructure platform and software. Business cloud platform from du offers standard cloud building blocks that support multiple market segments, from small to medium enterprises (SMEs) through to large enterprise customers. du and Encloud have partnered with Cisco, EMC and Citrix to bring the best technology solution in the market. The services offered are customizable based on individual requirements, giving the customer complete control of their cloud investment with continuous access to new cloud products. du Business Cloud Services have been designed to offer a one-stop shop for a wide array of services, all delivered from a virtual data center out of a world class hosting facility in Dubai. Each service is backed by technical experts and can be provisioned in minutes, with easy scalability and a Pay-as-you-Grow Opex model.

## Yahoo's Head of MEA departs for new social TV startup

One of Yahoo's senior international execs and longtime entrepreneur Ahmed Nassef is leaving the company to create a new startup called Telfez, which will be a social television effort, aimed at emerging markets. Nassef, who was until now the head of Yahoo's efforts in the Middle East and Africa, is co-founding the new company with Tamer Rashad, a top Merrill Lynch in the same region. "Today the Middle East and Africa region represents an inflection point for television viewership, skyrocketing growth in the penetration of smartphones and connected devices, and heavy social engagement," said Nassef in a press release. "Increasingly, the millions of TV viewers in places from Capetown and Casablanca to Dubai and Istanbul are watching TV while holding a mobile phone or tablet and connecting with friends on their favorite social platforms. Nassef has been at the Silicon Valley Internet giant for four years, in which he has doubled its audience and improved revenue growth. He came to Yahoo after the company acquired Maktoob.com, an Arabic language site, in 2009.

## Mobily wins three AMEC Awards

Mobily was rewarded with three AMEC awards for global best practices in social media measurement during conference that was held in Madrid on the 6th of June 2013. International companies participated in the competition where Mobily was chosen to be the best with the social media measurement tools and approaches. The company was able to outperform reputed companies and big names

as it won the Grand Prix Platinum Award, "best of the best" – which is a unique award across all categories and is widely considered as one of the top five social media awards globally. In addition, Mobily won the gold award, "Best use of Communication Management in Business-to-Consumer" and the silver award, "Best use of Social Media Measurement". These awards reflect the company's efforts to build action oriented insights in integrating social media with the voice of customer's platform to improve customer experience, measuring the online communication engagement on specific campaigns and posts, and quantifying unstructured text into structured format.

## Etisalat obtained Universal Service License in Benin

Etisalat Benin, a wholly owned subsidiary of Etisalat Group, the leading telecommunications company in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, has obtained a Universal Service License for the West African country. The license gives Etisalat Benin the right to provide third and fourth generation (3G and 4G) and any other mobile telecommunications technology that becomes available for the next 20 years. The license will enable Etisalat Benin to offer its customers more innovative telecoms products and high-speed data services. Etisalat Benin strives to pioneer telecommunications services in Benin, an African country with huge potential for future growth and development. The company invests in the future of mobile services technologies that will provide citizens, businesses and communities with the means for economic growth and success.

## Governor of Riyadh honors STC for supporting training and employment programs

His Royal Highness Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, governor of Riyadh honored STC for its role in supporting the training and employment programs executed by the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation. The honoring was done on the occasion of the 22nd technical forum held for the graduation of a batch of Riyadh technical colleges and industrial institute trainees and the 1st batch of Riyadh technical trainer college graduates at the HQs of Riyadh Technical College. Honoring of STC was a reward for its role in supporting the programs of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation and technical and vocational training council in Riyadh in different training activities and programs. It also reflects the concern for strengthening ambitious plans of drawing a promising localization path to serve the Saudi society and achieve sustained national development and attract the Saudi youth who proved scientific and knowledge abilities so as to use their expertise and polish their skills to enable them keep up with rapid technical developments witnessed by the telecom industry in Saudi Arabia and the region.

## Arthur D. Little: Decisive National Fiber strategies needed to boost future economic growth

Governments and regulators must move decisively to fiber in order to support future economic growth, states Arthur D. Little (ADL) in its new report, "National Fiber Strategies: National economic imperative or just another private

industry task?" Saudi Arabia is amongst the least developed GCC countries when it comes to fiber deployment but has previously had success in promoting mobile and broadband services with its Universal Services Fund program. Despite the on-going work of key fiber players such as STC and Mobily, a lot of work still has to be done. "Government should make fiber infrastructure a national priority," says Dr. Karim Taga, Managing Partner and Global Practice Leader, ADL TIMEpractice. "This means devising new ways of financing and promoting future deployment in order to catch up with neighbouring countries in the GCC." There are clear economic benefits to improving broadband infrastructure; jobs are created and there is a permanent boost to GDP. Ultra-fast broadband also drives critical diversification of economies, as Small and Medium Businesses are among the first to benefit from new services.

## Mobily launches free promotion for Twitter access service

Ethad Etisalat, Mobily, has launched a new promotion allowing subscribers to use Twitter free of data charges. The new promotion enables Mobily's subscribers to login to their Twitter accounts through mobile.twitter.com and Tweet, Retweet, and follow any of their interests for three months, whereas Twitter is considered to be one of the most active social media platforms in the region. This free promotion reflects Mobily's devotion to meet subscribers' needs, and its innovation passion that gives customers' experience the priority. Mobily always takes the initiative to launch customized services for the common social media applications where it exclusively has launched WhatsApp and WhatsApp Plus packages.

## Qatar's Ooredoo to invest US\$274 million in fiber optic network

Ooredoo, the state-backed telecommunications operator formerly known as Qtel, is to invest more than QR1 billion (US\$274 million) to develop the Gulf state's fiber optic network and aims to have all homes connected to the service by the end of 2014, a senior executive said. "In January 2012 we commercially launched Ooredoo Fiber, which is Qatar's fastest-ever home fiber optic network. Ooredoo Fiber is currently connected to more than 50,000 customers, providing a connection speed 10 times faster than copper wire." Qatar has one of the fastest nationwide fiber roll-outs in the world since the start of deployment in 2011, as judged by the average percentage of homes passed by Fiber (33 percent of the total) and the number of homes connected (6.3 percent) per year," according to the latest report released by international management consulting firm Arthur D Little (ADL). The report claimed the pace of the roll out in Qatar exceeds that of several highly-developed nations and the UAE. Ooredoo reported a 13.6 percent rise in first-quarter net profit, as increased revenue from Qatar, Iraq and Indonesia offset a sustained profit slump at its Kuwait and Oman units.

## BlackBerry launches scholarship for women

BlackBerry has launched its Scholars Program, a global initiative designed to inspire more women to enter and develop careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths (Stem). The program will provide full, four-year tuition scholarships to outstanding women

globally, who are seeking degrees at accredited colleges and universities in the areas of Stem, with a particular interest or aptitude in the area of mobile computing, said a statement. The scholarship program, which was unveiled by BlackBerry's global creative director, Alicia Keys, at BlackBerry Live, is its long-term commitment to engage young women at every step of their education, from high school to university, and as they rise through the workforce. BlackBerry will also offer mentorship and professional opportunities for each of the scholars, who will be selected based on their academic merit and passion for entering the mobile computing industry.

## Huawei starts up LTE commercial support group

Huawei has introduced a business initiative designed to explore the application scenarios for SDN in carrier networks, to help operators better understand the technology's commercial value. The Business Initiatives Zoom-in (BIZ) program is geared understanding the business needs that drive the future of technological development in the ICT industry, whereas the company's SoftCOM strategy, launched in February, is more technological in nature. So the BIZ program aims to give telecom operators a step-by-step approach to SDN application by studying and analyzing each part of the network to develop cost-effective solutions that can be efficiently applied to the operators' existing networks.

## Nawras People Development trainers mentor Omani college students with skills workshops

Emphasizing the important role that education plays in the business world, trainers from Nawras People Development recently mentored 18 students from the Higher College of Technology Muscat who were preparing to enter the workplace. During the session, the students learned how to formulate ideas and work together as a team to develop a project for presentation. Consisting of motivational videos and team activities, the training session focused on the importance of learning listening skills and how to transfer knowledge and skills into real life scenarios both now and in the future. The main team activities challenged students to consider the future and their role in society later in life. This exercise highlighted each individual's skills, examined how they contribute to the group and looked at the challenges that lie ahead.

## Etisalat exclusively launch highest speed 4G LTE modems in UAE

Etisalat, one of the largest telecom operators in the Middle East and Africa, announced the exclusive launch of 4G LTE mobile broadband devices available from Huawei at highest speeds of 150Mbps in the UAE. The New devices will be available at all Etisalat business centers effective from Monday 17 June 2013. The portable 150 Mbps 4G LTE WiFi Modem - the latest generation of high-performance wireless internet devices from Etisalat - allows users to enjoy a multiple super-fast internet connection they can share with up to 10 of their friends, family and work for their laptop, smartphones or tablets. The device works on 4G as well as 3G network. The slim and small 150 Mbps 4G USB Internet modem is portable, user friendly and compatible with all computers, both desktop and laptop. This USB device is best suited for a single user as it gives Etisalat customers the option of utilizing it on demand basis and works on 4G as well as 3G networks.

Address



http://www



## REGULATORY & POLICY NEWS

### FTTx network in two cities of Iran by the end of August 2013

Iran's telecoms watchdog the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) has announced that a fiber-to-the-x (FTTx) network, currently being deployed by Iranian Net Communication and Electronic Services Co. (Iranian Net), will go live in Mashhad (Khorasan Razavi province) and Tehran by the end of August 2013. According to the press release, the company was granted an operational license in June 2012 which stipulates the implementation and operation of FTTx networks within 18 months in seven cities, namely Mashhad (Khorasan Razavi province), Tehran, Shiraz (Fars province), Karaj (Alborz province), Qom, Isfahan and Tabriz (East Azerbaijan province). According to Iranian Net's CEO Mohammad Ali Rahmandoust, the company is expected to provide services to 400,000 subscribers by end-August 2013, gradually increasing to a total of one million subscribers within the next two years.

### Australia to auction unsold 700MHz spectrum

Australia's ICT Minister, Senator Stephen Conroy has started a consultation on what to do with the unsold radio spectrum left over from last year's auction. The draft policy requires that the reserve price for the remaining spectrum be set at a price not less than \$1.36/MHz/pop, which corresponds with the reserve price at which it was offered at the digital dividend auction last year. That reserve price was criticized though for being much higher than the industry had been

expecting when it was originally set. The telecoms regulator, the ACMA has until next September to decide on the appropriate procedures for returning the unsold 700 MHz spectrum to market. "The ACMA report in September 2014 will inform the decision about how to bring the remaining 700 MHz spectrum back to market in a way that provides the greatest benefit to the Commonwealth, interested purchasers and the Australian public," Senator Conroy said.

### CITC has shortlisted three companies to award MVNO licenses

Saudi Arabia's telecoms watchdog the Communications and IT Commission (CITC) has shortlisted three companies to be awarded mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) licenses. According to the regulator's press release, the selected companies are Dubai-based Axiom Union Mobile, in collaboration with Zain Saudi Arabia (formerly Saudi MTC), Virgin Mobile MEA (VMMEA), with host provider Saudi Telecoms Company (STC) and Jawraa Group (Lebara), in partnership with Mobily (Etihad Etisalat). MVNOs do not have their own telecoms infrastructure and utilize other operators' networks to sell mobile services to subscribers. In order to qualify for MVNO licenses in Saudi Arabia, companies needed to sign an agreement for alliance with one of the three incumbents in the Kingdom – STC, Zain Saudi Arabia and Mobily. The watchdog stated that the shortlisted MVNOs now have 90 days to meet the requirements for the license award.

## Cofetel updates proposals for local calling area consolidation

Mexican telecoms regulator Comision Federal de Telecomunicaciones (Cofetel) has reportedly modified a draft bill which aims to consolidate the country's 397 local calling areas. According to BNAmericas, the watchdog has revised the bill following feedback it received during a public consultation process regarding the proposals. As such, it is understood that as per the updated draft bill Mexico's current 397 local calling areas will be reduced to 172 – the original plan would have meant consolidation to 173 zones. Further, the implementation period over which changes will be made has been extended to 24 months from 18 months, after operators and manufacturers called for more time to develop and deploy technical solutions. Following the revisions the draft bill will now be sent to federal regulatory review body Comision Federal de Mejora Regulatoria (Cofemer).

## MinTIC grants permission to six 4G bidders

Colombia's Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (MinTIC) has cleared all six prospective bidders for 4G spectrum, to participate in the auction next week, BNAmericas reports. The six bidders are as follows: triple-play provider Claro, a subsidiary of Mexican telecoms giant America Movil (AM); Movistar, a full-service telco owned 70/30 by Spain's Telefonica and the Colombian government; state-backed broadband operator Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Bogota (ETB) and Millicom International Cellular (MIC)'s Tigo Colombia have entering a joint bid; DTH service provider DirecTV, which was pipped to the post in the nation's previous 4G sale; digital trunking company Avantel; and national fiber networking firm Aztec Communications.

## PTS copper published report finds no unfairness by Telia

Sweden's Post and Telecom Agency (PTS) has published a report on the oversight of markets for broadband network infrastructure and bitstream access in the first half of 2013, focusing on price supervision of copper-based wholesale products, which include incumbent PSTN operator TeliaSonera's periodic charges for copper access and installation fees. The PTS examined a number of key indicators designed to highlight any possible discrimination of external wholesale customers compared to TeliaSonera's own retail business, but the analysis over the six-month period 'did not reveal any significant differences which could indicate that discrimination exists'. For the second half of 2013 PTS will publish an oversight report focusing on additional wholesale/retail access products including direct fiber residential connections.

## Russia's regulatory authorities plans MNP testing for September-November

Russia's regulatory authorities plan to test the country's planned mobile number portability (MNP) database between 11 September and 1 November. In accordance with laws introduced by President Vladimir Putin in late-2012, the service must be implemented by 1 December

2013, with the brisk time-frame posing logistical headaches for the country's wireless players. Some companies have protested that the service cannot be implemented until at least March 2014, as the appropriate legislative rules have yet to be prepared satisfactorily.

## Ukraine's National Commission for the State Regulation extends Astelit's DLD, ILD license for five years

Ukraine's National Commission for the State Regulation of Communications and Informatization (NCCIR or NKRZI) has extended cellco Astelit's fixed line domestic and international long-distance (DLD and ILD) telephony license for a five-year period to 16 June 2018, reports ProIT. In March 2013 the NCCIR withheld its permission to extend Astelit's ILD/DLD license covering the regions of Kiev, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Odessa and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, but its latest decision upholds subsequent rulings of the Kiev Administrative and Appeal courts.

## Sweden's Post and Telecom Agency (PTA) issues SMP verdict on mobile termination, leased lines markets

Sweden's Post and Telecom Agency (PTA) issued two final significant market power (SMP) decisions in telecoms markets '6' (wholesale leased lines) and '7' (wholesale mobile voice calls termination). In the mobile termination segment the regulator issued individual SMP obligations for the provision of wholesale services to nine companies: TeliaSonera, Tele2, Telenor Sweden, Hi3G Access Sweden (3), Net 1, Mundio, TDC, Lycamobile and Gotlandsnatet; prices offered by these companies are subject to ex ante regulation. PTS also decided that TeliaSonera alone remains under obligation to offer wholesale leased lines, at non-discriminative prices (subject to ex ante regulation) after identifying TeliaSonera as a company with SMP in market 6.

## Kuwait to setup self-governing regulator

Kuwait's National Assembly has passed a draft law to establish an independent telecoms commission to oversee the country's communications sector, the Kuwait Times has reported. According to the article, Kuwait is the last country in the Gulf region to establish such a regulatory body, as the draft law has reportedly been the subject of much deliberation by the government and the previous assemblies for the past decade. The new commission will regulate the mobile, landline and broadband sectors, although the exact scope of supervisory powers it will be given remains unclear.



## A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN THE SAMENA REGION

### Active Consultations & Invitations for Feedback

#### Qatar

The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) has launched a public consultation on a draft Radio Spectrum Fees Policy and Fees Schedule. Under the proposed new Schedule of Radio Spectrum Fees, no fees will be payable when radio spectrum is used in accordance with a Class Radio Frequency License, however, fees will be applied for the use of radio spectrum under Individual Radio Spectrum Licenses granted by ictQATAR. Deputy Assistant Secretary-General, Regulatory Authority, ictQATAR said that as demand for radio spectrum has grown, it has become increasingly important to ensure that all of the available radio spectrum is used in the most efficient and effective manner and Radio Spectrum Fees have become an important tool used by spectrum management organizations to encourage efficient spectrum use and discourage licensees from acquiring or retaining more spectrum than they actually need. The closing date for submission of comments is June 23, 2013.

