Volume 05 _ Issue 10 _ October 2014

SAMENA TRENDS

EXCLUSIVELY FOR SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

A SAMENA Telecommunications Council Newsletter

Articles

Shaping the Competition and Building Competitive Edge

SAMENA TRENDS

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

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

Editor-in-Chief
Bocar A. BA

Contributing Editors
Zakir Syed
Awais Amjad
Javaid Akhtar Malik

Contributing Member
Coleago Consulting Ltd
Huawei
Strategy&
SLA Mobile

Publisher
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

Subscriptions
subscriptions@samenacouncil.org

Advertising
ads@samenacouncil.org

Legal Issues or Concerns
legal@samenacouncil.org

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

CONTENTS

VOLUME _ 05 _ISSUE _ 10 _OCT _2014

Shaping the Competition and Building Competitive Edge

The demand for telecom services has improved robustly during the last 8 years, predominantly in the extents of mobile telephony, international calls, and business data services. This global mandate is very much prompted by the globalization of business operations across all trades, and the linked with it labor, capital and resource mobility. The rising demand for innovative technology services comes along with changes in life style and living standards of consumers.

The crucial expansion and growth in the ICT markets is also connected with the rapid pace of new technology implementation, which encompasses the market prospects by launching new services, and evolving new competences to vital players, as well as lowering their costs. Other aspects distressing the competition and progress in the market are the world-wide de-regulation and privatization.

Investments in R&D in the market cause convergence of platforms and technologies that produce multiple and contiguous markets. The convergence also has narrowed the gap between discrete markets such as computing, communication, and media content. The core of the telecom industry is in the communication and information transmission, and this is strength for the whole global information sector. The structure of the telecom market is progressing adjacent to the line of four elements: hardware, communication networks, network management systems, and service content.

Various telecom companies have already started to transfer aggressively into new extents in pursuit of lucrative growth, and to repel the intimidation of players in head-to-head value chains. Several companies are becoming accustomed to their core areas of businesses to increase medium-term advantages; obtaining retailers, purchasing media companies, IT services and content providers, they are moving into adjacent markets, with a vision, in the direction of escalating into markets that could, with the passage of time, become parts of their core areas of businesses. Consequently, operators are planning to build an extensive portfolio for business expansion potential prospects. This infers a greater amount of danger as well as few of these opportunities may not materialize, but the fruitful ones could possibly push the operators in the long term IT, communications and media value chain.

Top management should put their efforts to align their corporate strategy and M&A plans. I believe this will be more significant than ever now, since various operators today are making substantial shifts on their strategic roadmaps and it is going to be vital that their M&A objectives are aligned to empower the fresh overall strategic plan. This means that it is essential for telcos to have noteworthy debates and discussions by exploiting the available discussion platforms as SAMENA Council, and work closely together during the next few years on their corporate strategy and M&A objectives.

Yours truly,

Bocar A. BA
Chief Executive Officer
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

Kyle Whitehill
CEO
Vodafone Qatar

vodafone

Kyle Whitehill was the Chief Executive Officer for Vodafone Ghana from June 2010 to June 2013.

Under his leadership, Vodafone Ghana became the second largest telecom operator in Ghana and grew the subscriber base from 2 million to over 5 million.

Before joining Vodafone Qatar, Kyle Whitehill was the Chief Executive Officer for Vodafone Ghana from June 2010 to June 2013. Under his leadership, Vodafone Ghana became the second largest telecom operator in Ghana and grew the subscriber base from 2 million to over 5 million.

Prior to that, Kyle joined Vodafone UK in 2001 as head of the Enterprise business. In February 2008 he moved to Vodafone India as Chief Operating Officer. During his tenure as Chief Operating Officer, the subscriber base of Vodafone India's business grew from 47 million to over 100 million. His early career was spent in fast moving consumer goods with L'Oreal and Jeyes before he entered general management with the Soft Drinks division of PepsiCo.

Kyle was educated in Scotland and has a degree in marketing and economics. Kyle is a keen golfer and supporter of Glasgow Rangers football club and is married with 3 teenage sons. Kyle and his family are looking forward to exploring and experiencing all that Qatar has to offer.

Q. You have now been leading Vodafone Qatar for a little over a year and you've had a very strong FY 2013-2014. What were the major achievements and what are the plans for the future?

A. **Financial Performance:**

- It has been a fantastic year for us at Vodafone Qatar and we have had major achievements in record. On a financial front, we continued to deliver solid growth in our fifth full year of operations..
- FY 2013-2014 also witnessed a Distributable Profit of QR 157 million, and as such, we were able to reward our 41,000 shareholders with dividends for the first time.
- We have recently announced our half year financial results with an increase of 16% in our customer base compared to September 2013 to reach 1,372,000 mobile customers and a 24% growth over the same period last year with total revenue reaching QR 1,144 Million.

Major Consumer Propositions: Red & Falla:

- In addition to this financial milestone, we have made a number of announcements that helped to cement our status as a true global leader with very local roots.

- On a commercial level, we have launched Vodafone Red Postpaid Plan which has completely revolutionized Postpaid propositions for consumers thanks to an unmatched portfolio of services such as Valet parking, VIP concierge, access to VIP airport lounges, an exclusive go-to-customer Red Care Team, and family deals together with great telecom benefits such as hours of free international calling, roaming minutes and mobile internet.
- We then launched Vodafone Falla Postpaid and Prepaid Plans; Qatar's first ever telecom proposition appealing to the youth with great mobile deals, exciting activities and direct youth engagement.
- Both products have proven to be very successful.

Qatar's Newest 4G Network, Vodafone 4G:

- Then in June 2014, we announced Vodafone 4G, Qatar's newest 4G network and it was a completely new experience for all those who were eagerly awaiting its advent. We brought 4G to life as never before with great content and in-store propositions. We know data is important for our Qatari customers, we rolled 4G where they exist and regularly hangout – a new important milestone in our strategy to acquire more high value customers and high data users. At the same time we have been investing heavily in our 3G network with upgrades to cater for all our 3G customers.
- We have also recently been the first to introduce 4G roaming in KSA, Netherlands, Romania and Spain.