(May 23, 2013) [cellular-news.com](http://cellular-news.com)

The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) released the State of Qatar's National Broadband Plan for public consultation. This document, Qatar's first National Broadband Plan, supports and promotes broadband market development by providing the guidelines and actions the nation needs to take in the next decade to ensure that the opportunities offered by broadband technology are realized. This plan represents Qatar's commitment to becoming a leading digital economy and recognizes the critical contribution of information and communication technology. ictQATAR realizes that high-quality, high-speed, affordable broadband services are essential to future innovation, economic diversification, and creating a knowledge-based economy. The National Broadband Plan is aligned with the objectives of Qatar's National ICT Plan 2015 which calls for achieving ubiquitous, high speed broadband access for households and businesses (95 percent). It also is aligned with Qatar's National Vision 2030, and ensures that Qatar maximizes the opportunities arising from the FIFA World Cup in 2022. All stakeholders and interested parties are invited to comment on the proposed plan and provide feedback to ictQATAR by June 15, 2013. (May 09, 2013) [ictqatar.qa](http://ictqatar.qa)

## Country-wise Policy & Regulatory Developments

### Afghanistan

#### Board Chairman: Mr. Abdul Wakil Shergul

[Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA)]

State-backed Afghan Telecom (AFTEL) has signed a deal with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as part of latter's Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Program, marking the launch of the second phase of the SILK Afghanistan operation, which aims to extend fiber-optic broadband to Afghan universities and government institutions. To date the SILK program has extended broadband to 18 universities across the country and a number of government offices in Kabul. The second phase of the EUR750,000 (US\$967,110) program will see the partnership extend fiber-optic infrastructure to four sites in the capital and 13 sites throughout the country's other regions. (May 30, 2013) telegeography.com

### Algeria

#### Chairperson: Ms. Zohra Derdouri

[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]

Negotiations between the Algerian government and Russian telco VimpelCom Group regarding the former's purchase of local mobile subsidiary Djezzy a unit of VimpelCom have reportedly been suspended, two unnamed government officials indicated. According to the anonymous sources, at a meeting in Paris two weeks ago, 'VimpelCom presented ten points regarding a new shareholders agreement on Djezzy and all of the points were rejected by the Algerian side. After the Paris meetings, the Algerian government stopped any further communication with VimpelCom.' Both sides declined to comment on the development, which now throws into doubt the proposed auction of 3G/3G+ service licenses. The Algerian government had previously postponed the tender in order to complete the acquisition of Djezzy first. (May 22, 2013) Dow Jones Newswires

The Algerian government will seek a new valuation for Vimpelcom's local mobile subsidiary Djezzy before acquiring a 51% stake in the company. The initial valuation was appointed to law firm Shearman and Sterling LLP, however no official figures have been released. It is unclear who is going to be responsible for the new valuation, as the Algerian finance ministry declined to comment. The North African country's government has been in discussions for more than two years to purchase a stake in the lucrative Djezzy unit, which was previously controlled by Egyptian telecoms tycoon Naguib Sawiris through his Orascom Telecom Holding (OTH) unit, which was merged with Vimpelcom in a US\$6.5 billion deal in April 2011. In October 2010, prior to the completion of that deal, Vimpelcom conceded that it was happy to sell Djezzy, but only if the Algerian government was willing to match its US\$7.8 billion valuation – more than Sawiris' accumulated assets were eventually sold for. According to local media reports at the time, the government envisioned a figure in the range of US\$2 billion–US\$3 billion for the cellco. (May 13, 2013) Reuters

The Algerian government recently issued licenses allowing internet service providers to use VOIP and Wi-Fi technologies for international calls. Previously, state-owned Algeria Telecom was the only provider of international call services. VOIP and Wi-Fi communications technology can help African countries achieve development targets. According

to Algeria Telecom Managing Director the government allowing telecom competition will bring greater access to information and communication technology (ICT) in less-privileged areas. (May 2, 2013) magharebia.com

### Bahrain

#### Chairman: Dr. Mohammed Al Amer

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has decided that Viva Bahrain holds a dominant market position in the provision of mobile call/messaging interconnection services on its network, and therefore the regulator will extend regulation of mobile termination rates (MTRs) in a non-discriminatory manner to Viva. Viva is required to publish a Reference Interconnection Offer (RIO) with 'fair, non-discriminatory' tariffs and terms within three months of the publication of this decision. Prior to this decision, based on a proposal by the TRA in August 2012, no dominance decision applied in respect of Viva's mobile network, despite the TRA's recent calculations that the Saudi-backed newcomer has become the largest operator in Bahrain in terms of subscriber numbers. In its 2010 Dominance Determination (ahead of Viva's launch in March that year), the TRA determined that both Batelco and Zain were dominant in wholesale termination services on their respective mobile networks. (May 17, 2013) telegeography.com

### Bangladesh

#### Chairman: Sunil Kanti Bose

[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)]

Bangladesh's mobile subscriber base broke through the 100 million barrier during April, according to a statement made by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). The subscriber base stood at more than 98 million at the end of September 2012, but growth was restricted due a regulator-imposed directive that tightened SIM registration. Wireless penetration in the country remains below 65%, leaving plenty of room for future growth. Bangladesh is the 15th country to reach a mobile subscriber base of more than 100 million. (May 30, 2013) telegeography.com

Bangladesh's telecoms regulator, the BTRC is working on a new set of regulations that would require the mobile networks to be able to block inbound calls and text messages on a per-subscriber basis. BTRC Chairman Sunil Kanti Bose told that moves had been taken to enforce the guidelines immediately after they are prepared. In addition, the mobile networks will have to develop an internet blocking facility and will also be barred from selling customer data to outside parties without the customer's prior approval. Finally, the operators will now be required to make at least the previous six months worth of phone bills available to be downloaded from their websites. (May 25, 2013) bdnews24.com

Bangladesh's High Court on Monday issued a stay order on the previous award of an 800MHz wireless frequency license to ISP New Generation Graphics Limited (NGGL), which was allocated the 4G-suitable paired spectrum block free-of-charge by the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) in August 2011. Following a legal petition by WiMAX operator Banglalion, the court questioned the legality of the gratis spectrum award and gave the BTRC ten days to respond to the ruling. The court heard the argument



that the regulator's actions resulted in a loss of 'at least US\$230 million' in potential state revenue from a 4G mobile auction, based on the value of 800MHz license awards in other countries in the same year. Reportedly, the 800MHz license was allocated to NGGL for an initial twelve-month period on condition that the frequencies would be utilized appropriately, and the company's rights to the spectrum were renewed in December 2012, while BTRC's meeting minutes say that the wireless resources were allocated to NGGL at the request of the Access to Information project under the Prime Minister's Office. (May 15, 2013) *The Dhaka Tribune*

Telecoms regulator has confirmed that it is their intention to hold the country's long delayed 3G auction in June, and won't need to delay it again as had been previously suggested. BTRC Chairman told that they will resolve the outstanding tax problems with the mobile networks before the auction. The mobile networks have to submit applications by the May 12 and the shortlist will be announced a week later. Bidding is due to start on the June 24. The networks have however been arguing over a problem of how VAT would be applied to the cost of the licenses, and have also been lobbying for a reform of the sales tax applied to SIM cards. A top BTRC official that a proposal has been made to halve VAT on 3G license to 7.5% from proposed 15%. This had already been rumored to be suggested last month, and now appears to be moving closer to agreement. The government also recently approved measures to offer 8 blocks of 5MHz instead of four blocks of 10MHz to encourage the smaller networks to participate in the auction, and open up the possibility of more than one new entrant into the market.

(May 4, 2013) *bdnews24.com*

India's Bharti Airtel has announced that it will acquire the remaining 30% stake in Airtel Bangladesh, bringing its ownership of the company to 100%. The *Economic Times* writes that Airtel purchased 70% of the operator, then known as Warid Telecom, in 2010 from Warid Telecom International, part of the Abu Dhabi Group, which has now agreed to sell the remainder. The deal follows hot on the heels of an agreement signed last month that will see Airtel take control of Warid Telecom's Ugandan subsidiary. Airtel Bangladesh closed out 2012 with 7.501 million subscribers, equating to a market share of 7.3%, but the unit faces tough competition from five mobile rivals, and local regulator the BTRC reported that its customer total shrank slightly to 7.47 million at the end of March 2013. (May 3, 2013) *telegeography.com*

According to the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) the country ended March 2013 with 481,559 WiMAX broadband internet subscribers. This represents an increase from around 360,000 WiMAX subscriptions a year earlier and 115,000 in March 2011, although it appears that growth in the segment has slowed considerably in recent months. Just 7,500 net new WiMAX users were signed up in Q1 2013 shared between the two main WiMAX operators Banglalion and Qubee compared to 27,000 in the previous three months and 65,000 in the year-ago quarter. The BTRC also reported that mobile (cellular) internet users in the country reached 30.1 million at the end of March 2013, up from 28.7 million in just one month. Total mobile subscribers in Bangladesh reached almost 100 million at the same date, the regulator added.

(May 2, 2013) *telegeography.com*

## Egypt

### Executive President: Dr. Amr Badawi

[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]

Altimo, part of Russia's Alfa Group, has asked the Egyptian Financial Supervisory Authority (EFSA) to waive the minimum take-up requirement relating to its would-be buyout of minority shareholders in Orascom Telecom Holding (OTH). Orascom shareholders recently offered to sell 15.9% of the shares listed on the Egyptian stock exchange in response to a US\$0.70 per share offer from Altimo's Cypriot affiliate Baskindale Limited, falling short of the regulator-stipulated 26.6% minimum required for the buyout. The deal was expected to pave the way for the Vimpelcom Group to effectively take full control of OTH. The Russian backed, Amsterdam-based telecoms giant currently owns a 51.9% stake in OTH via directly held and subsidiary holdings, while Altimo is Vimpelcom's largest shareholder. (May 28, 2013) *Reuters*

Egyptian mobile network operator MobiNil has selected Swedish vendor Ericsson to modernize its network with a view to better catering for high speed internet services. Under the deal Ericsson will also provide MobiNil with its operations and business support systems, which include IT transformation, customer management and revenue management. The deal also includes design, installation and integration of the microwave backhaul by using MINI-LINK TN and MINI-LINK CN, which supports high capacities and a cost-efficient migration to packet transport. Commenting on the deal, MobiNil CEO was cited as saying: 'With the help of Ericsson we are now positioned to introduce the latest services and innovative solutions that cater to the diverse and quickly evolving needs of Egyptian users'.

(May 23, 2013) *Daily News Egypt*

Egypt's official statistics agency CAPMAS has said one third of Egyptian households had internet access in 2012, up three million over the previous year. Last year, 18.2 million households owned at least one mobile phone, compared with 17.9 million in 2011, the agency said. Following ten years of gradually increasing internet penetration, national internet use spiked following Egypt's January 2011 revolution, growing by 17% in a single year to reach 31 million by July 2012, according to a report issued in 2012 by Boston Consulting Group. (May 21, 2013) *Al-Ahram*

Telecom Egypt (TE) has reiterated its desire to launch mobile voice services as a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO), subject to finally receiving an appropriate license. The fixed line incumbent had said that it plans to move forward with technical tests this week. Alongside plans to allow TE to offer mobile voice services, the Egyptian government is also looking at permitting the country's cellcos – MobiNil, Vodafone Egypt and Etisalat Misr – to offer fixed line voice services using the incumbent's infrastructure. With the National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA) having assigned a German company to formulate fees for the new concessions, the latter is expected to have finished its work on the pricing by mid-June 2013. Meanwhile, TE is said to have already received a draft MVNO license from the regulator, the terms of which is understood to be discussing with the NTRA. (May 13, 2013) *Ahram Online*

**Iran****Minister of Communication & Information Technology:  
Dr. Reza Taghipour**

[Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC)]

Iran's sole fixed line telephony service provider Telecommunications Company of Iran (TCI) has announced its plans to make investments worth IRR25 trillion (US\$20.34 million) during the current Iranian year, which started on March 21. According to Head of the Board of Directors, investment during the previous year rose to IRR17 trillion as a result of the company's privatization, with renovation of its mobile phone network as the most important achievement. The process of part-privatization of TCI began in August 2008 when an initial 5% stake valued at US\$360 million was floated via an IPO. In October 2008 the government announced plans to sell a second, much larger, share of the company to a strategic investor. The size of the holding was set at 51%: a 35% cap was set for non-nationals in accordance with FDI rules. The winner of the tender was a consortium affiliated to Iran's Revolutionary Guard, known as Etemad-e-Mobin. The group, which includes the Mobin Electronics Development Company, Shahryar Mehestan and Tose's Etemad Investments, bid US\$7.8 billion for a 51% stake in the company. (May 13, 2013) Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA)

**Iraq****CEO: Dr. Buhan Shawi**

[Communication &amp; Media Commission (CMC)]

Asiacell, the Iraqi mobile operator majority-owned by Qatar's Ooredoo, has posted a 31% jump in its annual profit thanks to a rise in customers and revenues. The country's second-largest mobile operator made a net income of ID662bn (US\$569m) last year, on an 18% rise in revenue to ID2.17trn. Customer numbers also grew by 12% to 10.1 million, helping to lift the firm's market share to 36% from 35% in 2011, Asiacell said. (May 5, 2013) ameinfo.com

**Jordan****Chairman of the Board of Commissioners/CEO: Mr.  
Mohammad Al Taani**

[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

Canadian Smartphone maker BlackBerry is set to launch a competition for Jordanian app developers in early 2014 for its BlackBerry 10 platform, which will enable them to globally demonstrate their skills. The competition will be held in cooperation with the Gaming Lab in Jordan, said director of product management for the Middle East at BlackBerry. (May 30, 2013) Jordan Times

**Kuwait****Minister of Communication: Salem Mutheyeb Ahmed  
Al-Utheina**

[Ministry of Communication (MOC)]

Kuwaiti telecom company Zain Group has published the group's consolidated financial results for the three months ending March 31, 2013, with a 26.8% decrease in net income to KWD52 million (US\$184 million) from KWD71 reported in 2012. Zain Group announced consolidated revenues of KWD299 million for the period, down from KWD326 million in 1Q 2012, while consolidated EBITDA for first quarter in 2013 reached KWD127million, an 18.9% decrease year-on-year from KWD151 million. Zain Group attributed the loss of KWD50.97 million in revenues, KWD21.64 million in EBITDA and KWD12.53 million in net profit for the quarter to the adverse impact of currency conversion in Sudan. Zain Group added 3.9 million new active customers over the past twelve months to a total of 44.1 million, reflecting a 10% annual

growth rate, with Zain Saudi Arabia reporting 32% customer growth due to 4G LTE network expansion and aggressive marketing campaigns; Zain Bahrain – 30% increase in subscribers; Zain Iraq – 9% growth, as its networks expand to North Iraq; and South Sudan – 44% growth in number of subscribers. Zain Group's substantial investments in 3G and 4G LTE networks resulted in an increase of nearly 14% in data revenues, further closing the gap between traditional voice and data proceeds. (May 8, 2013) telegeography.com

**Lebanon****Acting Chairman & CEO: Dr. Imad Hoballah**

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Lebanese state-owned mobile operator Touch, managed by Kuwait's Zain Group, has joined its sole rival Alfa in launching a commercial 4G LTE mobile broadband network with initial coverage extending to main areas of Beirut, plus Dora, Joedideh and Amarat Chalhoub. Touch claims that its LTE signal reaches 80% of the capital and will be expanded to the entire city this year, ahead of rollouts to other areas of Lebanon in 2014. At launch, Touch is offering post- and pre-paid data-only SIM card services with a choice of two USB dongle modems or two routers including a personal Wi-Fi ('MyFi') option. 3G coverage is available to subscribers automatically outside of 4G zones. Data plans, including a new 40GB monthly tariff (US\$149) are similar to rival Alfa's new LTE network, also launched within the last week. (May 23, 2013) telegeography.com

Lebanese cellco Alfa has commercially launched its LTE 4G mobile broadband network, with coverage initially in central Beirut, offering data services for USB dongle modems, tablets and Wi-Fi routers for post- and pre-paid users, with support for 4G mobile handsets 'coming soon'. Alfa built its 4G network in cooperation with European vendors Ericsson and Nokia Siemens Networks, and according to the operator's press release, its planned deployment of around 300 active LTE base stations by the end of 2013 will cover roughly 40% of the population, representing approximately 25% of a 1,200 base station network necessary for nationwide coverage. The LTE coverage footprint will be expanded to Jounieh and Kesrouan by November this year, while other cities are scheduled to receive coverage in 2014, including Tripoli, Sidon and Zahle. Alfa is offering consumers several new data packages aimed at 4G usage, including 10GB, 20GB and 40GB bundles whilst business customers can purchase packages up to 100GB. Voice call support for 4G handset users (via the 3G/2G network) is expected by the end of June 2013, Alfa has disclosed, whilst it estimates that voice-over-LTE (VoLTE) will be available on the network by the end of 2014. Users outside of 4G coverage zones will automatically access 3G data services. At the launch, Lebanon's minister of telecoms, Nicolas Sehnaoui, said that further 3G coverage improvements would also be going ahead to provide comprehensive high speed data services. Sehnaoui noted that Alfa and rival cellco Touch would complete respective projects to deepen 3G indoor reception, strengthening their 3G coverage in many locations, 'between the end of August and the end of this year.' (May 20, 2013) telegeography.com

**Libya****Minister: Osama Siala**

[Ministry of Telecommunications &amp; Informatics]

TI Sparkle, the international services arm of Telecom Italia Group, and Gateway, a self-styled 'alternative local operator' based in Libya, have signed an agreement for the provisioning of international end-to-end services to and from the North

African nation. The services, which primarily cater for the demands of corporate customers, are offered through a joint platform composed of Gateway's newly constructed Libyan national backbone and TI Sparkle's international capacity resources. International customers are interfaced by TI Sparkle, while Gateway handles all Libyan clients.

(May 22, 2013) telegeography.com

Libya International Telecommunications Company (LITC), which was given the responsibility for managing and developing the country's international telecoms links in 2008, has signed a contract with French-US telecoms vendor Alcatel-Lucent to cover the installation of new switches for international calls in the Benghazi-Derna region. The LITC is wholly state-owned via Libya Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology Company (LPTIC).

(May 9, 2013) telegeography.com

Internet service provider Rawafed Libya has inked a multi-year agreement with Eutelsat Communications to lease capacity on the latter's KA-SAT satellite with a view to supporting IP trunking services related to its new wireless broadband network. Rawafed's wholesale agreement will enable it to use up to 1.6Gbps of capacity on two KA-SAT spotbeams, providing coverage of Tripoli, Benghazi and surrounding regions. Rawafed is reportedly deploying a number of localized Wi-Fi hotspots in areas currently lacking terrestrial infrastructure, while KA-SAT will also provide a back-up solution in areas that do have fixed network coverage.

(May 7, 2013) telegeography.com

## Morocco

**Director General: M. Azdine El MountassirBillah**

[Agence Nationale de Reglementation des Telecommunications (ANRT)]

UAE-based telco Etisalat has received shareholder backing to seek external funding to finance its bid for a 53% stake in Moroccan operator Maroc Telecom. Etisalat shareholders were asked to approve the move at an extraordinary shareholders' meeting; their backing was required because the amount of funding exceeds Etisalat's own capital. A report suggests that 68% of shareholders approved the move while the maximum amount of financing cannot exceed EUR6.67 billion (US\$8.60 billion). Etisalat has reportedly secured a US\$8 billion dual-tranche loan facility to finance its bid for Vivendi Group's 53% stake in Maroc Telecom, while the only rival bidder, Ooredoo of Qatar, has lined up a loan of up to US\$12 billion. (May 30, 2013) Reuters

UAE-owned telecoms company Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat) has crossed out the option of buying the Moroccan government's stake in Morocco's Maroc Telecom, should the Abu Dhabi-based group be successful in securing Vivendi's 53%-share in the North African operator, Etisalat's chief executive Ahmad Julfar said to reporters on the side lines of a conference in Dubai on Wednesday, Zawya reported. Although Etisalat has yet to be informed of Vivendi's decision on the auction's outcome, Mr. Julfar is confident that Etisalat's offer is adequate. French media and telecoms group Vivendi has confirmed the receipt of two binding offers for its 53% controlling stake in Maroc Telecom from Etisalat and Ooredoo, formerly Qatar Telecom (Qtel). Neither company has disclosed the value of their binding bids, although Etisalat has reportedly secured a US\$8 billion dual-tranche loan facility to finance its bid, while separately, Ooredoo has lined up a loan of up to US\$12 billion. The Kingdom of Morocco owns a 30% stake in Maroc Telecom, whilst 17% is publicly floated. (May 23, 2013) telegeography.com

The Telecommunications Regulatory National Agency (ANRT) plans to launch tenders for 4G mobile phone licenses by the end of the year. Morocco wants to be one of the first African countries to get the fourth generation (4G) telecom services, the statement said. The head of ANRT said that they will launch the tenders to award 4G licenses by the end of the year, and the opening of the service is expected in 2014. The Morocco's telecom watchdog had originally planned to sell at least one 4G license in the fourth quarter of last year, but ANRT head has not given any reasons for the delay. Morocco's telecommunications market is dominated by Vivendi's Maroc Telecom, which is being sold, France Telecom affiliate Medi Telecom, and Inwi, owned by a holding company controlled by the Moroccan monarchy and Kuwait's Zain. Mobile phone penetration hovers around 115% of Morocco's population of 34 million, and the country had 4 million Internet subscribers by the end of March 2013, up 24.35% from the previous year, the statement said. (May 22, 2013) english.alarabiya.net

Moroccan telco Maroc Telecom has published its financial results for the first quarter of 2013, reporting a 4.7% decline in the group's revenue to MAD7.18 billion (US\$840 million), from MAD7.53 billion in 1Q12, due to slower consumer spending in Morocco. The group's international operations, however, have increased, with subsidiaries' contributing revenue growth of 7% to MAD1.84 billion between 1Q12 and 1Q13. Maroc Telecom's EBITDA amounted to MAD4.23 billion, a paltry increase of 0.1% due to a decline in EBITDA in Morocco, compensated by strong growth in international EBITDA, while the 2.8 points increase in EBITDA margin to 58.9% was attributed to more efficient cost control. The company reported a healthy growth of 14.1% in its overall subscriber base year-on-year, with a total reaching nearly 34 million subscriptions at March 31, 2013, mainly attributed to 32% surge in subsidiaries' users which attracted a total of 14 million net new customers. (May 2, 2013) telegeography.com

## Nepal

**Chairman: Mr. Digambar Jha**

[Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTR)]

Nepal's minister for information and communications has said the government is committed to improving its fiber-optic links in the country, specifically through the deployment of optical networks along highways and trunk roads. The state's backing of the plan comes at a time when its efforts to roll out the district optical fiber project are faltering. Minister called for an increase in activity concerning fiber-optic networks, saying that 'the government will arrange the required funds'. The national regulator, the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA), has been aiming to roll out fiber-optic networks along the country's Mid-Hill Highway for several years, using monies supplied by Nepal's Rural Telecommunication Development Fund thought to be worth NPR7 billion (US\$80.9 million). However, efforts to connect around 75 administrative districts have so far stalled due to what have been termed 'procedural' delays. The minister has called on the domestic telecoms industry to re-galvanize efforts to boost ICT in education, health, rural development, and in its import and export markets. (May 20, 2013) e-Kantipur

State-owned Nepal Telecom (NT) has launched an aggressive promotion campaign for its new IP-CDMA based 1xEV-DO data service, dubbed Sky Pro, distributing new Removable User Identity Module (R-UIM) cards across the country. The new service allows users to access voice services as well as

data access at speeds of up to 3.1Mbps. NT is distributing and selling the R-UIM cards as part of plans to sell up to two million IP-CDMA connections in Nepal. In its current fiscal year the carrier plans to sell around 270,000 Sky Pro lines, which it is claiming is the 'cheapest' broadband plan in the country. NT is also looking to offer the high speed data service to CDMA users on its old network, once it has completed a program to upgrade the old network. It is understood that NT plans to begin marketing the new data service once it has been given the clearance by the watchdog, the Nepal Telecommunications Authority.

(May 7, 2013) [telegeography.com](http://telegeography.com)

## Oman

### Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Hamed Al-Rawahi

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

According to the latest figures from the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), Oman ended 2012 with a total of 304,545 fixed telephony lines, an increase of 6% from 287,323 twelve months earlier. Including subscribers of mobile resellers, total wireless customers increased from 4.809 million at 31 December 2011 to 5.277 million a year later, of which 91.2% were pre-paid customers. Active mobile broadband subscribers reached 1.646 million at the end of 2012, compared to 1.076 million in Q4 2011, while fixed broadband lines increased from 78,214 to 113,324 over the same period. As of 31 December 2012, the majority of fixed broadband subscribers (86%) had access to download speeds of between 2Mbps and 10Mbps, according to the TRA. (May 28, 2013) [telegeography.com](http://telegeography.com)

Nawras has increased its 3G network capacity by refarming some of its 900MHz spectrum for 3G services. This is the third block of spectrum being used for 3G services by the mobile network operator.

Ross Cormack, Nawras Chief Executive Officer, said, "The new data carrier will now enable our signals to reach further inside buildings from Al Bustan to Barka. This provides a noticeable difference for all customers using 3G+ broadband services in this turbocharged area. We are extremely grateful to the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority for making this development possible." Nawras is now beginning the second stage of its Network Turbocharging program that will see the replacement of every single base station in the country with the latest technology including the addition of 3G+ to every site. By the end of 2014 the company plans to deliver faster 3G+ to more than 97 percent of the population. At the same time, 4G broadband is being rolled out. Currently Nawras offers contiguous 4G coverage of greater Muscat. (May 27, 2013) [cellular-news.com](http://cellular-news.com)

Omantel has signed an agreement for another submarine cable to enhance the reliability of international connectivity between the sultanate and the rest of the world. The 'Bay of Bengal Gateway' submarine cable system (BBG) will span approximately 8,000km and connect six countries via landing points in Barka (Oman), Fujairah (UAE), Mumbai and Chennai (India), Rathmalana (Sri Lanka), and Penang (Malaysia) and Singapore. Commercial operation of BBG is set to start by end of the fourth quarter of 2014. It will offer an ultimate design capacity of 28 Tbit/s and is designed to provide upgradable transmission facilities by adopting the state-of-the-art 100 Gbit/s technology.

(May 20, 2013) [Muscat Daily](http://Muscat Daily)

InfiNet Wireless, a manufacturer and provider of wireless infrastructure solutions for Fixed Broadband Wireless Access (FBWA) and wireless connectivity, has been selected by Omani telecoms operator Nawras to provide wireless broadband connectivity across its corporate customer base. Following the first rollout of InfiNet's 'InfiLink 2x2' and 'InfiMan 2x2' solutions, Nawras is now able to more effectively tailor its offerings to business customers, meeting their specific requirements for bandwidth, performance and quality of service. 'We are delighted to be Nawras' partner of choice for wireless connectivity across the Sultanate of Oman,' said Kamal Mokrani, global vice president at InfiNet Wireless, adding: 'Following a successful trial through our local partner HTC and extensive work on the design, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) compliance and deployment of the network, Nawras' business customers can now enjoy reliable and fast-speed connectivity, tailor made to their specific communication needs.' (May 17, 2013) [telegeography.com](http://telegeography.com)

Omantel has announced its financial results for the first quarter of 2013, reporting a 3.1% year-on-year increase in revenue to OMR114.5 million (US\$296.5 million). Net profit totaled OMR29.1 million in Q1 2013, down 2.5% from OMR29.9 million in the year-ago quarter. The company attributed the fall in net income to the expansion of its 3.5G, 4G LTE and fixed next generation networks, which put pressure on operation and maintenance and depreciation expenses. Operating expenses increased 5.4% year-on-year to OMR83.9 million in the first three months of 2013, mainly due to an increase in external administration expenses to OMR6.6 million, on account of increased international retail minutes, while employee-related costs also rose. Total Omantel subscribers (including Pakistani subsidiary Worldcall Telecommunications) reached 3.883 million at the end of March 2013, an increase of 7% from 3.627 million a year earlier. The firm's domestic subscriber base increased 9.7% year-on-year to 2.956 million, with growth mainly driven by its mobile business, which saw a 10.1% rise in customers to 2.6 million. Commenting on the results, Omantel's CEO Dr. Amer Awadh Al Rawas said: 'We are proud to see our company making a good growth despite the challenging market conditions and increased competition in the domestic market. As we are continuously working on providing our customers enhanced customer experience, Omantel made huge investments to expand the reach of its network and roll out the new state-of-the-art network and the second carrier on 3.5G network... These investments along with increased employee costs and increase in external administration costs have contributed to an increase in expenses by 5.4% therefore impacting the company's net profit which has marginally decreased by 2.5% compared to the first quarter of 2012.' (May 8, 2013) [telegeography.com](http://telegeography.com)

## Pakistan

### Chairman:

[Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)]

Cellular phone companies have been witnessing rising volume of SMS (short messaging service) on their networks generated by different political parties for their campaign to convince the masses for vote in their favor as the average text traffic touched nearly 1 billion per day. Telecom officials said the political parties and workers have been generating enhanced number of SMSs to different mobile phone users increasing the revenues of the mobile phone companies as well. Nearly Rs1 billion worth SMSs are exchanged per month usually which translates into more than Rs 300,000 SMS per day but the revenues are increasing by 10 to 20 percent these

days as mostly users generate SMSs through packages. They added the number of SMS bundle subscription has been increasing with the same pace on the high demand of the cheap communication way. These rise in revenues will bode well not only for the companies but it is successful way of communication and campaigning as the number of mobile phone users have reached 120 million in the rural and urban parts of the country. On average, the number of daily SMS volume generated reached 833 million on the networks of different mobile phone operators in routine however it has been surging gradually to cross 1 billion on high demand of communication among the mobile phone users for election campaigning and masses reach. The mobile phone companies have already bought a special code for their workers and supporter to pass on information on several times a day besides exclusive bulk SMS generated to people using mobile phone services. They said that political parties rely on mobile phone have been increased due to poor law and order situation which have kept them away to organize rally and conventions for politicking. Companies like Telenor and Ufone have introduced special packages to cash in on the fever of elections among the masses providing them information services regarding their constituency and polling booths. Officials said that text volume is likely to see surge in the days to come till the day of election, May 11, 2013. In Pakistan, SMS is one of the most popular data traffic till date. These messages include the Person-to-Person SMS (On-Net, Off-Net, Bundled, flat rate, international SMS), and Person-to-Application (P2A).

The rise and spread of mobile ad consumption is attributed to wide adoption of smart-phones, and unlimited data plans. This allows advertisers to find alternative ways to reach consumers through mobile browsers, apps, SMS, and other platforms. The advent of these technologies will surely bring the mobile advertising in Pakistan as in other countries. However the tough competition among the companies has decreased their cumulative revenues compared with volume of SMS which has been growing constantly. In 2012, the revenues through SMS reached to Rs 10 billion as per estimate against 280 billion text messages. The revenues were recorded at Rs22.5 billion for generating 175.6 billion text messages in 2010. Pakistan remained one of the leading countries having trend of generating high number of SMS by its users as the average text messages generated by individual users were recorded 7 on daily basis whereas it reached to 200 on monthly basis till 2012. Portio Research published recently stated that an average mobile user generated 176 SMS per month in Pakistan. An average SMS-per-person-per-month in China was 99 SMS per month during 2011, compared to the same figure for India at just 53. In the USA the figure reached an astounding 617, compared to average usage across the entire Latin America region of just 69 SMS per month. SMS usage per month was just 22 messages per month in Brazil in 2011.

(May 6, 2013) nation.com.pk

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has nullified International Clearing House or ICH and has imposed a penalty of 7.5 percent of annual turnover on each of 14 LDI Operators that were part of the agreement for violating section 4 of the Competition Act 2010, we have confirmed with sources. On other hands, in an interesting turn of events, appointment of CCP Chairperson and Members was challenged at Islamabad High Court by Mr. Junaid Jahangir. The petitioner pleaded the court that the members' appointments at CCP including the chairperson was done

without due competitive process which is a violation of rules. Justice Riaz Khan has admitted the petition and has issued notices to all concerned to submit reply. According to data provided by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, commission maintained that volume of incoming calls as on September 2012 before the ICH Agreement was 1.9 Billion minutes, which decreased to 579 million minutes in February-13 after the establishment of ICH. Earlier, in its order, CCP observed that the estimated revenue of LDI Operators for the month of September 2012 — before the ICH arrangement — were US \$8.37 million, which increased to US \$59 million in the month of October 2012 — after establishment of ICH — and currently stands as US \$34 Million in the month of February 2013. Despite reduction in the incoming traffic by 70 percent — after the establishment of ICH — the revenue of LDI's increased by 308 percent in Post ICH period. The main reason behind increase in Revenue of LDI's is that ASR now has been taken as to 8.8 cents/minutes from rates around 2 cents/minute pre ICH. The order states that the monthly APC received/ receivable by the PTA, has decreased from \$24.33 million to \$16.78 million in the month of February 2013 (Decrease of 31 percent). The Bench held that the facts and figures available highlight the pernicious nature of the ICH arrangement, its harmful effects on the telecom sector, consumers and the economy in general which must be condemned and cannot be condoned at any cost. The order states that the ICH Arrangement reduces choice, forecloses the market, removes incentive for better quality of service, removes incentives for investments in improvement of infrastructure, reduces the size of the market and market players, confers anti-competitive advantages and becomes a clear threat to consumer welfare in total negation of spirit of Telecom De-regulation Policy, 2003 apart from the provisions of the Competition Act. In fact, ICH Agreement squanders any gains that we have made in the telecom sector till now — gains that have accrued precisely because of a focus on competition. LDI Operators have been directed to cease and desist from carrying such prohibited practices and not to enter into any other agreement of similar nature having object or effect of restricting competition and PTA has been advised to ensure restoration of competition amongst the LDI Operators as it existed prior to implementation of the ICH Agreement. For failure to comply with the earlier order passed by the Commission requiring the LDI operators to seek clearance if at any point of time they intend to enter into ICH arrangement, a penalty of Rs 1,000,000 (one million) has been imposed on all the LDI Operators. Commission also imposed a fine of 7.5 percent of annual turnover of all 14 participating LDI operators. The order also provide that for any loss resulting from illegal gains received by LDI Operations under the ICH Agreement, the aggrieved parties can claim compensation from the LDI Operators before the court of competent jurisdiction in pursuance of this Order. During the proceedings the LDI operators pleaded before CCP that they entered into the ICH Agreement on the directives of the Ministry of Information Technology (MOIT) and PTA. (May 1, 2013) propakistani.pk

## Qatar

### Executive Director: Mr. Greame Gordon

[The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR)]

Qatar's Ooredoo has said it has raised US\$12bn to finance its bid for a majority stake in Maroc Telecom, as it seeks to expand through acquisitions. The company is competing with the UAE's Etisalat to buy Vivendi's Maroc Telecom stake

and both made binding offers in April. Ooredoo submitted a "strong, compelling offer" and raised the necessary financing, said chief executive. "We still believe we have a strong chance to win this bid." (May 28, 2013) Bloomberg

The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) has launched a public consultation on a draft Radio Spectrum Fees Policy and Fees Schedule. Under the proposed new Schedule of Radio Spectrum Fees, no fees will be payable when radio spectrum is used in accordance with a Class Radio Frequency License, however, fees will be applied for the use of radio spectrum under Individual Radio Spectrum Licenses granted by ictQATAR. Deputy Assistant Secretary-General, Regulatory Authority, ictQATAR said that as demand for radio spectrum has grown, it has become increasingly important to ensure that all of the available radio spectrum is used in the most efficient and effective manner and Radio Spectrum Fees have become an important tool used by spectrum management organizations to encourage efficient spectrum use and discourage licensees from acquiring or retaining more spectrum than they actually need. The closing date for submission of comments is Sunday, June 23, 2013.

(May 23, 2013) cellular-news.com

Vodafone Qatar has said its mobile base has grown by 30% year-on-year to 1,084,000 customers as at March 31, 2013. "To have 56% of the population using our services is a great achievement for our shareholders, staff and partners," said Vodafone Qatar's CEO, Richard Daly. Vodafone will report its financial results for the year ended March 31, 2013, following a board meeting on June 3, 2013. (May 22, 2013) The Peninsula

The Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) released the State of Qatar's National Broadband Plan for public consultation. This document, Qatar's first National Broadband Plan, supports and promotes broadband market development by providing the guidelines and actions the nation needs to take in the next decade to ensure that the opportunities offered by broadband technology are realized. This plan represents Qatar's commitment to becoming a leading digital economy and recognizes the critical contribution of information and communication technology. ictQATAR realizes that high-quality, high-speed, affordable broadband services are essential to future innovation, economic diversification, and creating a knowledge-based economy. The National Broadband Plan is aligned with the objectives of Qatar's National ICT Plan 2015 which calls for achieving ubiquitous, high speed broadband access for households and businesses (95 percent). It also is aligned with Qatar's National Vision 2030, and ensures that Qatar maximizes the opportunities arising from the FIFA World Cup in 2022. All stakeholders and interested parties are invited to comment on the proposed plan and provide feedback to ictQATAR by June 15, 2013. (May 09, 2013) ictqatar.qa

## Saudi Arabia

**Governor: Eng. Abdullah A. Al Darrab**

[Communication & Information Technology Commission (CITC)]

The Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) has said internet usage in the country climbed 16%, with a 10% growth in the number of providers expected by the end of this year. Subscriptions to broadband services via fixed telecoms networks increased to 14.82 million subscribers at the end 2012, a 12% rise from 2011, while the number of internet subscribers was recorded at

15.8 million subscribers in 2012. Internet service providers said that modern and smart technologies are helping to increase internet use as services are available in packages for all social sectors. (May 26, 2013) Arab News

The government is planning to build an electronic governance network that will link the Gulf Cooperation Council members to one another and also include a unified traffic system. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), however, has expressed some reservations regarding certain articles in the proposed system, pointing out that it interferes with its national policies. Accordingly, the UAE has called for the amendment of three articles in order for it to acquiesce to the new unified traffic system. The head of the traffic department in Jeddah revealed that discussions were under way regarding the establishment of a united directory for traffic violations and the creation of a higher Gulf authority for traffic, which would be concerned with policies related to vehicle and drivers' licenses, among other issues. In addition, a unified traffic law is currently being chalked out to put in place regulations and penalties for motorists who violate the system. The system will also establish a safe security environment for the exchange of data between member countries in matters pertaining to traffic, health and education, as well as other areas agreed upon by the six countries. As proposed by Saudi Arabia, the system is to link the Gulf States through e-government programs and integrated governmental portals, thereby facilitating the exchange of data between the public sectors and ensuring a safe environment that expedites the transfer of information.

(May 23, 2013) zawya.com

According to a study by the Saudi Consumer Protection Association (CPA), mobile call charges in the kingdom are among the highest in the world, at around 35 halalas a minute compared with the world average of seven halalas a minute. The CPA urged the local telecoms operators to restructure their fees to reflect real prices, and said it would publish a fair price for calls, after taking into account details such as the income of citizens, inflation and the real cost of the communication. (May 20, 2013) Arab News

The Communication and Information Technology Commission (CITC) has said Virgin Mobile Middle East & Africa (VMMEA) and four more companies have submitted applications for virtual telecom licenses in the kingdom. VMMEA, part-owned by Virgin Group, is competing against Dubai-based Axiom, as well as consortiums headed by local companies FastNet and Safari and another that includes London-based Lebara, said the CITC. The telecoms regulator will sell three mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) licenses, as part of a plan to liberalize the country's telecom market, with Saudi poised to become only the second of the six GCC members after Oman to allow MVNOs.