Enterprise Firsts:

- We have identified big growth opportunities in the enterprise segment and are rapidly growing in this market. The Qatar enterprise market is worth 1.8 Billion Qatari Riyals and we have a clear strategy to grow in this market drawing on our local knowledge and global track record.
- This year; we launched a comprehensive range of enterprise grade fixed products including Corporate Voice, Internet and Data Network solutions. We brought two firsts to the business market in Qatar with a locally supported Secure Device Management solution and an Audio Conferencing solution with a free local dial-in number which can significantly reduce the telecoms costs for local businesses.
- In summary, we have the infrastructure, business solutions and an aggressive product roadmap coupled with outstanding client management that will transform the way many businesses in Qatar work.

Competition in Fixed:

- As you know, it has recently been announced that Vodafone Qatar has entered into a non-binding Heads of Agreement with Information Communication Technology Holdings Q.S.C. ("ICTH") with a view to acquiring the entire issued share capital of Qatar National Broadband Network Company.
- The combination of Vodafone Qatar and Qnbn will enable us at Vodafone Qatar to deliver the benefits of choice to customers in the fixed line market in Qatar.

Customer Service:

- Our obsession with customer service has been recognised with over 35 awards this year. We continue to be uniquely innovative in using technology to engage our customers with customer care via their mobile platforms, and information about the latest phones, apps, mobile and innovative technology. We expanded our Self-service channels and with the addition of MyVodafone *100# and IVR self-service channels, we have effectively doubled our capacity to service customers, now efficiently managing 63% of all care inquiries through self-service channels. In addition to this, our retail footprint has been expanded to ensure we can service customers wherever they are.

Key Priorities for the Coming Year

- Fixed will definitely be at the top of our priorities and delivering world-class services to both our consumer and enterprise customers on this front.
- We will aggressively compete in enterprise to deliver the most innovative and tailored

solutions to our business customers whilst ensuring that their costs are well managed.

- Our consumer customers will continue to see amazing offers and propositions from Vodafone bringing what's best from Vodafone globally to Qatar.

Q. What steps have you taken to ensure greater uptake of data services?

A. - In Qatar, we already have one of the world's highest levels of internet penetration and with 56% of the population engaged in social media compared to a global average of 27%. Social media is increasingly

- In addition to Vodafone 4G, we continue to offer great data promotions and plans for everyone in Qatar; the latest data offers were announced together with our launch of the iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus in Qatar for both our Postpaid and Prepaid customers. That complements our superb data packs for our Vodafone Red Postpaid plans.

This will be supported by unmatched customer service which is at the heart of what we do.

- Additionally, our relentless pursuit of network excellence continues, as we plan further capacity and coverage enhancements empowering everybody to be confidently connected.

- Smart Cities will remain a priority and we are committed to playing a key role in Qatar's society and to bring the world's most advanced technologies to help realize the 2030 Qatar National Vision.

- Last but not least, we will continue with our focus on innovation and digitization in order to support the growing ICT plans and aims of Qatar.

used as a key source of breaking news, second only to television. This is driven by the fact we have a young, technologically savvy population, combined with some of the most advanced technology in the industry as a result of the work of the operators and the progressive action of the Ministry of Information & Communications Technology's Digital Inclusion Strategy and the government's commitment to its National Vision 2030, which is driving the country's transition from an oil & liquid natural gas producer to a Knowledge-based economy.

- So, we realise that there's an explosive demand for data in the Qatari market especially every person in this market owns more than one smart device so there's quite a lot of mixed usage particularly on data.

- We recognized this and launched our 4G network in June, giving our customers a better, faster and more content-rich experience.

Q. How has the telecom landscape evolved over the past 5 years? What developments can be expected in the 4G space in 2015?

A. - All players have seen the surge in data usage. Qatar and the GCC are no exception. In terms of content, we're seeing the increased importance of video – YouTube, for instance is no longer just for entertainment. We already know that users in the MENA region watch more YouTube videos than anywhere else in the world, but it's important to note that people are increasingly downloading and watching these videos on their mobile phones.

Q. What key trends or challenges are likely to be witnessed in the telecom space in near future?

A. - We see data usage increasing exponentially in the MEA region – to the tune of 70% compound annual growth by 2018. In addition to that, we see the following indicators as both trends and challenges to operators in the future:

- Video streaming: Total subscription video streaming to grow 13x by 2018, accounting for 50+% of all data use
- Mobile VoIP: Mobile VoIP Minutes will grow from 343M in 2010 to 30B in 2015
- New OTT Services: Netflix, Spotify, Apple TV, Skype, Whatsapp, Viber, Facebook
- Diversity: 45% of those >50 yr use mobile internet & children get their smartphone at age 14
- Quality: Customers increasingly look at quality, coverage of network and speed of transport when selecting an operator
- Mobile price disruption: From traditional and non-traditional competitors
- Inflation of network costs: Competition on fixed broadband and fast growing volume of data require continued significant infrastructure investments in both fixed and mobile
- Innovation: Need to define the right portfolio of products & services to exploit video, software, security, M2M and other opportunities

Q. What has been the customers' response and behavior to your 3G/4G services in terms of utilization and QoS?

A. - Usage trends of customers have changed over the last 10 years and Vodafone is witnessing this across their networks worldwide. Data services, in particular video services like streaming (YouTube) and video on demand services like OSN becoming more and more important to customers worldwide. The Middle East and especially Qatar have shown a very strong adaption of these types of services and Vodafone Qatar has built their network specifically with data services in mind.