(May 15, 2013) Reuters

Five companies have submitted applications for virtual telecom licenses in Saudi Arabia including Virgin Mobile Middle East & Africa (VMMEA). VMMEA - part-owned by Richard Branson's Virgin Group - is up against Dubai-based Axiom, plus consortiums headed by local companies FastNet and Safari and another that includes London-based Lebara, the Communication and Information Technology Commission (CITC) said on its website. CITC will sell three mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) licenses as part of a plan to liberalize the kingdom's telecom market, with

Saudi poised to become only the second of the six Gulf Cooperation Council members after Oman to allow MVNOs. The kingdom has three mobile operators - Saudi Telecom Co (STC), Etihad Etisalat (Mobily) and Zain Saudi - and each are expected to host an MVNO. MVNOs do not own the networks they use to provide communications services, but instead lease capacity from conventional operators VMMEA, which has operations in Jordan, South Africa and Oman, has signed a preliminary agreement with former monopoly STC to use its network, VMMEA chief executive Mikkel Vinter told Reuters in an emailed response to questions. Bidders were required to include such an agreement in their application, Vinter said. STC affiliate Cell C hosts VMMEA's operations in South Africa, which was a factor in choosing STC this time, he said. The other bidders have not stated with which operators they have made preliminary agreements. Zain Saudi and Axiom declined to comment, while the regulator, STC, Mobily and the other bidders did not respond to requests for comment. The CITC has told bidders that it will take up to 12 weeks to evaluate their tenders, Vinter said.

(May 15, 2013) [zawya.com](#)

Telecommunications regulator, the Communications and IT Commission (CITC) has announced the five companies that will be further evaluated for new mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) licenses on offer in the Kingdom. Axiom Mobile, Virgin Mobile MEA, Jawraa Group (Lebara), FastNet Group and Safari Group has all submitted their MVNO license applications prior to the deadline of May 11, 2013. The companies will be assessed according to the guidelines previously provided by the CITC, and shortlisted candidates will be announced once the assessment is complete, although no date has been set by the watchdog for the announcement. The CITC has already informed existing mobile operators in Saudi Arabia of the requirement to collaborate with one MVNO to provide mobile and data services. The initiative is designed to raise competition between network providers in Saudi Arabia, and to deliver larger variety of packages at reduced prices to end-consumers, the regulator reported on its website. (May 13, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

A Saudi court has ordered the local telecoms regulator to overturn a ban on a free roaming service that was offered by the operator Mobily. The court also ordered Saudi's Communication and Information Technology Commission (CITC) to lift a SAR500,000 fine it imposed on Mobily for continuing to offer its free service, Arab News reported. The decision came three years after Mobily took CITC to court over its decision to ban local service providers, which also include Zain and STC, from offering customers free roaming services. CITC has not commented on the results yet, but it is understood that the regular will be allowed to appeal against the decision. (May 6, 2013) [english.alarabiya.net](#)

### Sri Lanka

#### Director General: Mr. Anusha Palpita

[Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC)]

The National Telecommunication Service Provider - Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT) announced the soft launch of its VDSL2 (Very-High-Bit-Rate Digital Subscriber Line 2) advanced fixed broadband technology. The addition of this new tech means the company's broadband users could expect speeds of up to 100Mbps. The newly introduced VDSL2 technology based fixed broadband, its speed and access capabilities were demonstrated to the Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology in the presence of Group CEO, SLT and many other top officials. The initial demonstration

held at the Sri Lanka Telecom Regional Office in Kegalle recorded data speeds in excess of 90Mbps. SLT has plans to expand the services to other regions as well by upgrading its fixed broadband network in the near future. SLT's technology leadership continues to revolutionize internet usage across the country whilst expanding Sri Lanka's broadband capacity, availability and affordability to empower Sri Lankan internet users with consistent, uninterrupted, high-speed broadband internet access with the highest reliability. (May 23, 2013) [prlog.org](#)

### Sudan

#### Director General: Dr. Izz Al Din Kamil Amin

[The National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC)]

Kuwait's Zain has posted a 27% drop in first-quarter net profit, due to a steep devaluation in the Sudanese pound and loss-making unit Zain Saudi. The Gulf country's former monopoly made a net profit of KD52m (US\$182.6m) in the three months to March 31, down from KD70.9m a year ago. Sudan accounted for almost one third of Zain's customer base and a fifth of group revenue last year, but the country has been mired in economic turmoil following South Sudan's secession in 2011. "Operationally our group companies are performing well in local currency terms," said chief executive Scott Gegenheimer. "The adverse effect (from) the devaluation of the Sudanese pound is unavoidable as there is no effective hedge on the currency." (May 9, 2013) [Reuters](#)

### Tunisia

#### President: Mr. Hassoumi Zitoune

[National Telecommunication Commission (INTT)]

Tunisian telcos Tunisiana and Orange Tunisia have signed an agreement with Interoute for the commissioning of a submarine cable connecting the North African country to Interoute's pan-European fiber infrastructure. The cable, dubbed 'Didon', will run from Kelibia in Tunisia to a landing station in Mazarra del Vallo, Sicily where it will interconnect with the rest of Interoute's submarine cable network. Didon will utilize equipment from Alcatel-Lucent and will be capable of speeds of 100Gbps at launch, upgradable to 8Tbps. The cable is expected to be ready for service in April 2014. The deal forms part of a national initiative to support and strengthen Tunisia's ICT sector, and is expected to reduce the cost of broadband services, whilst helping meet the nation's growing demand for mobile internet services.

(May 17, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

### Turkey

#### Chairman & CEO: Dr. Tayfun Acarer

[Information & Communication Technologies Authority (BTK)]

The Turkish stock market regulator has said that it will step in and impose a settlement on the shareholders in the country's largest mobile network if they cannot sort out their differences within a month. The three major shareholders in Turkcell, Cukurova, Altimo and Teliasonera have been fighting for control of the company for years, with numerous lawsuits between them. The latest attempt to hold a general assembly was again abandoned after the necessary quorum was not reached. The regulatory body recently sacked three of the company's directors and imposed its own nominees instead. In order to hold a General Assembly, at least five directors need to be present. The head of Turkey's Capital Markets Board (SPK) has now issued the shareholders 30 days to settle their dispute; otherwise he will impose two more independent directors to the board, forcing it into compliance. "We would prefer that there was no need for us. We will undertake such a responsibility only if we have to," The head of the SPK, Vahdettin Ertaş said. The dispute

between the three shareholders means that the company has been unable to pay dividends for several years, which affects the finances of the company's minority shareholders. Much of the dispute stems from Cukurova's controlling stake in the company, which it was alleged to have put up as collateral against a loan supplied by Altimo. Teliasonera claimed that Cukurova wasn't allowed to use its stake in such a manner, while Altimo attempted to seize the stake when it said Cukurova had failed to make debt repayments on time. TeliaSonera lost a later legal action to enforce its rights to the shares, leaving open the opportunity for Altimo to take them when Cukurova defaulted on its debts. In a recent court ruling, Cukurova was given time to repay the loan, so if it is able to raise the necessary US\$1.35 billion it may be able to retain control of the mobile network. However, a number of its assets were seized in a recent unrelated action, putting its ability to raise the money in doubt. (May 26, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

### United Arab Emirates

#### Director General: Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim

[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

The UAE has jumped eight places to 8th rank in the latest world competitiveness ranking published by Switzerland-based IMD World Competitiveness Centre on Thursday, from 16th position last year. The country scored 88.439 to be the top Arab country and the fourth ranking in Europe, Middle East and Africa, and ahead of countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, United Kingdom and France - among many other competitive countries.

(May 30, 2013) [zawya.com](#)

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has announced plans to allocate spectrum in the 700MHz and 800MHz bands for mobile broadband services, in a bid to drive down costs in the United Arab Emirates and minimize interference along borders. The regulator said that by

combining the 800MHz band plan for Europe, the Middle East and Africa with the lower duplexer (2×30MHz) of the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) 700MHz band, the UAE will be able to reap the benefit of both bands to support affordable network rollout, thereby benefiting more of the population with mobile broadband connectivity. Deputy director general for the telecommunications sector said that by maximizing the spectrum for mobile broadband in harmony with the growing economies of scale for both bands and the TRA decision will enable nearly global interoperability and roaming and the UAE is predicting a rising demand for global harmonization of the APT 700MHz band benefiting in the growing ecosystem of devices from Asia Pacific across the Middle East and Africa, through to Latin America. The UAE 700MHz band will utilize the lower duplexer of the APT 700MHz band (2×30MHz) as a base line with the possibility for additional 2×10MHz for more spectral efficiency and for Public Protection and Disaster Relief applications, while 5MHz has also been considered for direct mode operation. (May 24, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

UAE was recently ranked as a global leader in connecting homes in the country on the fiber to the home (FTTH) network, as per recent industry report. This achievement was possible mainly due to the huge investment made by Etisalat UAE in the network which exceeded AED19 billion. According to the annual study conducted by Panorama Research on the Global FTTH market for the FTTH global council, UAE has taken the lead with a penetration rate of 72 per cent. The ranking covers all countries with at least 200, 000 households where the penetration of FTTH has reached 1 per cent of total number of homes. In 2013, 36 countries were members of the Global Ranking with UAE taking the lead at a bigger margin to South Korea, the nearest competitor at 57 percent of homes subscribing to FTTH. (May 6, 2013) [etisalat.ae](#)



## Regulatory Activities Beyond the SAMENA Region

### ITU

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has presented to Cambodia's telecommunications minister a draft national policy designed to expand the availability of broadband internet access and ICT across the country. The policy was presented to Minister at the ITU's Asia-Pacific Regional Development Forum, which is being hosted in Phnom Penh this week. Hamadoun Toure, Secretary General of the ITU, said that the ITU had teamed up with UNESCO to set up the Broadband Commission for Digital Development in 2011, which promotes the expansion of high speed broadband infrastructure in developing countries. He said the ITU was providing technical assistance on Cambodia's broadband policy with a focus on 'universal access and universal service.' For his part, Minister said the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPTC) was aiming to issue the national broadband policy in the near future.

(May 2, 2013) The Cambodia Daily

### SAMENA

The SAMENA Telecommunications Council will be holding its 4th flagship Annual CEO & Chairmen Leadership Dinner in Venice, Italy, on May 24, 2013. The event, held in co-operation with ETNO, will gather more than 60 chairmen and CEOs of some of the most important telecommunications operators and broadcasting companies worldwide. Telecom Italia will host this leaders' gathering in Venice. The Leadership Dinner will comprise several discussion sessions, exploring prospects of cooperation and collaboration among telecom operators, broadcasters, and Internet players. The discussion will focus on the creation and convergence of new ecosystems, and on the development of innovative and sustainable business models involving all stakeholders across the digital value chain. The SAMENA Council and ETNO are both calling for an enhanced global and cross-sector cooperation on several issues related to the digital economy. This is particularly important in a context where both geographic and business boundaries are blurring. Co-operation across the broadcasting, telecommunications and Internet sectors is vital and no one segment can act in isolation. The existence of synergies between telecom operators and broadcasters is already a reality, and will take on increasing importance in the future. Just to give an example, according to recent estimates, the average share of European telecom operators' residential fixed revenues deriving from IPTV will increase between 10% and 30% in the forthcoming years. This new scenario raises topics such as possible new market definitions, the emergence of new forms of competition among players, the debate around how to better address the increasing spectrum needs, how to improve users' access to content, as well as the sustainability (or the financing) of the digital market. Moreover, issues related to media freedom and fundamental rights protection, including privacy and IPRs, are also of extreme importance. Mr. Bocar A. BA, CEO of the SAMENA Council, affirmed that "the legacy of the SAMENA Council's Leadership Dinner in 2013 is a recognized need for further relationship building and new business development, as well as the identification of some high-priority telecommunications issues, all of which was discussed among world-class industry leaders. Participation in the SAMENA Council's Leadership Dinner has increased since its inaugural launch in 2010 in Dubai. We attribute the continual success of this executive initiative by the SAMENA

Council to the depth of knowledge that is exchanged among our participating leaders and to the support provided by our gracious hosts and strategic partners. This year, we are indeed thankful to Mr. Franco Bernabè, Chairman and CEO of Telecom Italia and to Mr. Luigi Gambardella, Chairman of the ETNO Executive Board, for facilitating our Leadership Dinner's planning process, which we believe will contribute to the global dialogue on industry issues, which has a direct bearing on the success of the business in this converged world." Mr. Luigi Gambardella, Chairman of the ETNO Executive Board, declared: "We are much honored to host this year's SAMENA Council annual gathering in Venice. Both Telecom Italia and ETNO believe that common reflections between players from different regions of the world will help develop a shared vision on the challenges that the telecom sector is facing and the possible synergies that the convergent scenario may offer to telcos, fixed and mobile, and broadcasters. The borderless nature of on-line services requires more and more that the debate on future business models and investment challenges takes place at a global level. We therefore hope that both the workshop and the SAMENA Council's CEO & Chairmen Leadership Dinner will provide a useful platform for a successful exchange of ideas on how to best respond to market evolution for the benefit of citizens both in the EU and in the SAMENA region".

(May 10, 2013) [samenacouncil.org](http://samenacouncil.org)

The SAMENA Council released a white paper to give operators, broadcasters and regulators across the region, insights into a technology solution called SDL (Supplemental Downlink) which could increase the capacity and QoS (Quality of Service) of mobile broadband networks using HSPA+ and LTE-advanced standards. With SDL being endorsed by operators and regulatory bodies across the globe, SAMENA Council is taking the lead in having a discussion around the potential of SDL technology with stakeholders across the region through this white paper to present relevant technology alternatives to enhance the delivery of mobile broadband services. According to the white paper, the MENA region could benefit from the technology through enhanced user experience (faster download speeds, larger capacity and richer new content) and low cost rollout of rural services by using the 1.4 GHz spectrum through SDL. The technology could also be used to drive more innovation in specific sectors such as education through professional tele-education, webcasts etc., improve government services through online access to public services and enhance healthcare services through applications such as online health record, emergency room consultation to name a few. Speaking on the release of the white paper, SAMENA Policy Board Chairman Dr. Mustafa Aykut (Turk Telekom), said, "As mobile data traffic continues to grow exponentially, greater bandwidth is required now more than ever. Given that two-thirds of the world's mobile data traffic will be video by 2017, new and innovative solutions are needed to increase mobile broadband capacity and enhance quality of service which has the potential to benefit the MENA region by US\$26bn over the next 10 years. In this respect, SDL technology is not only a promising solution but a technological breakthrough that offers smoother user experience through faster download speeds, larger capacity and richer new content. With SDL, operators can now manage and optimize mobile communication networks of the future." Mobile Supplemental Downlink (Mobile SDL) is a feature within a

mobile broadband system, which by means of base station transmitters in the network, is able to provide a supplemental downlink capacity to efficiently carry comprehensive text, voice, images, sound and video content to mobile devices. Mobile broadband traffic and especially downlink traffic in the MENA region are forecasted to grow rapidly over the next 10 years and it is possible that countries in the MENA region may face a spectrum shortfall unless operators undertake costly investment in network infrastructure to support this traffic growth. The 1452-1492 MHz spectrum frequency range, largely unused in much of the MENA region and in Europe, presents a real option to address this shortfall of downlink capacity. In some countries of the MEA region, the mobile data traffic has jumped over 450% year-on-year between 2011 and 2012. The exponential traffic growth is estimated to continue to be strong in many countries in this region due to the increasing consumption of multimedia services. (May 8, 2013) [ameinfo.com](#)

## United States

Wireless provider MetroPCS moved to dismiss its claims in the lawsuit challenging the Federal Communication Commission's net neutrality laws. In the motion, MetroPCS, which recently merged with T-Mobile, noted that the FCC and the Department of Justice had already consented to the dismissal. Additionally, Verizon Communications, which is also taking part in the case, is aware and will not object. Verizon will continue to pursue the litigation. The two parties filed the case in 2011 to challenge the open internet rules that had been formally passed by the FCC in December 2010, then under then-Chairman Julius Genachowski. The three-judge panel that will hear the case in the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals has not yet been selected, nor is there a date yet for the beginning of the oral arguments, although it is expected to be set around September. The judges are expected to produce a ruling sometime in the fall or winter. The FCC put their net neutrality rules forward in an attempt to promote competition and protect consumer choices. As a result of the regulations, broadband providers are required to disclose information regarding their network management practices and performance. They are also prohibited from blocking legal, content, applications, services, or devices, and from unreasonable discrimination of network traffic, such as slowing or degrading particular services or websites. In a press release issued last Friday, his last day at the agency, Genachowski praised the decision to withdraw from the lawsuit and asserted the importance of the net neutrality laws. "Since 2010, our strong and balanced rules have been protecting entrepreneurs and consumers, and have increased certainty and predictability for investors in Internet services as well as networks," Genachowski said. (May 23, 2013) [broadbandbreakfast.com](#)

America is lagging behind a number of foreign countries in terms of broadband penetration, according to a Telecommunications Industry Association documentary entitled "Broadband Capacity: Are We Ready?" According to the video, America's deficiency is due to the fact that America pioneered the system and therefore has a more antiquated infrastructure, whereas many other countries established networks later, taking advantage of newer technology. As broadband modernized, certain areas, primarily rural and low-income, have been left behind. While government funds have been made available to help expand coverage to these areas particularly through the Universal Service Fund many carriers have rejected the funding in order to avoid

compliance with certain requirements. Other strategies should be used to establish broadband coverage, said the video. While rural areas struggle to keep up, even the most advanced systems have problems, said the video. It focused on a school district that has adopted a high-speed broadband system and has struggled to meet the high cost of securing the network. Although the spectrum crunch was expected to mark the end of broadband expansion, the documentary discusses how the industry has adapted to survive. Incentive auctions are held to sell off under-utilized spectrum space. While this process will take some time, significant innovations have been made in the meantime to maximize efficient use of the spectrum. (May 17, 2013) [broadbandbreakfast.com](#)

The US and Canadian telecom regulators have agreed on ten interim spectrum sharing arrangements covering operations along their common borders. The FCC said that these arrangements will aid in the deployment and use of mobile broadband and improve public safety communications along the US-Canada border by facilitating the efficient sharing of spectrum and avoiding potential interference. Among the technical sharing arrangements is an arrangement reached on the 3650-3700 MHz band, which allows wireless broadband and high-speed Internet services to coexist along the US-Canada border. In this band, the United States and Canada agreed upon a spectrum sharing arrangement which includes, among other things, the use of "contention-based protocols" to avoid harmful interference while sharing the spectrum more efficiently. Contention-based protocols allow multiple users to share the same spectrum by defining the events that must occur when two or more devices attempt to simultaneously access the same channel and establishing rules by which each device is provided a reasonable opportunity to operate. The technical sharing arrangement reached on the 700 MHz band will allow public safety licensees on both sides of the border to fully implement their 700 MHz narrowband systems. The arrangement reflects the harmonization of the US and Canadian public safety 700 MHz narrowband channel plans, thus providing more efficient, interference-free public safety operations in the border area. In addition, the United States and Canada have agreed upon several other spectrum sharing arrangements including Personal Communications Services; Advanced Wireless Services; public safety operations in the 4940-4990 MHz band; and railway communications systems. These arrangements provide coordination and sharing protocols for spectrum used for Wireless LAN, Mesh Network and Wi-Fi hotspots, fixed point-to-point/multipoint services and broadband traffic. (May 16, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Argentina

Telecoms regulator the Comision Nacional de Comunicaciones (CNC), has issued fines to four of the country's network operators after customers experienced fixed and mobile telephony service failure in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area and the city of La Plata on April 2. According to a press release on the Secretaria de Comunicaciones (SeCom's) website, Telefonica de Argentina and its mobile unit Movistar, America Movil-owned Claro and Personal (the wireless arm of fixed line incumbent Telecom Argentina) have each been ordered to pay ARS60 (US\$11.5) in compensation to each of their affected subscribers. On top of the compensation, the CNC has sanctioned Telefonica a total of ARS587,375, while Movistar must pay ARS5.873 million. Personal and Claro were each fined over ARS1.938 million. (May 15, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Brazil

Telecoms regulator ANATEL has passed new measures designed to further open up the country's fixed broadband market. Under the plan, the watchdog has amended two key regulations: one concerning the area of multimedia communications services regulation; and one related to public price regulation for the right to offer telecom and satellite services. The two amendments are aimed at facilitating the arrival of new players to the fixed broadband sector, as well as simplifying the rules and regulations for companies wishing to purchase operating licenses for such services. The online journal notes that the changes will also impact on fixed telephony and pay-TV regulations, as they allow telcos and cablecos to offer triple-play packages and to make use of fixed telephony numbering. In addition, ANATEL has ruled that for those broadband providers with more than 50,000 subscribers, they must provide the internet connection for free, and must not charge it as part of a data communications service fee. In a statement, the watchdog noted: 'ANATEL is sure that the expansion of the market, the de-bureaucratization for the acquisition of licenses and increased competition are essential to reduce prices for the end consumer, to improve quality and to decisively make the transition to an information and knowledge society'. The new rules affect the country's 3,950 or so internet service providers (ISPs). (May 28, 2013) [BNAmericas](#)

## Colombia

The Colombian government has decided to drop regulatory changes that would have severely restricted America Movil's local mobile network's market share. A Senate committee voted 6-3 to scrap a measure that would have limited any mobile network from holding more than 30% of the market share. America Movil's local Claro unit holds a 62% market share. The move is a victory for the mobile network operator, which is facing a serious regulatory challenge to its dominance of its home market in Mexico.

"Claro's power is very great, and the government also didn't promote or defend the bill," said Jorge Enrique Robledo, one of the proposal's sponsors. "We'll keep fighting." The Senators voting against decided that the country's existing Constitution already offers options for dealing with anti-competitive behavior. (May 26, 2013) [Senado](#)

## Bermuda

Bermuda's new telecoms industry Regulatory Authority (RA) has issued an emergency decree concerning the proposed merger of domestic internet service providers (ISPs) North Rock Communications and Logic Communications, amid worries the move 'raises potentially serious competition concerns'. Logic Communications and North Rock Communications said they planned to merge and trade under the Logic Communications name, although both firms will retain their individual brands for the short-term. The new enlarged company will be 100% owned by KeyTech Limited – which already owns Logic Communications – and the tie-up comes at a time when the RA is looking to level the playing field by replacing segmented licensing with a unified single license, the Integrated Communications Operating License (ICOL), allowing service providers to offer a full suite of integrated telecoms products pursuant to the new regulatory framework established by the Electronic Communications Act, including internet, local and long-distance phone services and mobile. The Royal Gazette

writes though, that although the emergency order does not stop the merger taking place, it does place a 'temporary stop' on ICOLs being issued to the enlarged entity to allow the RA time to review that internet market again, in light of the new development. Furthermore, the paper goes on to say that the government intends to hold a news conference on the matter in the wake of the issuance of 19 ICOLs to domestic operators. The CEO of the independent regulator, Philip Micallef, is quoted as saying that North Rock has been informed that it must 'continue giving services as they were doing prior to ICOLs' being issued. 'The ICOL for North Rock cannot be issued as North Rock no longer exists as a legal entity,' he said. 'We would then need to transfer North Rock's ICOL and associated spectrum licenses to Logic'. He went on to say however, that this process is not expected to take long. (May 2, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## European Union

The European Commission has decided to refer Estonia to the Court of Justice of the EU over its national law which does not guarantee the impartiality of the national telecoms regulator. According to EU telecoms rules, national authorities exercising regulatory tasks cannot at the same time be involved in the ownership or control of telecoms companies. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications in Estonia carries out some regulatory tasks, in particular over the allocation of radio frequencies and procedures for granting frequency authorizations. At the same time it exercises control of the state-owned company Levira, the largest TV and radio broadcast network operator in Estonia, which provides telecoms services such as broadcasting and wireless broadband access. The Commission sent Estonia a formal request to comply with EU rules in June 2012 but Estonia has not adapted its national law to guarantee the impartiality of the telecoms regulator and the Commission says that this can have negative consequences for competition in the sector. (May 30, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

The vice president for the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda for Europe, Neelie Kroes, has issued a call for the formation of a single EU telecoms market before the next European election. The European Commissioner voiced her intent to oversee the reform of the EU telecoms market by Easter 2014, claiming that it would be good for Europe's economy. "I want you to be able to go back to your constituents and say that you were able to end mobile roaming costs," said Kroes. "I want you to be able to say that you saved their right to access the open internet, by guaranteeing net neutrality. I want you to be able to say we took real action on cybercrime and other threats." She said that a single European market would result in growth stimulated by breaking down barriers and that it would create a "strong and digital economy" for young people to escape the unemployment trap. She argued that elderly people who need new digital services to stay healthy and active, would also benefit from the reform. "If we do this right, then digital connections can bring political connections. Digital dividends can bring social ones," she said. "Everyone loves the benefits of EU price cuts to roaming. It is the one thing even Eurocritics agree the EU did well. And it could never have happened without the EU. But this fact is also a challenge. On one hand my portfolio is the source of this incredibly popular EU policy... but on the other hand we struggle to push other telecoms and digital issues to the top of the political agenda. A strong single market package is the way to change that." Kroes also argues that there is

no place for borders in the telecoms sector; and that it is a market where the barriers are unneeded, and yet so high. She therefore called for the development of a “radical legislative compromise”. “I chose those words carefully. “Radical” because an economic disaster requires big action. “Compromise” because everyone will have to give, in order to get,” she explained. “We will each need to consider all the pieces in the jigsaw, not only our personal favorites, or the visible and sexy changes. Often the invisible investments are just as important for long-term consumer welfare. And in the case of roaming, it is only if a genuine single market actually exists that roaming can cease to exist, in legal or economic terms. “I come to you with an open mind about how to assemble the jigsaw.” Kroes ended her speech calling on MEPs who believe in the single market and a strong Europe to believe in this reform. “This is the opportunity to stand up and be counted. I will fight with my last breath to get us there together.” (May 30, 2013) [telecoms.com](#)

European operators are looking at the development of a coherent strategy to prepare for the arrival of roaming MVNOs in 2014. From May 14 to June 3, the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) is holding a public consultation on draft guidelines in relation to regulated retail roaming services. The latest set of regulation proposals, if implemented, will bring fundamental change to the structure of the European roaming market, requiring European mobile network operators to open their networks to providers of voice and data roaming services acting as MVNOs, from July 2014. The new Roaming Regulation includes a provision to allow retail customers to request roaming services from a separate roaming provider than the one providing their domestic mobile services – a process known as decoupling. In particular, domestic providers are required to enable their customers to access regulated voice, SMS and data roaming services provided as a bundle from any alternative roaming provider. Domestic and alternative roaming providers must also allow their retail customers to access local data roaming services provided directly on a visited network – known as decoupling in the visited country. Two types of decoupling models are considered in the regulation. For the first type of decoupling, where regulated voice, SMS and data roaming services are provided as a bundle, the Single-IMSI solution has been chosen. Under the Single-IMSI proposal the separate sale of roaming services is technically still provided by the domestic provider, which serves as the host mobile network operator to the alternative roaming provider. The separate sale of roaming services is provided on a wholesale basis to the alternative roaming provider, which resells the services to the roaming customer at the retail level. This basic option of resale of retail roaming services does not allow the alternative roaming provider to control which visited networks are to be used in preference to others. For the second type of decoupling – data roaming services provided directly on a visited network – the basic requirements are the implementation and activation of the processing of data roaming traffic in the visited network and the requirement not to prevent the manual or automatic selection of a visited network. (May 16, 2013) [telecoms.com](#)

## United Kingdom

Tests of whether LTE services will affect terrestrial television services in the UK have found no problems in the capital city, London. The results reflect the fact that there is a very strong digital terrestrial television signal in London, and that

this is transmitted at frequencies clearly separated from the frequencies on which new 4G at 800 MHz mobile services will be carried. Similar results could be expected in other areas of the UK with the same characteristics.

(May 15, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

Telecoms regulator OFCOM has revealed that it has begun a competition inquiry related to BT’s dominance in the broadband sector, according to British broadsheet The Daily Telegraph. The report cites the watchdog as saying that it had found ‘reasonable grounds’ to support a request made by Sir Charles Dunstone, founder of BT rival TalkTalk, which called on OFCOM to examine the incumbent’s alleged dominance in the supply of fiber-optic broadband services. As such, OFCOM noted that in its examination it aims to ‘consider whether BT has abused a dominant position under UK and/or EU competition law’. TalkTalk’s appeal for the investigation, meanwhile, was reported to have argued: ‘BT has failed to maintain a sufficient margin between its upstream costs and downstream prices, thereby operating an abusive margin squeeze.’ Unsurprisingly perhaps, in the wake of the development BT has been quick to voice its displeasure with OFCOM’s plan to investigate, stating: ‘BT is disappointed that OFCOM has opened this case despite the lack of any evidence. We are confident there is no case to answer. It would be better if the industry’s, and OFCOM’s, focus was on investing in the future of the country rather than on spurious actions designed to hold up fiber in the UK.’ For its part, TalkTalk was more satisfied with the outcome of its call for action, with the alternative operator saying: ‘We have long maintained that there needs to be tighter regulation in superfast broadband to ensure a level playing field and therefore deliver real benefits for consumers and businesses. We are pleased that OFCOM is taking this matter seriously and have decided there is reasonable suspicion to investigate BT’s fiber pricing.’ (May 2, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## France

The telecommunications regulator ARCEP has published the contributions to the public consultation on professional mobile radio (PMR) systems held from October 8 to November 30, 2012. PMR networks, which include public protection and disaster relief (PPDR) networks, are independent from the cellular mobile service and are used to perform government duties. ARCEP received an estimate of 20 contributions; with provision of a sufficient quantity of radio spectrum resources stated as the main point of emphasis. According to the contributors, Long Term Evolution (LTE) is the technology best suited to satisfy the impending broadband and ultra-fast broadband PMR network needs, with some contributors suggesting an overall estimate of about 2x10MHz duplex spectrum necessary for the purposes of civilian PMR.

(May 21, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Germany

The Federal Cartel Office has written to T-Mobile, Vodafone Germany, E-Plus and O2 Germany warning them that it suspects them of exchanging sensitive business information in order to avoid an expensive auction when mobile telephony licenses expire in 2016. According to a needs assessment survey by the Federal Network Agency (Bundesnetzagentur or BNA), demand for frequencies does not exceed supply, meaning there could be no auction. The four mobile phone companies filled in their assessment questionnaires in such a way as to divide up the spectrum amicably without treading on each other’s toes, and that

the cartel office suspects there may have been a prohibited agreement among them. The four operators have been told to respond by the end of next week. If the office's suspicions are firmed up, there could be further investigations and fines. The companies reject the allegations. (May 7, 2013) Der Spiegel

## Italy

Telecom Italia has finally decided that it will be splitting off its landline access network into a separate company. The firm has been debating the issue since earlier this year. The assets and resources for developing and managing the passive access network (both copper and fiber) and the active components of the fiber consisting of OLT (Optical Line Termination) and cabinet will be spun off to the new company. The new structure will guarantee all operators (OLOs and Telecom Italia) access to the fixed-line network, in application of the European-denominated "Equivalence of Input" (EoI) model of equality of treatment. The new company will offer to all operators services including Unbundling of the Local Loop (ULL) and Virtual Unbundling Line Access (VULA) for next-generation networks leveraging FTTC and FTTH architecture. The assets are said to have a valuation in the region of US\$18 billion.

(May 30, 2013) cellular-news.com

Telecom Italia has been hit with a EUR104 million fine by the Antitrust Authority after it was found guilty of having "abused its dominant position in network infrastructure". The investigation found that in two separate episodes, Telecom Italia had abused its dominant position in managing wholesale access services to local and broadband networks, obstructing competitors' expansion in the market for voice telecommunication services and broadband internet access. The company denied the allegations and said that it will appeal. In a statement, the company said that it has always assured alternative operators full and equal access to its network, in compliance with the current regulations. It also said that all its practices had been regulated over the three years of the period being reviewed. The company is currently investigating a possible separation of its landline network, or a merger of its mobile network with Hutchison Whampoa's local Three Network. (May 13, 2013) cellular-news.com

## Norway

The Norwegian Post & Telecoms Authority (NPT) has outlined its proposed timetable for the auction of spectrum in the 800MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands, while also confirming it has inked a contract with UK-based DotEcon for consulting services related to the sale. Under the watchdog's plans, a study regarding the auction format is to be sent to the Ministry of Transport and Communications for approval in June 19, 2013. Following this the NPT will issue the draft auction rules for a public consultation, submission to which must be received by September 30. Subsequently, on October 28 the regulator expects to publish the final auction rules and open registration for would-be bidders, with those parties seeking to take part in the sale process given until November 15 to apply. The auction itself, meanwhile, will then get underway on December 2.

(May 16, 2013) telegeography.com

## Bulgaria

Vivacom says that over 300,000 customers have ported their mobile phone numbers to its network since the MNP facility was launched. It noted that is nearly 100,000 more than the total accumulated by its two rival networks. In addition, it

is the country's only mobile network with more ported in numbers than clients who left in favor of another operator. Users were given the opportunity to choose their operator, while retaining their current number, in April 2008. Two years later the procedure for a "one stop shop" was introduced and since August 2010 those who want to port out or port in their numbers have to only fill in an application for the preferred operator. (May 28, 2013) cellular-news.com

## Slovenia

Following a competitive tender, Slovenian telecoms watchdog the Post & Electronic Communications Agency (APEK) has awarded a contract to UK-based DotEcon to provide technical advisory and IT software services to support the regulator's upcoming multi-band 4G mobile license auction in the 800MHz, 900MHz, 1800MHz, 2100MHz and 2600MHz spectrum bands. (May 15, 2013) telegeography.com

## Belgium

Belgian fixed line incumbent Belgacom has cited the impact of regulatory measures as the main factor behind it posting a 0.1% decline in revenues in the first quarter of 2013. Publishing its financial results for the quarter ended March 31, 2013, Belgacom reported total turnover of EUR1.586 billion (US\$2.083 billion), down from EUR1.588 billion in the same period of 2012, though it noted that excluding regulatory effects revenues would, in fact, have been up 1.4% year-on-year. Similarly, EBITDA for the period under review was EUR441 million, down by 6.1% compared to 1Q12, though Belgacom said that the decline would have been 2.9% y-o-y, as a result of 'increased pressure on direct margin and higher HR-expenses, partially offset by the containment of non-HR expenses'. Net income in 1Q13, meanwhile, stood at EUR171 million, down from EUR199 million. Belgacom's wireless subscriber base stood at 5.077 million at the end of March 2013, of which the bulk – 3.561 million – were residential users, down from 5.218 million (3.805 million residential) at end-March 2012. Broadband connections, meanwhile, totaled 1.647 million at the end of the period under review, up slightly from the 1.603 million reported in 1Q12, while fixed voice accesses fell to 3.031 million, down from 3.174 million. (May 3, 2013) telegeography.com

## Czech Republic

Industry regulator the Czech Telecommunication Office (CTU) is looking to attract more interest from new investors to its revamped auction of 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) mobile frequencies. The last tender, which was to be contested by four pre-qualified bidders – incumbents T-Mobile, Telefonica O2 CR and Vodafone, and local financial firm PPF Group's subsidiary PPF Mobile Services – was cancelled in March this year when bids spiraled above US\$1 billion, prompting concerns over the competitive pricing of new services and the speed at which operators would be able to launch them. However, Chairman Novak now says that having settled any objections to the terms and conditions of the revised LTE auction, the regulator hopes to kick start it in mid-July. 'The CTU invited again the potential investors,' the chairman said, adding that the idea of hiving off a portion of the available frequencies in the lucrative 800MHz band 'could be attractive' for potential new entrants, as there was no such facility in the previous tender. A minimum of CZK7 billion (US\$345.5 million) is expected to be raised for state coffers this year with the government adamant that the process will fulfill its promise to see the arrival of a fourth operator to boost competition. (May 22, 2013) The Czech News Agency

## New Zealand

New Zealand's Communications and Information Technology Minister, Amy Adams, has released a consultation document for the forthcoming 700MHz auction. The frequencies will be freed up by the switch to digital television and have been earmarked to be used for 4G mobile networks. The auction reserve price is set to be announced closer to the auction, and the price does not form part of the current consultation.

(May 15, 2013) [telegeography.com](http://telegeography.com)

## Macedonia

The Agency for Electronic Communications (AEC) has announced a public auction for national mobile service licenses in the 790MHz-862MHz and 1710MHz-1880MHz spectrum ranges, aimed at providing 4G LTE mobile broadband services. The 20-year licenses are open to domestic and foreign companies, and will be valid from September 1, 2013 until August 31, 2033 with the prospect of extension. In order to qualify, interested parties have to already provide mobile services to at least 300,000 subscribers (as of December 31, 2012) and have combined revenues generated from telecommunication activities of EUR10 million (US\$12.97 million) in 2011 and 2012. The winners of the beauty contest will have to provide the regulator with a six-year timetable plan within 45 days of bid approval. Under the license requirements, the operators should offer mobile service to 20% of the population in two years after the license issue date; in four years the coverage should reach 40% and in six years – 70% of the population. All interested companies have to submit their bids in 45 days from the publication of the announcement in the Official Gazette. The AEC's main criteria for determining the winning bids will be based on the economic value of the offers, with the official opening of the envelopes set for June 24, 2013. The decision to determine the qualified participants in the subsequent auction will be adopted within seven days. The auction itself will follow within 14-30 days of this decision (i.e. by mid-late July 2013).

(May 14, 2013) [telegeography.com](http://telegeography.com)

## Estonia

TeliaSonera has won frequencies in the 800MHz band in the beauty contest in Estonia arranged by the Estonian Technical Surveillance Authority. The 800 MHz frequencies will enable a faster roll-out of 4G services in Estonian rural areas. With the new frequencies TeliaSonera will roll-out 4G to cover 95% of Estonian territory in the middle of June, 2013. TeliaSonera has already built a 4G network, using the 1800/2600 MHz combination in Estonia. In the spectrum beauty contest TeliaSonera won 2 x 10 MHz frequencies in the 800 MHz band.