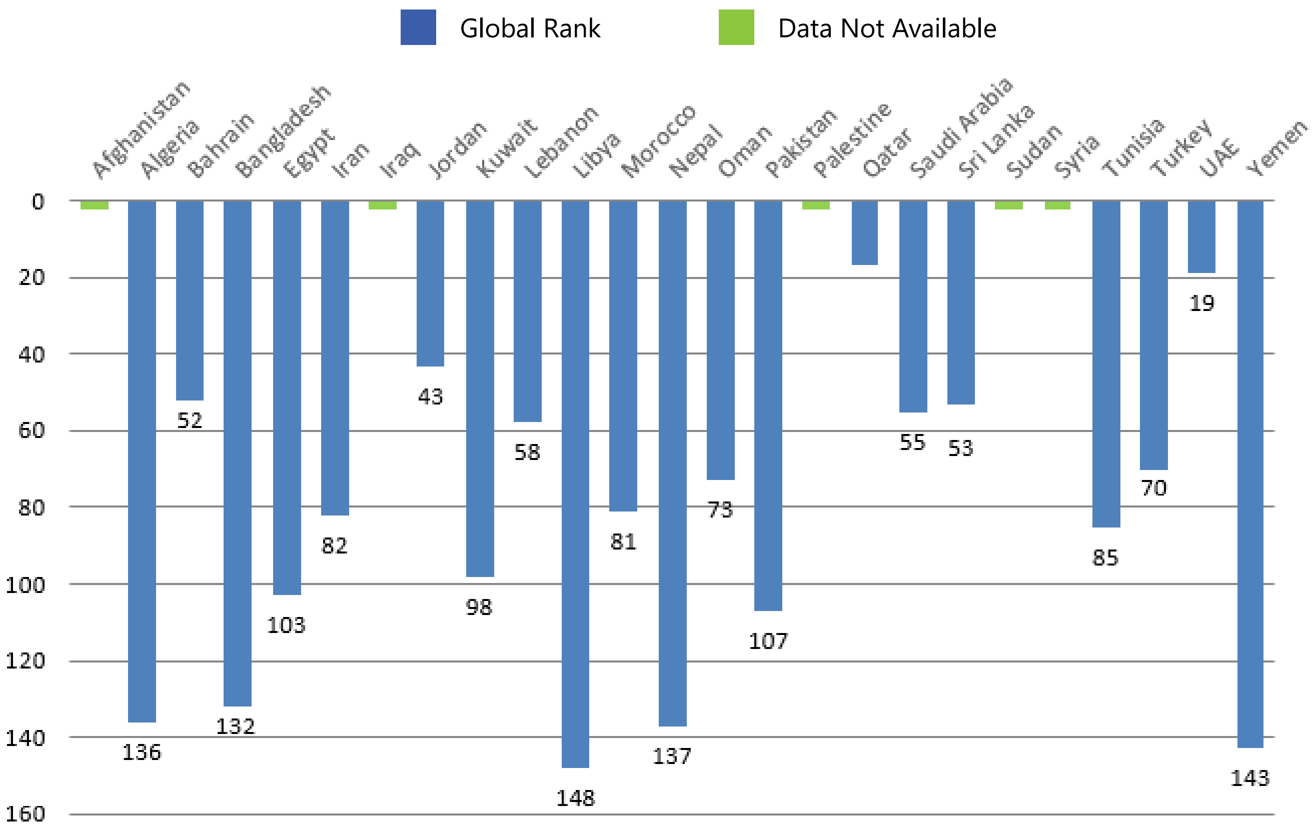
- The latest addition is Vodafone's launch of the 4G network which is providing another milestone for Vodafone in terms of network speeds and capacity. Vodafone customers are in a great position to enjoy video on demand powered by OSN which gives customers access to the extensive GO library of hundreds of movies and TV series in both English and Arabic. And now we have also introduced 4G roaming in a number of key destinations around the world.
- Demand for Data is increasing and we are making sure that we have the full range of devices to meet this demand
- Vodafone already offers and will continue to offer the widest range of 4G devices in Qatar and the newest 4G devices across all device brands will be added to Vodafone's portfolio.
- We are very confident about our network which we are relentlessly working to enhance with increased investments. More so, Vodafone Qatar is at the heart of a massive global network that no other telecom operator has access to. This scale lets us deliver a brilliant service to people either when they call internationally or when they travel to other parts of the world.

Q. Various mobile phone operators have been striving to lead the regional market. How your company differs from its competitors?

A. - I believe what's important here is not what the other operators are achieving but what we, as a Qatari company which is at the heart of the largest mobile telecommunications networks in the world, are doing differently.

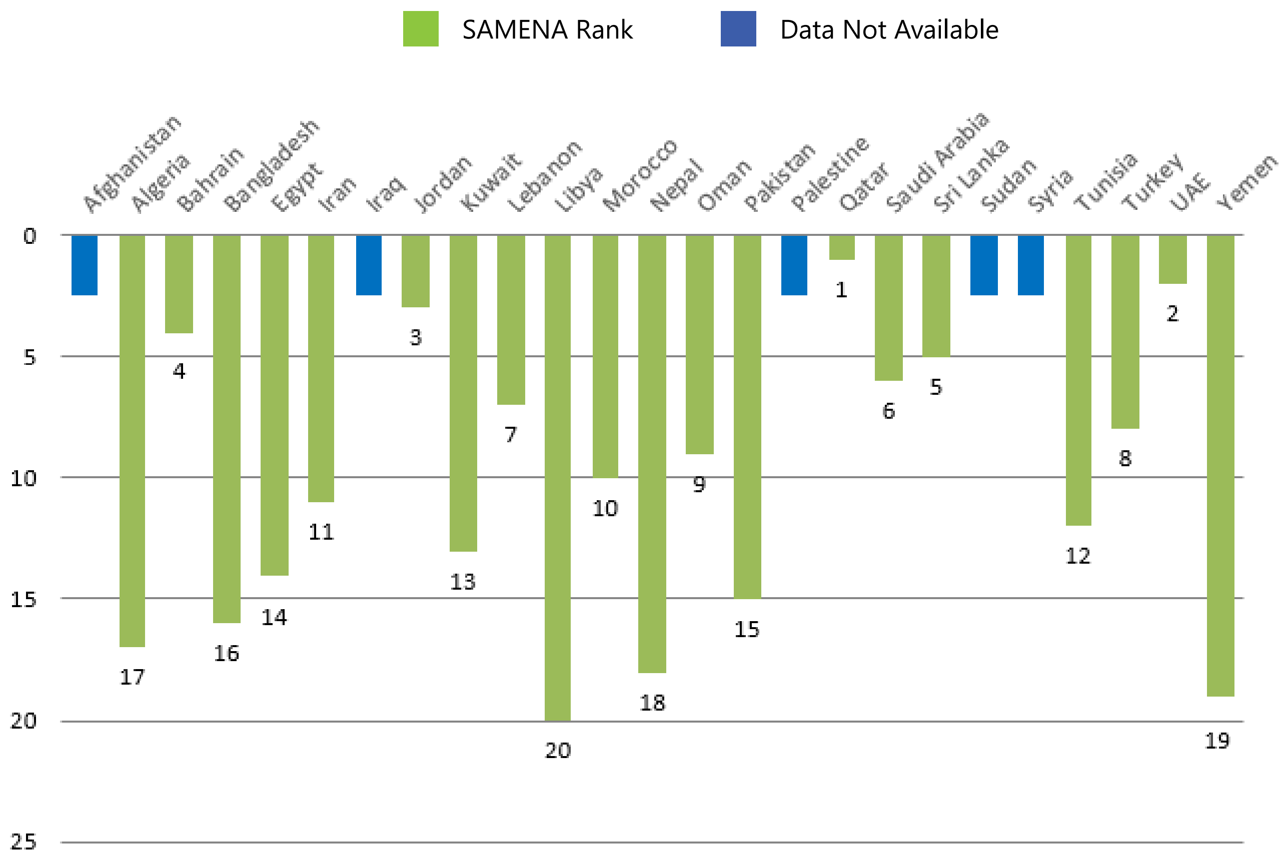
- We have been able to change the telecom landscape in Qatar; offering choice and innovation, where we are clearly differentiated.
- Qatar has presented us with a fantastic opportunity to introduce one of the world's biggest brands to this market. What we did, fundamentally, is turn one of the most valuable telecom brands into an entirely Qatari company and we are the only international company in the country which has been localised to that extent. This is something that we're very proud of. We have been able to bring world class services to a frontier market that's developing at a much quicker rate than any other country in the world.
- In its 5 years of operations, Vodafone Qatar has brought much needed competition to the local market that has resulted in improved services and a much better experience for customers. And there has truly never been a better time to be at Vodafone as there is today and we are extremely confident of the significant role we are playing to help enable Qatar's future digital agenda with a world-class networks infrastructure and an unmatched innovation roadmap.
- We currently enjoy 32% market share with 41,000 Qatari shareholders and have a very strong plan to grow the company even further especially with our strong focus on Fixed. Already more than 1,300,000 customers in only 5 years of operations are actively using our networks every day which means more than 57% of the population is Vodafone Qatar customers. This, by itself, is a tremendous achievement for any telecom operator around the world and proves how seriously committed we are to bring more than just basic telecommunications services to our Qatari community.

Local Availability of Specialized Research and Training Services (Global Rank of SAMENA Countries)



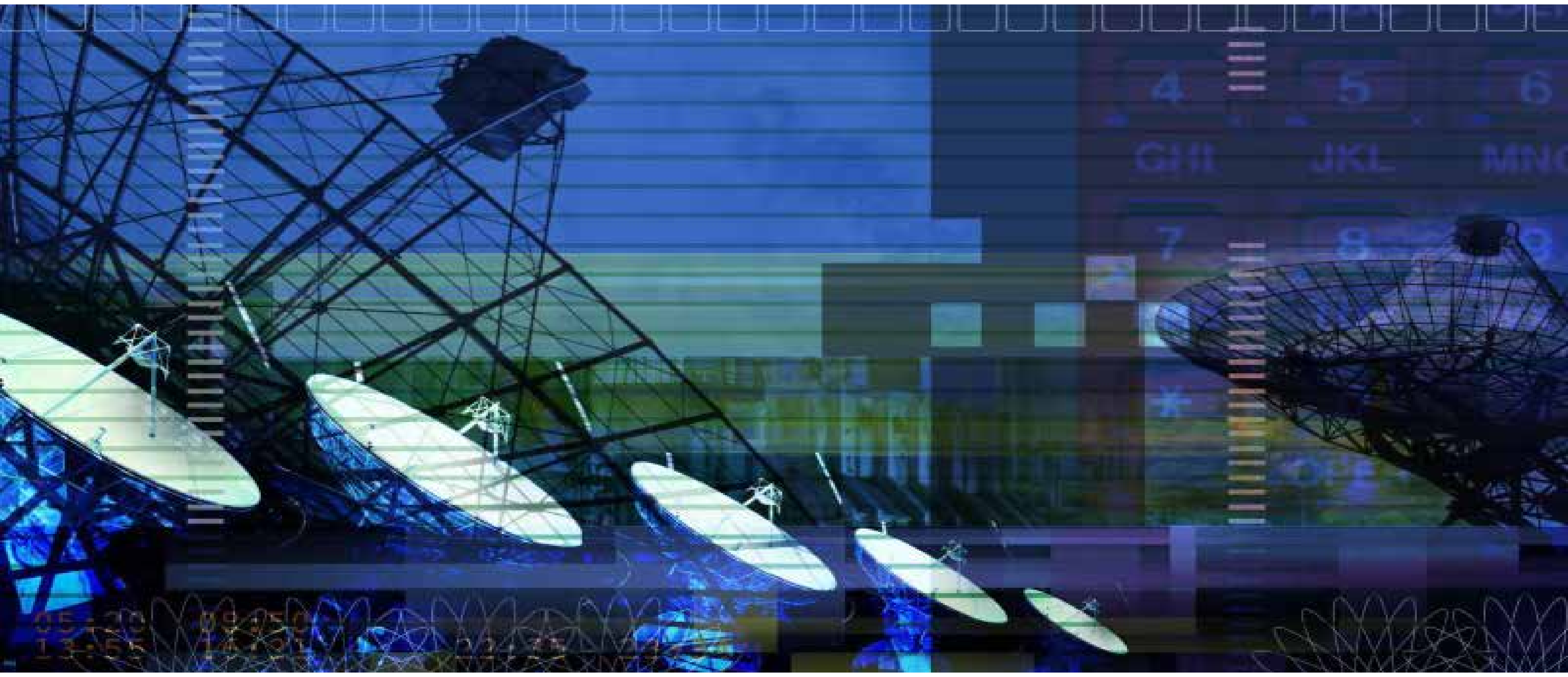
Total Countries: 148
Rank 1: Iceland
Data Source: World Economic Forum - Global Competitiveness Report 2013
Image Source: SAMENA Telecommunications Council