(May 30, 2013) [cellular-news.com](http://cellular-news.com)

## Fiji

The government has announced plans to hold a 4G license auction end of next month. Fijian Attorney-General and Minister for Communications said that in some unspecified manner that the "strength of signal will play an important role in extending mobile coverage to 100% of Fiji, up from 95% now". "The auction for 4G LTE Spectrum will promote competition, attract foreign investors, and eliminate the kind of corruption that is seen the world over when it comes to spectrum allocation," the Attorney General said in a statement. Even at this fairly close date to the auction though, no details about the pricing or the license conditions have been released. The ascending bid auction will take place from June 24 to June 28 at the office of the Department of Communications in Suva, Fiji.

(May 30, 2013) [cellular-news.com](http://cellular-news.com)

## South Africa

Mobile network operator, Cell C has denied claims that it owes money to the telecoms regulator for unpaid radio spectrum fees. An opposition politician, Marian Shinn made the claim that Cell C owed R107.3 million (US\$11.9 million) to ICASA as part of a Parliamentary debate on late fees owed by companies to government bodies. In a statement, Cell C said that it "has never been advised by ICASA that it owes R107.3 million or any other amount in outstanding license fees and, accordingly, Cell C denies that it owes this amount." The company said that it had asked the regulator to make a public statement confirming the mistake, but as the regulator had not replied, it put out its own denial. "ICASA has failed to respond as it appears to be unable to verify its own information," the mobile network said. "ICASA's failure to respond and set the record straight publicly is having a negative impact on Cell C's reputation and leaves Cell C with no choice but to make its own public statement in this regard."

(May 9, 2013) [cellular-news.com](http://cellular-news.com)

Telecoms regulator ICASA has released a report into the mobile networks quality of service and found that while Cell C had the best rate at setting up a call, MTN was the best at letting customers complete a call once it started. The regulator said that it carried out drive-testing of the mobile operators' networks in the Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal Provinces. The report was delayed after the mobile networks complained about how the tests were carried out. The intention is to publish the reports every three months from now on. Cell C customers were able to start a phone call 96.84% of the time, while MTN only dropped called 0.8% of the time. Vodacom had the worst average call drop rate, but came second in call set up performance.

(May 5, 2013) [cellular-news.com](http://cellular-news.com)

## Ghana

Telecommunication regulator National Communication Authority (NCA) has imposed a GHS900,000 (US\$460,000) fine on five mobile phone network operators for violating Quality of Service (QoS) standards. MTN and Glo received the largest fines of GHS300,000 each, while Expresso, Airtel, and Tigo got GHS100,000 penalties each for providing telecom services to consumers below the set benchmark for quality. The NCA periodically undertakes the service standards quality test to ascertain whether telecommunications companies operating in the country deliver appropriate services. The five operators were found in breach of their network obligations – call congestion, call setup time and signaling traffic in particular – in the Northern, Volta, Ashanti, Upper West and Upper East Regions. Meanwhile, Vodafone was in compliance with all QoS parameters. In March 2013, the number of mobile phone subscriptions reached 26.32 million, which imposes a strain on the current cable infrastructure to carry traffic and data services in order to meet current demand for speed and capacity. However, telecom operators and infrastructure providers have pinpointed poor energy supply, fiber-cuts and fuel-theft as the topmost challenges threatening the delivery of quality service in the country.

(May 7, 2013) [telegeography.com](http://telegeography.com)

## Rwanda

Mobile telephone penetration rate in the country inched upward in March to 53.7% of the population with the number of subscribers now above six million. According to figures released last week by the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA), the number of mobile phone subscribers grew from 5,902,630 in January to 6,008,777 in February and to 6,039,615 in March this year—a monthly increase of about 8.14%. Competition for subscribers seems to be intensifying as the latest entrant in the market, Airtel Rwanda, appears to be gaining ground. In operation since March last year, Airtel has witnessed a rise in the number of subscribers since the beginning of the year, from 570,739 in January to 781,162 as of March. Airtel is the third mobile phone service provider in the country after MTN Rwanda and Tigo Rwanda. RURA figures show the two leading telecom companies, MTN Rwanda and Tigo Rwanda Ltd's active subscribers decline marginally during the first quarter of the year. Tigo's active lines dropped from 1,877,621 in January, to 1,854,651 in February and then to 1,806,271 as of March, the sector regulator reported. But officials attributed the downward trend to seasonal changes. MTN Rwanda saw 2,088 numbers go silent from January through March this year. RURA says that 3,452,182 lines remained active on the MTN network, down from 3,454,270 in January. With over 3.4 million subscribers, MTN remains the dominant player controlling more than half of the total market share. (May 13, 2013) [allafrica.com](#)

According to data from the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA), the country's wireless subscriber base reached 6.04 million at March 31, 2013, up from 5.69 million at the end of 2012. MTN remains the market leader with 3.45 million subscribers, followed by Millicom-owned Tigo with 1.81 million users. Newest market entrant Airtel, which launched in June 2012, grew its subscriber base from 391,072 on January 1 to 781,162 by end-March, demonstrating the biggest single gain quarter-on-quarter. With regards to Rwanda's ongoing SIM registration scheme, RURA notes that MTN has registered 60.3% of its subscriber base, followed by Airtel with 52.4%. Tigo brings up the rear with just 44.8% of its users currently registered. (May 2, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

## Zimbabwe

The number of fixed line users in Zimbabwe declined in the final three months of 2012, according to figures from regulator the Posts and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ). The country had 301,650 wireline subscribers at the end of December, down from 325,000 three months before and 337,000 at end-2011. The wireless market is still showing healthy growth, however, with 12.98 million users at end-2012, up from 8.98 million twelve months earlier. The fixed line sector in Zimbabwe is controlled by state-owned operator TelOne, while the mobile market is home to three players: Econet, Telecel and NetOne. (May 30, 2013) [ITWeb](#)

## Malawi

Telecoms regulator has won the final stage in cancelling the mobile operator license it had awarded to G-Mobile. The company was granted a license in April 2009, and was due to have launched its network within a year. The license was finally cancelled in September 2010 following several deadline extensions, but the company appealed to the courts. The High Court upheld the appeal, but this has now been overturned by the Supreme Court. The

company had tried to argue that it was denied the right to economic activity by the regulator, but the court found that the regulator had not breached the law in cancelling the license following repeated failures to launch the mobile network. In a fairly blunt comment, the court said that "The right to economic activity is available to honest and serious entrepreneurs not the likes of the respondent." The country has two active mobile networks, Zain and Telecom Networks Malawi. (May 6, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

## Australia

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has concluded its inquiry into the setting of terms and conditions for wholesale ADSL services, on the back of which it has published a Final Access Determination (FAD). With the determination setting out the price and non-price terms for the service in question until June 30, 2014, the watchdog has noted that wholesale prices will fall by around 15% 'compared to the commercial prices that were being charged, on average, prior to the regulation of the service in February 2012'. As per the decision, the ACCC has limited the application of the FAD to fixed line incumbent Telstra, although it applies to all geographic regions of the country. As per the FAD, the final prices are in fact lower than draft prices published by the ACCC earlier this year, with the watchdog noting that the reduced charges were 'due to updated information received in the inquiry about use of the service'. The key price terms for the monthly per-user access charge and the monthly charge for data aggregation (which relates to data usage) have been set as: AUD24.44 (US\$23.42) per month per end-user in Zone 1 (predominantly CBD and metropolitan areas); AUD29.66 per month per end-user in Zone 2/3 (predominantly regional and rural areas); and a monthly charge per Aggregating Virtual Circuit or Virtual LAN acquired in connection with wholesale ADSL of AUD32.31 per Mbps. Commenting on the final pricing decision, ACCC chairman Rod Sims said: 'The wholesale price set in the Final Access Determination provides certainty to industry participants, which in turn benefits customers by promoting competition and allowing a range of broadband services to be offered over Telstra's copper network.' (May 30, 2013) [telegeography.com](#)

The head of the Australian telecoms regulator has hit back at allegations that the recent spectrum auction was "damaging to the economy" and dismissed claims that one of the country's three operators was deterred from participating by high reserve prices. The criticisms were leveled at ACMA by the CEO of spectrum auction planning specialist Coleago Consulting. Coleago's Stefane Zehle suggested that, by setting too high a reserve price for the 700 MHz spectrum auction, ACMA had deterred one of the three Australian mobile operators, Vodafone's VHA, from bidding. "ACMA's failure could hardly be more complete," Zehle said, arguing that the price had resulted in a 2x15MHz swathe of 700 MHz spectrum going unsold. But ACMA chair Chris Chapman has hit back at Zehle, telling that, in October 2012, Vodafone announced it did not need to buy the spectrum that was being offered in the digital dividend auction because it has sufficient spectrum to provide LTE services in the future. "Vodafone's CEO, Bill Morrow, made this announcement two months before the Minister directed the ACMA to set the reserve price for the 700 MHz band at A\$1.36/MHz/pop," Chapman said. He added that Vodafone had also refrained from bidding for licenses in the 2.5 GHz band, "even though it is hard to characterize the reserve price for this band

(A\$0.03 per MHz/pop) as extremely high, and indeed all 2.5 GHz lots were sold." The auction generated revenues of nearly A\$2bn, yet Zehle claimed that "potentially several billion dollars of benefit to the economy had been lost," given that the auction was estimated to deliver a net benefit to the Australian economy of between A\$7bn and A\$10bn. Chapman argued that Zehle's assessment of net benefit was well beyond figures quoted for expected auction revenue in the media and seem to be based on speculations about the overall economic benefits resulting from subsequent network rollout and operation. "Such benefits would, of course, be hard to calculate from the auction results alone," he said. "The ACMA expects that consumers will benefit from the substantial increase in spectrum holdings for Telstra and Optus resulting from this auction. Telstra and Optus would not have bought this spectrum if they didn't believe it would improve their position in offering competitive services to consumers. Vodafone says it also intends to compete vigorously in the mobile broadband market using its existing spectrum assets. In addition, the auction has brought a new entrant to the market (TPG Internet) with its own spectrum holding. "The ACMA is optimistic that all these companies will invest in the community when they commence 4G services, which will further transform the way Australians communicate and do business," Chapman said. On the matter of unsold spectrum, ACMA confirmed that three continuous lots or 15MHz paired, of 700 MHz spectrum remains vacant and available for allocation to the Australian industry at some future date. (May 9, 2013) [telecoms.com](#)

Three Australian operators have secured spectrum in the country's digital dividend auction, generating revenues of nearly A\$2bn (US\$2.06bn) for the Australian government. Telstra, Optus Mobile and TPG Internet each secured spectrum, regulator Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) announced. Big spending operator Telstra paid over A\$1.3bn for 2x20MHz blocks of 700MHz spectrum and 2x40MHz of 2.5GHz spectrum, as it looked to consolidate its position as Australia's market leader. The operator had 14.5 million subscribers as of December 2012, according to Informa's WCIS. Second placed operator Optus Mobile won 2x10MHz blocks of 700MHz spectrum as well as 2x20MHz blocks in the 2.5GHz band, paying almost A\$650m for its spectrum. And fixed line operator TPG Internet also secured 2x10MHz of 2.5GHz spectrum, for a total of A\$13.5m. 2x15MHz of 700MHz spectrum remained unsold. Each operator was not allowed to acquire more than 2x25MHz (50 MHz in total) in the 700MHz band or more than 2x40MHz (80 MHz in total) in the 2.5GHz band. "The auction process itself ran smoothly and resulted in the allocation of spectrum to the companies that valued it the most," said Chris Chapman, ACMA chairman. "This decades-long process of spectrum reform has already transformed the television industry, delivering greater diversity and better technical quality of television services to viewers. It will be complete when the new licenses in the 700 MHz band become operational at the beginning of 2015." (May 7, 2013) [telecoms.com](#)

## Taiwan

Taiwan's WiMAX networks can expect a decision on whether they will be allowed to migrate to LTE services by the end of next month, although the government looks unlikely to let them drop WiMAX entirely. The government's Minister without Portfolio confirming that a decision will be made about them however urged the continuation of WiMAX

services, citing the interest of fairness for all enterprises that have made investments in the past toward the endeavor. The minister said that he hoped investment in WiMAX networks would continue in the run up to the launch of LTE services by the incumbent cellular networks. He suggested that 70% coverage might be needed before the WiMAX networks can start offering alternative services. The country is set to hold its LTE spectrum auction later this year, and has given bidders until the 1st July to apply. (May 28, 2013) [cellular-news.com](#)

The National Communications Commission (NCC) has outlined the starting prices for the 4G-suitable spectrum which is expected to go on sale later this year. Should the government sell all spectrum on offer at its lowest price, it would raise some TWD35.9 billion (US\$1.2 billion) in total. With frequencies in the 700MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands to be offered for sale, the NCC has also confirmed that a total of twelve lots of spectrum will be made available, each offering between 20MHz and 30MHz. In the 700MHz band four lots of spectrum will be offered, three of which carry a base price of TWD4.6 billion for 20MHz of bandwidth, and one of which will cost at least TWD6.9 billion for a 30MHz block. Meanwhile, three lots in the 900MHz have been detailed, and while all three offer 20MHz of bandwidth, two will cost at least TWD2.1 billion, with the third costing at least TWD1.6 billion. Finally, five lots will be up for grabs in the 1800MHz band, with three of those offering 20MHz of bandwidth for a minimum bid of TWD1.4 billion. The remaining two lots will both offer 30MHz of bandwidth, although are priced differently, at TWD2.2 billion and TWD3.0 billion. The NCC noted that the variation in pricing for spectrum blocks in the same band was partly dependent on the date at which the frequencies will become available for use, as some spectrum in the 900MHz and 1800MHz bands are currently used for 3G services and the licenses are not expected to expire until 2018. The pricing announcement comes just a few weeks after the NCC outlined the timeframe for applications for the 4G spectrum auction. The regulator last month revealed that it would begin accepting applications for 4G concessions on May 1, 2013, with the submission period set to end on June 15. Following that the regulator has confirmed that it will examine the applicants between June 15 and August 15 with a view to announcing a list of those would-be bidders that have qualified to participate in the sale process. With an auction rehearsal expected to take place on August 20, the spectrum sale itself will get underway on August 26. (May 17, 2013) [The Digitimes](#)

## Macau

Director of the Bureau of Telecommunications Regulation (DSRT) said that the authorities will approve Macau's second fixed line license for new entrant MTel by the end of this month. According to the official, 'DSRT is striving to finalize the approval procedures this month and now we're processing the supplementary information the company had provided us. The government has to handle the application with extra prudence and carefulness because this license is of much importance to the development of Macau's telecom operations, given the project's size of financial and technical investments which involved a lot of examination and verification.' According to the new license conditions the licensee is obliged to roll out network coverage of 30% of residential buildings at launch, within 18 months of receiving the concession. Meanwhile, the regulator has ordered incumbent monopoly PSTN operator CTM to reduce its wholesale prices for fixed line cable



lease, and CTM's proposed 10% tariff reduction is below the government's expectation. On the other hand, he said those other operators' claims that Macau's cable leasing rates were eight times higher than average international standards were inflated, adding that the DSRT needed to study additional data to gauge the true figure.

(May 15, 2013) The Macau Daily Times

## Thailand

Thailand's telecoms regulator is seeking to audit the mobile number portability process to ensure that the mobile networks are complying with its regulations. The NBTC has issued an order to the MNP clearing house set up by the mobile networks instructing it to submit its data for assessment. Only data on MNP requests from incumbent networks to the new 2.1 GHz based 3G networks is being requested though. The NBTC will closely monitor the porting to ensure the process complies with regulations. The MNP holding company, Clearinghouse can handle up to 4,000 MNP requests per day, although the 3G networks want that massively increased to cope with demand. The upgrade request is being resisted by the two state-owned telcos who have the most to lose from the migration. There is also confusion about how the regulations handle the migration of a customer account as it would appear that in some situations, although the customer is now using the new 3G network, they are still counted as GSM customer on the older networks. That affects the payments to the two state-owned telcos that operate the GSM networks.

(May 13, 2013) Daily The Nation

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) confirmed with the cabinet secretariat that CAT Telecom must immediately return the frequencies of its two concessionaires after their contracts expire in September. The state telecom enterprise must revert the 1800 MHz frequency to the NBTC for reallocation for public use, said Secretary General Takorn Tantasit. On September 15, concessions for True Move, a unit of True Corporation, and Digital Phone, a unit of Advanced Info Service, are set to expire under agreements with CAT. Each operator holds 12.5 MHz of bandwidth on the 1800 MHz frequency. Mr. Takorn said the confirmation was in response to a request by the Cabinet's Secretariat Office asking whether CAT has the right to hold the spectrum after the concessions expire. He insisted that CAT would be in violation of Section 83 of the Frequency Allocation Act, stipulating that the NBTC specify the period for all state enterprises to return spectra after concessions expire. The NBTC urged the cabinet secretariat to ask the Office of the Council of State for clearer information, said Mr. Takorn. The NBTC has set the third quarter of 2014 as the auction period for 25 MHz of bandwidth on the 1800 MHz spectrum, after it reclaims 12.5 MHz each from Digital Phone and True Move. In addition, the watchdog is drafting a new regulation to protect 2G mobile users after September. The draft by a new subcommittee will allow True Move and Digital Phone to continue providing 2G service temporarily after their current concessions expire. (May 8, 2013) bangkokpost.com

## Hong Kong

Hong Kong's mobile networks have called on the government to speed up its review of their 3G spectrum holdings and be more transparent about the process. The existing 3G licenses are due to expire in late 2016, and the Communications Authority is understood to be favoring a scheme where it renews the licenses as per normal, but

also reclaims a third of the 3G spectrum and auctions that off in a fresh process. Following threats of legal action, it is seeking a technical consultant to investigate the proposals, but the mobile networks have jointly said the public and the industry must be given ample time and opportunity to review the consultant's findings. The consultation is not due to be decided before October, but there are concerns that the regulator has already made a decision before the mobile networks have been able to submit their own proposals. The operators have warned of as much as 40 per cent degradation of mobile network services and higher cost of these services to consumers if the government pushes through with its planned 3G spectrum reassignment. Part of the rationale for the spectrum seizure is thought to be that the government is known to be keen to introduce a fifth mobile network into the market. (May 6, 2013) South China Morning Post

## Myanmar

The government has selected Munich-based consultancy firm Roland Berger to assist in the auction of two telecoms licenses. The company will map out selection criteria for a 'beauty contest' competition to allocate the two concessions. A spokesperson for Berger was quoted as saying that the winners would be selected based 67% on a technical score and 33% on a financial score. The technical score comprises a total of 1,000 points split into eight categories including network rollout, customer care and social responsibility. The financial section is worth 500 points and is based solely on the license fee offer. Twelve groups were shortlisted to take part in the competition, narrowed down from a list of more than ninety expressions of interest:

(May 16, 2013) News Portal Mizzima

## India

The Indian government expects to raise nearly US\$6 billion from the country's mobile networks in one-off spectrum fees, the ICT Minister said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. In total, the government expects to raise Rs 31,589 crore (US\$5.9 billion) from the mobile networks as a one-time spectrum fee. He also confirmed that only Tata Teleservices (TTSL) has made any payment under the spectrum fee levy, and itself has only made a partial payment, under protest. "Representations against spectrum usage charges have been received from all telecom service providers, which are being examined," he added. Of the mobile networks, BSNL owes US\$1.3 billion, followed by Bharti Airtel (US\$970 million); Vodafone (US\$670 million); MTNL (US\$617 million), RCom (US\$360 million); Idea Cellular (US\$350 million) and Aircel owes US\$251 million. Even the companies that had their licenses cancelled as part of the 2008 GSM License scandal are being asked to pay the spectrum levy. The government is levying the charge on all networks that have holdings over 4.4Mhz of radio spectrum in each region. (May 6, 2013) economictimes.indiatimes.com

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*Information contained herein has been obtained from sources, which we deem reliable. SAMENA Telecommunications Council is not liable for any misinformed decisions that the reader may reach by being solely reliant on information contained herein. Expert advice should be sought.*



## SATELLITE NEWS

### SpeedCast launches Ka-band services in Libya, Afghanistan

Hong Kong-based global satellite telecommunications service provider SpeedCast has launched a new Ka-band service to serve the Libyan and Afghanistan markets. The service builds upon SpeedCast's existing service offerings in the two regions, which includes both C-band and Ku-band services. The new Ka-band service can be used for internet access, Virtual Network Operator (VNO) services, IP trunking, and fully managed network services.