Local Availability of Specialized Research and Training Services (Regional Rank of SAMENA Countries)



Research Note: Ranking done by SAMENA Council's team based on data from The World Economic Forum. Within the SAMENA region, the Qatar appears to be on top in terms of "Capacity for Innovation" which means that in a given country, to what extent do companies have the capacity to innovate. The ranking is based on scores i.e. 1 = not at all; 7 = to a great extent. Within the SAMENA region, the top 3 countries where companies have the best capacity for innovation are from the Middle East. Among the top 5 positions, Sri Lanka is the only one from South Asia which is at number 4 within the region with companies having considerable capacity for innovation. It is interesting to note that there is not country from North Africa in the list to top10.

Total Countries: 25
Rank 1: Qatar
Data Source: World Economic Forum - Global Competitiveness Report 2013
Image Source: SAMENA Telecommunications Council



MEMBERS NEWS

MEMBERS UPDATES

Etisalat teams up with Microsoft to offer UAE customers 'Xbox One' in white exclusively

Gaming is set to get better as Etisalat announces its exclusive offer on the new Xbox One in white, bundled with special edition Sunset Overdrive game access and Xbox Live subscription for a year.

The telco giant has teamed up with Microsoft to bring to its eLife customers the much-awaited device available for AED79 on flexible 24 monthly instalments. Alternatively, customers can purchase it up front for AED1899. The offer from Etisalat includes a white console and controller, a year's subscription of Xbox Live and full Sunset Overdrive game download. Customers can get their hands on the new Xbox One bundle across Etisalat stores in the country. Xbox One is a new generation of games and entertainment, where games push the boundaries of realism. Boasting the deepest and most varied launch lineup in Xbox history, the new games and exclusive titles look and feel like nothing else, tapping the incredible power of new hardware and the cloud, as well as advanced software tools and exclusive features that will bring an entirely new world of gaming to life.

Ooredoo recognized for CSR at Al Mar'a Excellence Awards

Ooredoo has announced the launch of a Ooredoo was given special recognition for their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions at the Al Mar'a Excellence Awards, held recently at the Intercontinental Hotel, Muscat. The award was presented acknowledgement of the company's flagship social initiative, the Goodwill Journey, which has benefited over 10,000 people over the last 10 years.

Receiving the award on behalf of Ooredoo, Manal Al Kiyumi, Department Head of CSR at Ooredoo, commented "This is a proud moment for us and a tribute to our family members' commitment and passion towards sustainable social investment. From the beginning, we realized our responsibility to one another and the community as a whole and have worked hand in hand with various public and private organizations to positively impact society in everything we do, whether through our products and services, women's initiatives or social and educational programmes. As a team, we have never been stronger, and we will continue to exceed our level of excellence in the future."

The annual award winning Goodwill Journey and other recycling initiatives will continue under the Ooredoo brand, bringing inspiration and empowerment, and also spreading environmental awareness, across Oman.

Mobily launches eLife One, the first smart device that combines FTTH fiber network services and digital interactive TV IPTV

Mobily announced the launch of FTTH (eLife One) device with unprecedented features, in a unique step aiming to recast the high precision content services via FTTH. (eLife One) device was specially manufactured for Mobily as the first in the Middle East.

The new (eLife One) device is considered the first of its kind that combines providing high speed internet services through FTTH network and the digital interactive TV services IPTV. Mobily has cooperated with the most powerful and specialized company in this field to innovate this distinguished device. Mobily offers (eLife One) device with free delivery and installation to the new subscribers in addition to 50% discount on the Internet subscription fees within the package and for a period of three consecutive months.

The device works with the Android latest operating system, supported by a remote control provided with RF waves technology that facilitates control without directing it to the device; (eLife One) is supported also with Arabic and English keyboard and mouse that enabling user to write and browse the internet with ease across the TV screen.

Vodafone Qatar announced unlimited data plan at the half price for life

Vodafone Qatar is introducing its new Data Plans with increased data allowances and special promotional offers which include Unlimited data and discounts for life. The new Data Plans range from Vodafone Data Plan 50 with 1 GB data bundled to Data Plan 400 with an Unlimited data bundle. Additionally, existing and new postpaid customers will get 50 per cent off for life on Data Plans. Customers, who are not on a Vodafone Postpaid plan, will get 30 per cent off for life on all Data Plans except Data Plan 50. The promotion offers customers a life-time discount promise if they subscribe to a Vodafone Data Plan up to 31st December 2014.

Existing Postpaid customers and those who take it along with a new Postpaid line get 50 per cent discount for life in the new Data Plans promotion, which include the: Data Plan 50 offering 1 GB of data at QR 25/ month instead of QR 50; Data Plan 70 offering 2.5 GB of data at QR 35/ month instead of QR 70; Data Plan 100 offering 7 GB of data at QR 50/ month instead of QR 100; Data Plan 200 offering 15 GB of data at QR 100/ month instead of QR 200; Data Plan 300 offering 25 GB of data at QR 150/ month instead of QR 300; and Data Plan 400 offering unlimited data at QR 200/ month instead of QR 400. Customers can use these data plans to power their tablets, smart-phones, USB hotspots and other smart devices with high speed internet including 4G network.

du emphasises the importance of online safety with new Be Safe awareness initiative

With increasing number of measures being taken to tackle the menace of cyber-attacks, it is a positive indication to find that the UAE appears at #45 in the global top 50 ranking of countries that have witnessed the highest volume of 'originating DDoS traffic' in its latest study, "The Continued Rise of DDoS Attacks*," conducted by Symantec. However, cyber-attacks continue to pose an increasing threat to individuals and businesses.