### ORBIT launches new maritime mobile VSAT product line in Asia

ORBIT Communication Systems, a provider of mission-critical connectivity solutions for mobile satellite communications, tracking and telemetry, and communications management systems, announced at the CommunicAsia 2013 exhibition the launch of the OceanTRx maritime stabilized mobile VSAT platform for the Asian market. Designed for efficient on-board serviceability and maintainability, OceanTRx-4 and OceanTRx-7 feature a highly accessible pedestal design enabling efficient service support and field upgrade process without requiring accurate or periodic balancing. The OceanTRx product line shares common electronic field-replaceable units (FRUs), allowing lower cost of ownership, easier maintenance support, and shorter service response times.

### ITT Exelis awarded contract for global satellite communications system

The Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) has awarded ITT Exelis a contract to develop a global netted communications capability for the agency's Distributed Tactical Communications System (DTCS). Under the current development phase of DTCS — called "Global Services"— Exelis will provide the Department of Defense and other high-priority/special users with a satellite-based, global "push-to-talk" netted-communications service for voice and data. This on-the-move, beyond line-of-sight capability will provide enhanced communications and global connectivity through small, low power devices without reliance on local infrastructure. The current DTCS system has delivered regionally netted communication services to warfighters in Iraq, Afghanistan and other theaters of operation since 2009. Global Services will build upon the solid foundation of the current DTCS system to deliver enhanced communications capabilities and enable greater performance, continuity and efficiency. Exelis, working closely with DISA and industry partner Iridium Satellite Inc., will deliver a Global Services capability fully supporting the currently fielded DTCS RO Tactical Radios and will establish an "open standard" interface so industry can develop a wide variety of additional DTCS devices.

## SSL selected to provide satellite to SKY Perfect JSAT

Space Systems/Loral (SSL), a provider of commercial satellites, announced that it was selected to provide a communications satellite to SKY Perfect JSAT, a leading satellite operator based in Japan, with a fleet of 16 satellites. The satellite, JCSAT-14, will replace JCSAT-2A at 154 degrees East longitude and expands on its capacity to meet the growing demand for telecommunications infrastructure in the Asia Pacific region. The satellite, which provides approximately 10-kW of power at end of life, has 26 C-band transponders and 18-Ku-band transponders for service in Asia, Russia, Oceania, and the Pacific Islands. The C-band coverage will be used for both broadcast and data networks and the satellite's Ku-band regional beams will provide high-speed connectivity for maritime, aviation and resource exploration use. JCSAT-14 is based on the highly reliable SSL 1300 satellite platform that provides the flexibility for a broad range of applications and technology advances. Scheduled for launch in 2015, the satellite is designed to deliver service for 15 years or more.

## Singtel to help launch Myanmar owned satellite system

Singtel will provide technical assistance to launch a Myanmar-owned satellite communication system the group told media at a press conference in Yangon. Singtel International will help to analyze whether to set up a satellite communication system in Myanmar is possible or not according to Mr. Mark Chong, CEO at Singtel International. They aim to help launch a Myanmar-owned satellite whether they succeed the bidding for the operator license or not, he said. "Singtel is more interested in helping Myanmar to connect with international world than to build infrastructure in Myanmar. We will help Myanmar to launch a satellite successfully whether we get the license or not. We have already launched our own two satellites," said Mr. Chong.

## China to provide Sri Lanka's first communication satellite

China's Great Wall Industry Corp. has signed a contract for commissioning Sri Lanka's first communication satellite. The company, in which China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp. has an equity interest, is China's only authorized provider of commercial satellite launch services to the global market, China Daily reported. The deal was signed in the presence of Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Mahinda Rajapaksa. It is part of an agreement between the two countries to expand bilateral trade, investment and cooperation in agriculture, space technology and infrastructure, China Daily reported. Last year, bilateral trade totaled US\$2.68 billion; up 19.6 percent from 2011. The satellite to Sri Lanka will be based on the DFH-4 satellite platform, which would provide telecommunications and broadcasting services to Sri Lanka and its neighboring countries and regions. China Daily, quoting a source, said several countries intend to buy the services from Sri Lanka. The Chinese company said as of May it has launched 43 satellites and 37 launch services for foreign clients, covering 18 countries and regions in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas and Oceania. China hopes to have a 10 percent share of the global satellite market and 15 percent of the world's commercial launch market by 2015.

## ViaSat introduces Exede Voice home telephone service

ViaSat Inc. is launching Exede® Voice, becoming the first satellite Internet service provider to offer U.S. residential telephone service. The offering complements the company's award-winning Exede satellite Internet service, which has transformed satellite Internet through its affordable 12 Mbps speeds using the world's highest capacity satellite, ViaSat-1. With the introduction of Exede Voice on June 17, ViaSat will begin offering consumers the nation's first all-satellite phone/Internet "double play" with unlimited local and long distance calling within the US and Canada, plus a full suite of digital phone features. Also available will be a "triple play" bundle – with Internet, telephone, and TV – starting at US\$99.99 per month. The ViaSat engineering team designed Exede Voice to be optimized with Exede satellite and ground technology, producing superior call quality. The team spent a year in development and another year in technical and user testing to ensure quality and reliability, including trials with hundreds of residential users.

## THAICOM and Gilat Satellite Networks announce partnership agreement

Gilat Satellite Networks Ltd. a leader in satellite networking technology, solutions and services and THAICOM Public Company Limited, Asia's satellite operator announced the signing of a Cooperation Framework Agreement. As part of this agreement, the companies will provide customers across the Asia-Pacific region with an integrated solution using Gilat's satellite ground equipment in conjunction with THAICOM-4 (IPSTAR) high throughput satellite. This cooperation is another step in THAICOM's Open Access Platform (OAP) strategy, which allows technology equipment vendors to access THAICOM-4 (IPSTAR) high throughput satellite, providing customers with more choices and flexibility to better serve their requirements.

## Eusanet delivers satellite broadband to Niederstetten

German satellite internet provider Eusanet, previously known as Schott, is using KA-band capacity for the first time in Europe to provide a German community with satellite broadband. It has been supplying the community of Niederstetten in Baden-Wuerttemberg with satellite broadband since start-May. Residents in the seven connected districts are offered connections with download and upload speeds of up to 30 and 5 Mbps. They can also benefit from VoIP services.

## Yemen launches satellite based internet service

The YahClick service, provided by TeleYemen in partnership with the UAE's Al Yah Satellite Communications Company (Yahsat), enables access to the Internet via broadband satellites that cover all Yemeni areas and villages. The service will open the horizon for new businesses, said Yemeni Communications Minister Ahmed Obaid bin Dagher, noting that the service is part of a package of technology projects the ministry seeks to execute in 2013. The service offers fast transmission and data reception, easy browsing and fast file downloads, he said.



## ROAMING NEWS

### Swisscom's roaming fees lowered as of 1 July

There is good news for Swisscom mobile customers: the company is lowering its roaming fees for data, in Switzerland as well as abroad. The group's 600,000 Infinity program clients could save up to 70 percent on roaming charges in 2013, the company announced. The 50 MB weekly package in Europe will cost CHF9 (-63 percent) in Europe and CHF15 outside Europe. The 200 MB monthly package goes down to CHF29 (-61 percent) and a number of other options will see sharp drops. "With these reductions, our prices will continue to be much lower than our competitors and our tariffs will also be well below the regulated EU level," says Urs Schaeppi, Swisscom's chief executive. The lower European roaming rates are thanks in large part to a fivefold increase in the volume of data traffic since 2010.

### BSNL signed four international roaming contracts

BSNL has signed four international roaming agreements in May with service providers in Bahrain, Guinea and Saudi Arabia. "We already have presence in these countries. The agreement is to strengthen our presence there and provide more choice for customers," BSNL Chairman and Managing Director RK Upadhyay told PTI. The company provides international roaming service to its post-paid service users. Under the new agreement, BSNL has partnered with Orange in Guinea for GSM roaming services. The company has extended agreement with Viva in Bahrain, Orange in Guinea (for mobile Internet services) and Mobily (Etisalat)

in Saudi Arabia for mobile Internet services. "Our customers can choose the operators manually and select best rates offered by our partner in which they are roaming. We don't force customers to latch on to any operator automatically. If there are savings, we share it with customers. We have uploaded rates and there comparison on our website for greater transparency," Upadhyay said.

### Celcom Axiata demonstrates roaming capabilities of its LTE service in Singapore

Malaysian wireless operator Celcom Axiata is said to have successfully demonstrated the roaming capabilities of its LTE service in Singapore, according to Bernama. With the demonstration understood to have been carried out at CommunicAsia 2013, in a statement the cellco was cited as saying: "The success of the demonstration positions Celcom as the first service provider to have roaming capabilities for 4G LTE between Malaysia and Singapore through M1, its mobile partner network in Singapore."

### Aircel collaborates with MPT to launch international roaming in Myanmar

Aircel has collaborated with Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications or MPT in order to introduce international roaming facility. The agency in question is run by the nation's Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telegraphs and is the only telecom operator in the

said region. All those who use the service provider's post-paid connections will be able to make the most of the new offering. But it should be noted that pre-paid customers will not be eligible for the service. The rates for making calls from the country have also been detailed. According to the company, those who use their Aircel numbers to call someone in Myanmar will have to fork out Rs 55 for a minute. Furthermore, outgoing calls to any number in India will result in customers on international roaming, paying Rs 80 per minute. And as far as the incoming charges are concerned, all the calls that users decided to answer will have them paying Rs 60 for one minute.

## Mobile operator Bakcell launched a new roaming package

Mobile operator Bakcell has announced about a new roaming campaign. The operator says that considering the start of holiday season Bakcell makes a special offer for those who are planning to travel and have a rest abroad. New roaming campaign introduced by Bakcell makes roaming calls as beneficial as they have never been before. Starting from 21 June, all CIN and New Klass subscribers leaving the country to Turkey, Georgia and Russia will benefit the advantage of talking for only AZN 0.35 per minute for incoming calls. Moreover, the campaign offers a special price for outgoing calls. Thus, while on Roaming, one minute of every outgoing call will cost only AZN 0.75. To join the campaign subscriber should dial \*130#YES. The daily service fee of the campaign is AZN 0.35. The campaign is automatically deactivated as soon as subscriber returns back to the home country.

## Swisscom offers 4G/LTE roaming for customers

Swisscom is the first provider in Switzerland to offer its customers 4G/LTE roaming. From 21 June, Swisscom customers will be able to surf the Internet in South Korea with 4G/LTE. Other countries will be added on an ongoing basis "Not only have we assumed a pioneering role in the expansion of 4G/LTE in Switzerland, we are also now the international front runner when it comes to LTE roaming. This is something we are proud of, because it demonstrates our innovativeness", says Heinz Herren, Head of Network & IT at Swisscom. From tomorrow, 21 June, Swisscom will be making fast connections on the new 4G/LTE technology available to its customers in South Korea. The service is expected to be expanded to Canada and Hong Kong at the beginning of July. This makes Swisscom the first provider in Europe to facilitate 4G/LTE roaming on another continent. Swisscom 4G/LTE is likely to become available in some European countries in late summer, with further countries being added on an ongoing basis.

## U Mobile postpaid consumers to benefit from lowest voice roaming rates in Myanmar

All U Mobile postpaid subscribers travelling to Myanmar will be able to enjoy voice roaming on Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications' (MPT) network. 3G mobile operator U Mobile Sdn Bhd said its postpaid customers travelling to Myanmar will be able to enjoy voice roaming rates at RM4 per minute when calling back to Malaysia and RM1.25 per minute when making local calls during their stay in Myanmar. "Recent numbers reported by the Central Statistical

Organization showed that more than 30,000 Malaysian travelers visited Myanmar in 2012. Malaysians are travelling more and more each year and mobile subscribers are using their phones abroad as frequently as they do in their own home country," said U Mobile Sdn Bhd CEO Jaffa Sany Ariffin in a statement. "With the new offering by U Mobile which offers the lowest voice roaming rates, it will certainly benefit the Malaysian travelers who visit Myanmar," he said, adding that this is part of the company's plan to tap the international business travelers' segment.

Regional mobile roaming radically gets better in Asia Pacific Regional mobile roaming is set to significantly improve in Asia Pacific as nations in the region have come together to meet the burgeoning demand for mobile broadband. Four nations, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, have announced their decision to align with the Asia Pacific Tele-community 700 MHz (APT 700 MHz) band plan. The APT 700 MHz band plan allows greater flexibility for the deployment of mobile broadband services, using technologies such as 4G. The participating nations believe the harmonized use of the 700 MHz band for mobile broadband will not only improve regional mobile roaming but will also provide more competitive mobile broadband services to customers. "It will enable greater interoperability and facilitate international roaming between networks," said Hj Yahkup Hj Menudin, chief executive of the Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI). "Cross border co-ordination can be further enhanced as we adopt the same band plan. In addition, there will be economies of scale for the cost of mobile broadband equipment and devices."

## Aicent facilitates flawless LTE roaming connectivity between SK Telecom and Globe Telecom

Aicent, a provider of mobile data network services and solutions for global mobile operators announced the successful implementation of their LTE Roaming Exchange solution with leading mobile operators SK Telecom and Globe Telecom, giving their mobile subscribers seamless connectivity over 4G LTE as they travel between South Korea and the Philippines.

## Enhancing postpaid customers base with Glo Infnitiser

Emma Okonji examines the challenges of postpaid subscribers in roaming their lines as well as in making international and local calls, and how Glo Infnitiser seeks to address such challenges. Making international calls from local lines often turn out to be a nightmare to most telecoms subscribers because of the high charges that they incur in the communication process. Apart from making international calls from local networks, the idea of roaming mobile lines when the subscriber travels outside the country where the local network is domiciled, is another nightmare for the subscriber because of the high roaming charges. The postpaid telecoms landscape in Nigeria shows lots of confusion and complications, as postpaid customers pay costly tariff and enjoy additional features with additional charge. But in a bid to address the high call rates on postpaid lines, Globacom recently launched the Glo Infnitiser, which seeks to reduce local and international call rates as never before. The Glo Infnitiser offer, simplifies the current terrain and gives substantial benefits and more value to postpaid customers.



## TECHNOLOGY NEWS

### SFR boosts FTTH speeds to 300 Mbps, launches 1 Gbps trial

French service provider SFR has launched a new top-tier service that offers 300 Mbps downstream and 50 Mbps upstream. The data rates are the highest in France, SFR asserts, and will be offered at an introductory price of €9.99 per month. SFR has fiber to the home (FTTH) available in more than 70 towns including Paris and other Ile-de-France, Bordeaux, Cherbourg, Grenoble, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Metz, Montpellier, Nantes, Nice, Pau, Rennes, Strasbourg, and Toulouse. Its service is available to 1.2 million homes. More than 90% of its FTTH network will support the new data rates, SFR estimates. The carrier will offer its existing FTTH customers "gradually" the option of upgrading to the new service starting this month. New customers can order the service upon sign up. The €9.99 monthly fee, in effect for customers who also sign up for mobile services, will be good for a year, after which the cost will rise to € 22.99. Both prices include VAT. The 300-Mbps download speed matches Verizon's top offering (see "Verizon boosts top FiOS FTTH speed to 300 Mbps") and lags Comcast's by just 5 Mbps (see "Comcast counters Verizon with 305-Mbps broadband plans"). Of course, it has a ways to go before it matches the 1 Gbps rates offered by several carriers – at least for now. SFR says it will launch a 1-Gbps pilot program in Paris and is currently recruiting existing customers interested in participating.

### Smart Village FTTH network opened to ISPs

Smart Village, a Multichoice-owned company specializing in high-capacity fiber to the home (FTTH) networks, will soon be promoting an open access network to ISPs in the 56 residential estates where they operate. Open Access Network (OAN) refers to a telecommunication network that is open to allow suitable and authorized Independent Service Providers (ISPs) to deliver services to end users. The Waterfall Development in Gauteng is the first open access network operated by Smart Village, with other residential estates to follow soon.

### Skype rolls out video messaging service to all users

The VoIP service Skype has rolled out its video messaging service, which enables users to send recorded video messages to contacts that are not online, to nearly all users of the service. The new feature, found under the "Video Message" button, enables users of Skype to send recorded video messages of a maximum of three minutes, free of charge, to other Skype users who are not online. When the recipient next logs into the service they can simply retrieve their message, in a similar manner as one would a voicemail, but here with video. The service, launched earlier this year, was previously only available to users of Skype on Mac, Android and iOS and was in Beta format. However the video messaging service is now out of Beta and available

to nearly all users on devices and platforms including Windows 8, Windows desktop, Mac, iPhone, iPad, Android and BlackBerry. Users send a video message by selecting a recipient, who is currently offline, selecting "video message," tapping "record" to begin recording their message, and again to stop, then clicking the envelope button to send their video. Additionally users can replay their videos to ensure they are happy with them before sending them to the recipient.

## Sunrise joins Switzerland's 4G crowd with LTE launch in 26 towns

Sunrise has become the last of Switzerland's major mobile operators to rollout LTE. Its network, which went live on Wednesday in 26 towns and cities, should deliver maximum download speeds of 100Mbps, Sunrise said. Initially the network will cover around 22 percent of the company's customers, and will be extended gradually from there. Sunrise intends to provide 50 percent coverage by the end of October. LTE connectivity will be available to anyone with a 4G-compatible smartphone, the company said, whether they're prepaid or postpaid users. Those on Sunrise NOW tariffs will be able to use the LTE network without any monthly data limits until the end of this year. Customers of MVNOs that use Sunrise's network will also be able to get on its 4G from today.