With the objective of creating more awareness about online security, du has launched a new awareness initiative under the umbrella of its Be Safe campaign. The initiative will be launched on du's website and through its social media channels, www.facebook.com/du, and @dutweets on Twitter and Instagram, targeting children, parents, educational institutions and corporations to teach them various topics related to internet safety.

There will be 12 topics in total, covering three different categories. du.ae/besafe will be updated every month with details on each new topic, including tips and an article in both Arabic and English.

STC delivers VW's to Sawa Golf GTI campaign winners

Saudi Telecom Company (STC) delivered the first installment of Volkswagen Golf GTI's to the winners of the "With Sawa. You Closer to Golf GTI" campaign. Coinciding with the launch of new Sawa Bundle offers on August 24, the campaign gave customers the opportunity to win one of 30 Volkswagen Golf GTI's.

The campaign was met with enthusiastic participation because the Sawa bundles are effectively designed to meet a wide variety customer needs. Packages range from 10SAR to 199SAR in durations of 24 hours to 30 days. Sawa bundles have been further enhanced with an unlimited 30-day package for BlackBerry Messenger (BBM10) that includes 1,000 MB of Internet data, 300 network minutes, and 300 network messages for only 99SAR.

To subscribe to the new Sawa Bundles, visit STC Online à My Services, or through the mySTC app, or visit www.stc.com.ca à SAWA offers.

Three winners of Every Step Counts social media competitions rewarded by du for adopting healthier lifestyle habits

As part of du's Every Step Counts national wellbeing campaign, three winners have been selected for their participation in the company's social media health-focused competitions, which are designed to encourage healthier choices. The winners were presented with their smartphone prizes during a ceremony held at the company's headquarters in Dubai Media City.

Mohamad Ali Al Ali submitted the winning recipe into a competition asking for the fastest and healthiest meal users could make. His suggestion was to make healthy chicken nuggets, using lean chicken, rolled in oats and then baked.

Hala Badri, Executive Vice President, Brand and Communications, du, said: "Our winners' stories and contributions are representative of the choices we try to inspire the people of the UAE to make, through the du Wellness App and our Every Step Counts campaign. Making healthy changes, even small ones, can have a significant impact on your wellbeing, and we hope people will be inspired by Mohamad, Rusha, and Mahe."

Mobily announces the providing of its services to King Abdullah Economic City

Mobily announced providing its services to King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC), through the communications network project in the KAEC. This comes as part of the active support and mutual co-operation with Emaar, the major developer for KAEC and Economic Cities Authority. This network will contribute to allow the residents of KAEC a direct access to all wired and wireless networks in the Kingdom in addition to get through the international communication networks all over the world, after Mobily has succeeded in the deployment of advanced infrastructure for integrated telecoms services in KAEC, in addition to rolling out a fibre-optic network.

This giant step allows all KAEC residents, both individuals and the business sector, many advanced services in the world of communications via satellite, such as television transmission through the Internet (IPTV) as well as VPN services: Ethernet, VPN (L2), IP VPN (L3), Direct Internet Access, Broad Band at Work, Business Connect and IP TRANSIT.

Ooredoo empowers women across Oman with new SmartWoman App

Ooredoo has launched a new mobile application to connect women across the Sultanate to the world's leading female voices. The SmartWoman™ app is exclusive to Ooredoo customers with a two month free-trial period and enables women to access rich, dynamic content by expert writers in Arabic and English, network with other subscribers, ask questions and share their own experiences on a wide range of topics. All this directly from their smartphone through an easy-to-use interface.

"The SmartWoman™ app is an innovative and valuable tool designed for everything that today's modern woman needs to enhance her career and learning, as well as many other areas of daily life on a personal and professional level. Whether women want to improve their parenting skills, break the glass ceiling or simply lead a healthier lifestyle, it's all there "said Amaal Al Lawati, Director at Ooredoo.

du empowers tomorrow's women leaders at Arab Women Leadership Forum 2014

du, the region's fastest-growing telecommunications company, supported the next generation of women leaders as official Telecommunication Partner of the Arab Women Leadership Forum 2014. The event was held in Dubai from 4-5 November. In its role as an event partner, du hosted a Social Media 101 workshop for participants.

Women in leadership are empowered by the information and communications technology (ICT) sector. In recognition of this, du's continuous innovation sees the company constantly seeking new ways in which to better serve its customers, including through offerings designed specifically with the needs of businesswomen in mind.

Through the Social Media 101 workshop, du provided basic training on social media etiquette, and how to best benefit from different social media platforms, under the theme of 'How to run your social media like a boss'. du also taught the participants how to get the right mix of tools to optimise social media for their personal use and their organisation.

A live Twitter wall at the Arab Women Leadership Forum shared the most relevant tweets throughout the event in real time.

Ooredoo launches value-packed 4G Home Broadband offers

Continuing the excitement of the brand launch, Ooredoo are now offering fantastic value on 2 Home Broadband (HBB) plans with introductory discounts on their two most popular plans. For the first three months of a one year postpaid contract, customers will pay just RO 10 per month for the 75GB plan and RO 15 per month for the 150GB plan, before moving back to the regular tariff for subsequent months.

Feras Al Shaikh, Director of Consumer Sales at Ooredoo said, "We have seen data consumption increasing exponentially in the Sultanate over the past two years and have invested heavily in upgrading our fixed data network to cater for the increased demand. With this brilliant promotion we are providing customers who use a lot of data every month with the chance to enjoy our 4G Home Broadband technology at a great price."

Home Broadband from Ooredoo allows customers to get online the same day using cutting-edge plug-and-play technology. The enhanced 4G network, which is already in place throughout Muscat and Batinah and being rolled out across the country, provides a much faster online experience than with previous technologies.

Etisalat introduces the first Digital Index for UAE businesses

Etisalat UAE has collaborated with Accenture to introduce the first Digital Index in the UAE. The initiative will provide businesses and government entities in the UAE with an opportunity to have their digital maturity ranked, and to understand how they can improve this ranking to increase their competitive advantage and drive growth.

The UAE Digital Index will focus on four areas – organization and collaboration, IT and infrastructure, the customer experience, and channels and partners – to understand how well UAE organizations are doing to leverage digital in areas such as recruitment, employee mobility, digital marketing, social media, e-commerce, and digital supply chain management. Each organization will be ranked against international benchmarks as well as their peers in the UAE.

"The Digital Index is part of Etisalat's initiative to be a business enabler for companies in the UAE," said Abdulla Hashim, Senior Vice President – Digital Services at Etisalat UAE. "Our aim is to drive awareness of how companies can better use digital solutions to meet the changing needs of their customers, employees and suppliers, and to underline the message that digital maturity is an ongoing journey rather than a single step. We want to encourage digital innovation and the Digital Index will help businesses learn how they can start improving their operations through doing more online."

Etisalat bags Best Customer Care Award

Etisalat was awarded the renowned TeknoTel Award for 'Best Customer Care 2014' during a ceremony held recently in Dubai. The honor recognizes Etisalat's achievements in improving overall customer experience by instituting advanced training programs, electronic services and technologies dedicated to customer satisfaction.

On winning the award, Tony Eid, CEO of Trace Media said, "Etisalat came out tops amidst stiff competition to win this award for its excellence in customer care. Through the year, the operator has successfully put in place a number of best practices as part of its customer experience strategy that also determines the high quality of services extended to its customers."

Eid added, "Etisalat has a proven track record of excellence and technology leadership in introducing innovative services catered to meet customer needs and tastes."

Hassan Hussain, Vice president of Customer Experience, Etisalat said, "Receiving this award is great recognition of Etisalat's efforts and success in improving customer experience, bringing it at par with international standards."

Huawei recognized for leadership in Middle East ICT industry

Leading the way in building a better connected Middle East, Huawei—a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider—was recently honored by industry pioneers with the prestigious title of Middle East "Hardware Vendor of the Year" at the annual ICT Achievement Awards 2014. The award recognizes individuals and organizations that have delivered ground-breaking business value through the innovative application of technologies and contribution to the region's technological development. The judging panel comprised of leading industry experts including Ali Radhi, Head of IT at MBC; Ian Wakeford, Managing Director at DW Consultants; Mohammed Shah, Head of IT & Business Solutions at AMS Baeshen Company; and Trevor Moore, Chief Information Officer at Qatar University.

Huawei was recognized for its noteworthy commitment to providing organizations in government, healthcare, education, hospitality, and other vertical markets to achieve operational excellence through more agile service innovation.

Turk Telekom CEO Aslan calls for improved business models

Turk Telekom CEO Rami Aslan, who attended the panel 'An Open Digital Agenda for growth and innovation' at CEO Summit 2014, highlighted that the sector needs novel and sustainable models in order to create a fair system. He complained that operators make all the investment while internet players get a disproportionate return. Aslan pledged for the creation and fostering of a common ecosystem that should be stable, predictable and rewarding for all participants. Life-changing OTT services are only possible thanks to operators who provide internet connectivity, he argued.

Highlighting the advances in the life-changing internet eco-system, Aslan stated that network operators and internet service/content providers need to explore innovative and incentive-compatible business models, leading to a more efficient use of networks and creating new business opportunities and value creation at this new spectrum of digital value-chain.

Omantel appoints Sale International as its sole distributor for its products

Omantel, the leading telecommunication provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has signed an exclusive agreement with Sale International LLC to act as its sole agent for the distribution of Omantel products which include Hayyak starter kits and top-up card. The sole agent will avail these products to the sub-distributor at the various governorates.

The award of the contract comes after the public tendering process by Omantel for appointing a sole agent for Omantel products to ensure availability and easy access by all customers to the company products throughout the Sultanate. The sole agent will rely on a number of SMEs that will deliver and avail these products at the different outlets in the Sultanate that will make them available for the end-users.

Commenting on the agreement, Waleed Mohammed al Rahbi, Indirect Sales Senior Manager at Omantel Consumer Unit said "the indirect sales play an important role in ensuring availability of all our products to all customers throughout the Sultanate".

'The partnership with Sale International will create a wide network of sales points through which customers can purchase the prepaid cards or top up cards which in turn will make Omantel products available anywhere in the Sultanate, he concluded.

Batelco invests millions in network enhancement

Batelco, Bahrain's leading communications provider and Ericsson, a world leading telecoms technology provider, have extended their long-standing partnership by signing a new transformation agreement.

The two partners have announced the new network enhancement programme, which is designed to meet the growing customer demand for increasingly powerful mobile services. The major transformation work is part of Batelco's ongoing strategy to enhance its networks and keep them on par with the highest international standards. The major project will see the upgrade of Batelco's 4G Network to provide faster mobile Broadband connections for its subscribers and superior voice quality, plus a set of new services and offers. Additionally, the Network will be expanded to cover new areas across the country. Batelco Group & Acting Bahrain CEO Alan Whelan and Head of Ericsson Gulf Council Countries Victoria Strand signed the agreement at a recent meeting in Dubai.

Mr. Whelan said that Batelco is very pleased to be taking this major step with Ericsson which is a long established trusted partner of Batelco's.

REGIONAL NEWS

REGIONAL UPDATES

Ericsson eyeing Afghan contract

Swedish vendor Ericsson is in the process of negotiating a management contract with a second telco in Afghanistan, Gulf News cites Ericsson's regional chief Tarek Saadi as saying. The official did not name the operator involved but ruled out Etisalat, leaving Afghan Telecom (Aftel), Roshan and Afghan Wireless Communications Company (AWCC) as the potential partner, Ericsson having signed a managed services deal with MTN Afghanistan back in 2012. Despite the progress of the talks, Saadi noted that an official announcement was unlikely to be made until H1 2015.

Saudi Arabia's security strengthened by DDOS solution from Arbor Networks

Arbor Networks has announced today the implementation of a DDoS Solution for Saudi Telecom Company (STC) for protection against internet based attacks that impact data centers, networks and applications.