## Tektronix launches LTE network optimization services for Asia Pacific

Tektronix Communications has launched its Professional Services Technology Consulting offering for Asia Pacific, designed to provide carriers with world-class optimization solutions for the rollout of LTE networks across the region. Asia-Pacific is set to become the largest LTE market in the world, with LTE rollouts now progressing faster than ever in the APAC region and due to surpass 120 million connections by 2015. With LTE, this balancing act is further compounded by the increase in traffic and signaling of data rich applications. And LTE's complex architecture presents its own unique technological challenges including circuit switch fall back (CSFB), success rate and setup time and inter-radio access technology issues for data services.

## AT&T 4G LTE expands In Logan

AT&T has expanded its 4G LTE network in Logan, bringing more customers the latest generation of wireless network technology. AT&T launched 4G LTE in Athens on March 20, and the expanded coverage is part of its ongoing rollout across the market. AT&T 4G LTE coverage now includes parts of Hocking County and Meigs County. The launch of new, even faster mobile Internet service in the Logan area will help residents and businesses, who are working hard to rebuild our local economy according to the Mayor of Logan.

## ArirangTV expands in Russia and Tanzania

Arirang is launching on Russia's largest IPTV operator, Rostelecom and two cable operators, MTS and ER-telecom, starting from July 2013. The Korean channel launched in Moscow in 2000 and is now expanding across the country. The broadcaster said that Korean pop-culture has not reached much [of Russia], but this will change now with the

new carriage deal in place. ArirangTV began subtitled in Russian on March, 2008 and acquired the official license for broadcasting in 2011. In 2013, ArirangTV has begun to service age ratings in every program to protect children, following the Russian regulation. Additionally, ArirangTV is starting DTT service in Tanzania, Africa in July, 2013. ArirangTV will be available on digital terrestrial 24/7, introducing various contents of Korea's tradition, cuisine, arts, and news. Broadcasted through local broadcasters, Tanzania is already familiar with Korean dramas such as Autumn in My Heart, Queen of Soudok, Prince of the Legend and etc.

## Platforms for mobile money to be interconnected

The Ghana Interbank Payment and Settlement System (GhIPSS) has given hints of moves to interconnect all mobile money payment platforms in the country. Currently the mobile money platforms in the country are run by the telecommunications companies such as MTN and Tigo. The interconnection will be done under what GhIPSS calls the 'mobile money interoperability system', its Chief Executive Officer, Archie Hesse announced at the National Payments Strategy Workshop here in Accra. According to Mr Hesse, there was a need for GhIPSS to offer a mobile money platform but it was beaten by the telecoms companies. He indicated that the initiative will soon be discussed with the various telecoms operators offering that service.

## Study to link SIM cards with fingerprints in KSA

Linking a SIM card's number with a customer's fingerprints could be the latest attempt at eliminating anonymous usage of SIM cards. Saudi Call Company and a French company intend to file an integrated study into this possible solution with the Communication and Information Technology Commission (CITC). The procedure would replace the current one that demands registering the ID number or the iqama (residence permit) number for expats. The study includes other possibilities, such as linking all parties concerned with the computers of communication providers, CITC, labor and passport offices. "Even though linking the SIM card number with that of the national ID or iqama greatly contributed to regulating the market, and eliminated the bulk of the black market for SIM cards, some dealers can still bypass these procedures," said Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, chairman of Saudi Call Company. Any person who buys a SIM card knowing that it is registered in the name of someone else will be regarded as a character impersonator and will be subjected to sanctions and penalties.

## EE launches 4G tractor hotspot for Glastonbury festival

EE has launched a unique mobile 4G hotspot for Glastonbury festival goers in the form of a modified tractor. The UK network provider has customized Worthy Farm's eco-friendly tractor to provide what it is calling the world's "slowest fastest" 4G hotspot at Glastonbury. Part of EE's partnership with the Glastonbury Festival, the bespoke tractor allows festival attendees to trial the superfast 4G network for free. Recognizable by its new aqua and yellow EE paintjob, EE will be announcing the 4G Tractor's whereabouts via the official @EE Twitter account. Anyone within a 10m radius of the tractor will be able to try out the 4G Wi-Fi connection, regardless of their current network provider.



## THE INTERNET FACELIFT NEW GENERIC TOP-LEVEL DOMAIN



**George V. Salama**  
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**SAMENA**  
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Does the Internet of today need a facelift? When I tried to find out an answer to this question, it came into mind the concept of “Soft Innovation” - which is the simple golden rule for any product sustainability and continuity. If I recall correctly, as learned in Marketing 101, Soft Innovation is significant changes in product design, form and appearance that do not alter the product’s functional in order to target a new customer segment. Since its naissance, the Internet went over different types of soft innovations; some are by necessity (i.e. adoption of IPv6) and others by accident (i.e social media). Today, the Internet is witnessing, as I name it, “Hard Innovation”, represented by the introduction of the “New generic Top-Level Domains” (New gTLDs). The reason I used the word “Hard” instead of “Soft” is that with the new gTLDs not only the appearance of the product (which is the Internet) will change, but also the overall consumer (Internet User) behavior and experience will transform widely. Currently, Internet users are using most of the time search engines to reach desired website. I can see that the Internet facelift (new gTLDs), will have a profound impact on the way people are interacting and doing business online, it will also completely alter organizations’ online strategies and business development plans.

The Internet Cooperation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which is coordinating the Internet unique identifiers (names and number) across the world- one global Internet, has identified the benefits and risks of operating new gTLD as follows:

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

- Entrepreneurship. Create your own business model and establish accessibility policies for your TLD. If your customers want tighter security, make your TLD a high-security zone.
- Increased control. You set the rules and the price for those registering your TLD.
- Ongoing revenue stream. Your customers could renew their domain names year after year.



*“Soft Innovation is significant changes in product design, form and appearance that do not alter the product’s functional in order to target a new customer segment”*

*“The Internet facelift (new gTLDs), will have a profound impact on the way people are interacting and doing business online”*

- Innovative marketing opportunity. Build better brand definition, brand awareness, brand loyalty and trust by having full control over your own TLD.
- Innovative business models. When new gTLDs combine with other emerging Internet technologies, such as IPv6, RFID chips, and cloud computing, new products and services are possible.
- Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). Increase market reach by making the Internet completely accessible to users whose local languages use non-Latin characters.
- Engage your community. Create a rallying point for supporters of your cause, community or culture to unite with a community-based TLD.
- Bring together your geographic area. Celebrate your local citizens, commerce, activities, and culture with a geographic TLD.
- Risks and Responsibilities:
- Investment. In addition to the US \$185,000 evaluation fee and ongoing registry operating costs, applicants must demonstrate sufficient financial depth to keep the registry fully operational for at least three years even if the business plan does not achieve its objectives.
- Loss of Investment. There is no guarantee you will get the string you applied for. If you do not pass the extensive evaluation process you could lose some or all of your initial investment. As with any new business, getting the operation started does not guarantee that revenues will profitably sustain it.
- Contractual restrictions. Running a TLD means you must comply with all the obligations of your registry agreement with ICANN. Even more restrictions exist when running a community-based TLD.
- Staffing. Running a registry requires employing highly skilled technical operators and/or negotiating a mutually beneficial agreement with a trustworthy technical partner.
- Competition. Your applied-for TLD could compete with a same or similar string(s), and indirectly with all TLDs, both generic and country code. If approved, your new TLD could encounter competition from unexpected sectors.
- Uncharted territory. You will be pioneering on the cutting edge of technological innovation in a relatively new sector. You may have to find your way without other applicable business models for guidance.

As of June 24th 2013, ICANN has received a total of 1930 applications for new gTLDs (1849 active – 81 withdrawn). For the SAMENA region, stakeholders still do not yet fully absorb the potential value behind the new gTLD program in creating innovative business opportunities and new types of revenue streams. The total number of applications received from both Africa and Asia/Pacific is 320 applications, which is almost 50% less than the applications submitted from Europe (675 applications) and around 70% less than North America (911 applications). In addition, having a closer focus into the applications received from the Arab countries, one can infer that protection of trademarks and geographical/territory names is the common main motivation behind most of these submissions. For the SAMENA Region, taking into consideration the current policy challenges and sustainability pressure caused by OTT, I believe that relevant stakeholders, especially Telco’s, need to revisit their Internet business development strategies. There is no limit for what the Internet can offer; and with the Internet facelift, the opportunity is not yet missed.



Solutions

## GET IN SHAPE IN 2013: KEY OPERATIVE PRIORITIES FOR YOUR ORGANISATION



**Erik Almqvist**  
Partner Global Head of  
Operational Consulting

**Analysys Mason - UAE**

It has been said that all good things come in threes. We here present three key operative steps you can take to get in better shape and leave 2013 stronger than you entered it.

### Drive down your network costs

Network sharing and the use of towercos have become proven solutions around the world for operators facing cost pressures created by falling tariffs and slower rates of customer growth. Many operators are already reaping significant benefits in terms of lower operating costs, improved network availability and faster roll-out of new coverage. Towercos have emerged as a strong and capable new industry sector.

With our mix of commercial and technical skills, we have helped clients in Europe, the Middle East and Africa to negotiate passive and active network-sharing deals and to sell network assets. Some aspects of these projects are now highly familiar, and we have well-honed tools to accurately determine our clients' current costs and estimate their future shared costs, ensure they have sufficient influence over the prioritisation of network roll-out/expansion, value assets, and calculate true 'up payments'. The impact of network sharing on competitive dynamics is, however, highly country-specific and needs to be carefully considered in every case – for example, deciding whether to form a consortium with two or three operators, or whether to select a towerco that is known to be in negotiation with another operator.

Once 'the deal' is done, the real work starts with transferring responsibility and people to a new company (operator JV or towerco) and then establishing new business processes to ensure that network operations and network build continue seamlessly.

*“Network sharing and the use of towercos have become proven solutions around the world for operators facing cost pressures created by falling tariffs and slower rates of customer growth”*

*“Customer experience gives operators an opportunity to alter the competitive dynamics in a market”*

## Turn customer excellence into a competitive weapon

Customer experience gives operators an opportunity to alter the competitive dynamics in a market. As telecoms services increasingly become commodities, customer experience becomes one of the few remaining avenues for differentiation. Service industries have long realized this, and many operators lag significantly behind cross-industry leaders such as Apple, Amazon, Harley-Davidson and Emirates.

You can improve your game with three simple steps. First, fix the basics by identifying the biggest reasons for churn then attacking these reasons head-on. Next, raise the consistency of your service delivery, across all touch-points and channels. And finally, add positive differentiation. These three simple steps can take an operator all the way to industry leadership. To reach cross-industry global leadership, more is needed. Contact us and we will coach you to the top.

## Transform your organisation

Is your organisation still stuck in silos? Are internal processes painfully slow, and have you ever wondered if all these activities really add value? Then transformation may be your answer. In the past, transformation programmes have too often been carried out as narrow cost-cutting or process-focused exercises, giving transformation itself a bad name. In our view transformation exercises should be holistic or not performed at all: they should as a minimum take into account people, processes, products and systems. Proper attention should be given to diagnosing where the root causes of problems can be found, and solutions should be sought ‘upstream’ where they typically are least costly to fix.





## SAMENA COUNCIL RELEASES WHITE PAPER ON THE POTENTIAL OF SDL TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE MOBILE BROADBAND ACCESS

The SAMENA Council released a white paper to give operators, broadcasters and regulators across the region, insights into a technology solution called SDL (Supplemental Downlink) which could increase the capacity and QoS (Quality of Service) of mobile broadband networks using HSPA+ and LTE-advanced standards. With SDL being endorsed by operators and regulatory bodies across the globe, Samena Council is taking the lead in having a discussion around the potential of SDL technology with stakeholders across the region through this white paper to present relevant technology alternatives to enhance the delivery of mobile broadband services.

According to the white paper, the MENA region could benefit from the technology through enhanced user experience (faster download speeds, larger capacity and richer new content) and low cost rollout of rural services by using the 1.4 GHz spectrum through SDL. The technology could also be used to drive more innovation in specific sectors such as education through professional tele-education, webcasts etc., improve government services through online access to public services and enhance healthcare services through applications such as online health record, emergency room consultation to name a few.

Speaking on the release of the white paper, SAMENA Policy Board Chairman - Dr. Mustafa AYKUT (Turk Telekom) said: 'As mobile data traffic continues to grow exponentially, greater bandwidth is required now more than ever. Given that two-thirds of the world's mobile data traffic will be video by 2017, new and innovative solutions are needed to increase mobile broadband capacity and enhance quality of service which has

the potential to benefit the MENA region by US\$26 billion over the next 10 years. In this respect, SDL technology is not only a promising solution but a technological breakthrough that offers smoother user experience through faster download speeds, larger capacity and richer new content. With SDL, operators can now manage and optimize mobile communication networks of the future.'

Mobile Supplemental Downlink (Mobile SDL) is a feature within a mobile broadband system, which by means of base station transmitters in the network, is able to provide a supplemental downlink capacity to efficiently carry comprehensive text, voice, images, sound and video content to mobile devices.

Mobile broadband traffic and especially downlink traffic in the MENA region are forecasted to grow rapidly over the next 10 years and it is possible that countries in the MENA region may face a spectrum shortfall unless operators undertake costly investment in network infrastructure to support this traffic growth. The 1452-1492 MHz spectrum frequency range, largely unused in much of the MENA region and in Europe, presents a real option to address this shortfall of downlink capacity. In some countries of the MEA region, the mobile data traffic has jumped over 450% year-on-year between 2011 and 2012. The exponential traffic growth is estimated to continue to be strong in many countries in this region due to the increasing consumption of multimedia services.



## SAMENA COUNCIL PARTICIPATED IN ARAB MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS ADVISORY GROUP'S (AMAG) 4TH MEETING FOR THE FIRST ROUND OF ARAB INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM(AIGF)

SAMENA Telecommunications Council participated in Arab Multi-stakeholders Advisory Group's (AMAG) 4th meeting for the first round of the Arab IGF, from 10th-12th June – Casablanca, under the patronage of the Moroccan Ministry of Industry, Trade and New Technologies. The main objective of the Meeting was to discuss and set the program of the Second Annual Meeting of the Arab IGF, Algeria 2013, based on areas of priority and relevance to the region. The meeting was attended by the member states including Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, UAE, Jordan, Kuwait, Sudan, and Iraq. Other participants included the League of Arab States, UN ESCWA, ICANN, RIPE NCC, and AfriNIC among others.

### **Participants to the Fourth Meeting of AMAG discussed the following topics:**

1. Briefing by AIGF-2013 host on logistics preparations
2. Structure of AIGF-2013 program including themes, workshops and fellowships
3. Findings and output of the AMAG subcommittees

George Salama – Senior Manager, Public Policy - SAMENA Council and member of the Arab Multi stakeholders

Advisory Group (AMAG) states that: “. 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. SAMENA 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 collaborates with leading non-profit international organizations, including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the European Telecom Network Operators' Association (ETNO), GSM Association (GSMA) among others.

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.



## SAMENA COUNCIL TO ISSUE PAPER ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMAIN NAMES INDUSTRY FOR THE TELECOMS IN COLLABORATION WITH ICANN AND ICTQATAR

SAMENA Telecommunications Council is conducting a study to highlight the importance domain names for the regional telecom operators and regulatory bodies amid the announcement of new gTLDs to be announced by ICANN this year.

SAMENA region, especially the Middle East has recently experienced a huge economic boom. Multinational as well as local organizations are continuously searching for the new business and investment prospects in the region, and probing to look after their intellectual property rights. Consequently, understanding and acknowledgment of the significance of intellectual property has grown throughout the region and governments have taken initiatives to alter the legal framework to shape it in a better way for the protection of intellectual property rights.

SAMENA Council in its survey "assessment of the domain name industry in the SAMENA region" conducted as part of its study "received very promising feedback from industry stakeholders on the subject. According to the survey, more than 90 percent of the participant agreed that a considerable opportunity exists in the region in terms of domain names industry as a new revenue stream. The participants of the survey also agreed that the current domain name policy and implementation is quite comprehensive. This is mainly as a result of ICANN's (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) growing support and interest in the regional markets with new gTLDs being issued. The participants of the survey at the same time agreed that educating the end users/owners of the domain names before they purchase the domain is important to be able to overcome the challenges associated with the domain names for the end users.

They also emphasized that the country code top-level domain (ccTLD) be open to anyone on a first-come first-served basis instead of any restrictions. The survey also received a positive input in terms of the number of domains that can be registered by an individual or an organization. More than 85 percent of the respondents were of the view that organizations/individuals be able to register as many domain names as they would like provided all laws and regulations are being followed.

SAMENA Council is highly supportive of the idea that the regional regulatory bodies, telecom operators, and ISPs should collaborate and work together with the Council and ICANN to highlight the significance of domain name industry. Qatar's telecom regulatory body, ictQatar has already initiated the process by participating in SAMENA Council's study on the importance of domain name industry.

The rise of the new gTLDs phenomenon over the coming years will result in major changes to the Internet, both in the SAMENA region and beyond. ICANN is in the process of evaluating the applications received on account of gTLDs this year. When the emergence of new gTLDs later in 2013, we will certainly see new business models from companies keen to connect with consumers in new ways. The new gTLDs will result in memorable domain names, attractive brand identity, and innovative marketing opportunity among a number of other benefits.



ICANN's decision to allow brands and organizations to apply for and manage their own unique top-level domains (gTLDs) will result in a major change in the domain industry. The most notable change resulting from this decision is that, alongside familiar TLDs such as .COM, .NET, .ORG etc hundreds of new TLDs will be introduced that will change the way people search and browse the Internet. Telecom operators have been aware of this new opportunity for some time hence regional operators have started applying for the "dot Brand" domain names. Additionally, last year ICANN announced 2000+ domain name gTLD applications including gTLDs, brands, and geographic regions and several community oriented specialist interest TLDs.

There have been examples of regional markets playing active role in regional domain name industry. The beginning of new gTLDs in the near future will result in major changes to the Internet with the internet service providers and telecom operators entering the domain name industry. With the advent of the new gTLDs this year, telecom operators in the SAMENA region will come up with new strategies highlighting the potential that exist in the domain name industry.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Arab IGF Algeria 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013 "Partners For Development"

In light of the continuous activities of the SAMENA Telecom Council in the Internet Governance fora on both regional and international level, we would like to announce that the 2nd AIGF will be hosted in Algeria under the patronage of Algerian Ministry of Post, Information Technologies & Communication. "Partners for Development" is set by the AMAG to be the main theme for the coming AIGF. In addition, the below 4 topics were set as sub-themes:

- Access: Infrastructure & Critical Internet Resources
- Security & Privacy: Towards an Environment of Trust and Safety
- Openness & Content: Rights and Accountability
- Internet & Youth: Innovation Culture and Development Opportunities

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.

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George Salama – Senior Manager, Public Policy - SAMENA Council and member of the Arab Multi stakeholders Advisory Group (AMAG) states that: ". 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. SAMENA 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".





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