Originally a national telco, Saudi Telecom Company (STC) is now active across the GCC and beyond, from Kuwait to Bahrain, Turkey to India, Malaysia to South Africa. Its rapid growth in little more than a decade and a half has seen it offer landline, mobile and Internet services to ever increasing markets. STC now serves just less than 170 million customers nationally and internationally - today it is the largest telecommunications company by market capitalization, total revenue and number of employees in the Arab region.

However, such growth and increased visibility also brings problems. Today, like telcos worldwide, STC 's revenue model depends on a shift from traditional voice/SMS services to 'always on' mobile/mobile data paradigms - capacity issues are one concern, but more serious perhaps is the need to assure customers that secure and reliable mobile broadband performance will also be 'always on'.

Abu Dhabi-owned telco Warid to spend US$470 million on network upgrades

Pakistan's Warid Telecom, wholly owned by privately-held Abu Dhabi Group, will invest US$470 million over five years to bolster its network, following a failed attempt by its owners to sell the mobile operator this year.

Warid Telecom has seen its mobile subscriber base slump from 17.9 million in 2008-9 to 13.1 million in May 2014, according to data from Pakistan's telecom regulator. That is barely half the subscribers of No.4. player, Etisalat unit Pakistan Telecommunications Co (PTCL), which has 24.6 million, and Warid's decline partly coincided with owner ADG's failed attempt to sell the company.

ADG scrapped a sale of Warid to PTCL in March, and is now committed to the firm, Tariq Gulzar, Warid's chief financial officer, told Reuters in a telephone interview. "Our total capital expenditure (for) the next five years will be about US$470 million. A lot of this is going towards technical investment in terms of upgrading to the newer technology, from 2.5 to 4G," said Gulzar.

GrameenPhone aims for 50 million internet users in five years

GrameenPhone, the Bangladeshi mobile market leader, last week announced reaching the milestone of 50 million network users, and declared that its number of internet users alone will match this figure within the next five years. GrameenPhone CEO Vivek Sood said that the company has maintained an annual average investment budget of USD154 million over the past few years to upgrade and expand its network, adding that the level of investment will be significantly increased. Internet speeds of its existing 3G data plans are being doubled at no added cost as part of a new promotion.

Renna Mobile offers special international call packages

After the success of Renna Mobile's international calling promotions, now their newly extended international calling bundle offers give valued customers more convenient options.
Renna's current promotion allows subscribers to call Pakistan for 20mins for just RO1 and subscribers calling India or Bangladesh can enjoy 35mins for just RO1 and 15mins for 500bz.

Renna has another international offer for the rest of the countries with a compatible price starting from 39bz per minute. Raed Haddadin, CEO, Renna said, "Renna has consistently been offering great value to customers on their bundle offers for international calling. Our market research shows that there is a huge demand by our Asian expats on international calling. We therefore make sure that our customer's get the best international calling rates and we want to further reward them by giving them the ability to choose from our varied offers."

Renna Mobile also offers Oman's most valuable data bundles with the best price/data ratio and international calling offers among all the mobile service providers in Oman. The quality of the services provided by Renna mobile is credited with a strong and reliable network accessible from almost all parts of the region.

Qatar sets sights to become digital economy leader

By 2016, 95% of households in Qatar shall have the ability to access affordable and high-quality broadband service of at least 100 Mbps for downloads and 50 Mbps for uploads

Qatar aims to become the best-connected country in the world and a leader in innovative digital economy, HE the Minister of Information and Communications Technology Dr. Hessa al-Jaber told a world conference.

Delivering Qatar's Connect 2020 ICT Policy Statement at the International Telecommunication Union's 19th Plenipotentiary Conference, PP 14, in Busan, South Korea, Dr. al-Jaber said: "As a nation, we can't think of a more important goal than inclusiveness and ensuring that all people reap the benefits from ICT, regardless of their age, gender, income, location or abilities. "For several years now, a host of ICT training programmes - targeted to women, low-skilled workers, people with disabilities, and the elderly - have been successfully under way."

Dr. al-Jaber highlighted the milestones of Qatar's ICT sector and goals for the next few years. She emphasized continuing ICT sector development efforts, enlarging the sector's contribution to the GDP and to sustainable development through digital inclusion, innovation, entrepreneurship and the delivery of ICT benefits to everyone.

Vimpelcom-controlled GTH sells off Burundi, CAR operations to Econet Wireless

Egypt-based Global Telecom Holding (GTH), a 51.9%-owned subsidiary of Russian group Vimpelcom, has announced the sale of its 100% stake in Telecel Globe Limited – which itself owns 100% of each of U-Com Burundi (leo) and Telecel-RCA of the Central African Republic – to African diversified telecoms operator Econet Wireless Group, for USD65 million subject to certain 'post-closing adjustments'.

Last month, Vimpelcom – which is US-listed and headquartered in the Netherlands but remains majority Russian-owned – and GTH jointly announced the sale of their entire interest in Canadian cellco Globalive Wireless (Wind Mobile) to its Canadian controlling shareholders and a group of investment funds for approximately CAD135 million (US$121.9 million), with the proceeds going to Vimpelcom in repayment of part of the debt owed to it.

Also, in August this year GTH approved the sale of 51% of Algerian cellco Djezzy (Orascom Telecom Algerie) to the Algerian National Investment Fund (Fonds National d'Investissement [FNI]) for USD2.64 billion, in addition to deals associated with the transaction. Pending final approval of the transaction, Vimpelcom/GTH will retain a 46% minority stake and management control of Djezzy.

SA and Egypt lead smartphone growth in Africa

According to a recent IDC study, the Middle East and Africa (MEA) handset market grew to its largest size in ten quarters in Q2 2014, expanding 27% year on year to total 64 million units. Within Africa, Egypt and South Africa posted the largest year-on-year handset shipment growth, at 37% and 32%, respectively.

The Middle East and Africa (MEA) handset market grew to its largest size in ten quarters in Q2 2014, expanding 27% year on year to total 64 million units. The latest insights from global advisory and consulting services firm International Data Corporation (IDC) show that the majority of this growth was seen in the smartphone category, with a major shift underway in the composition of the market. Indeed, smartphone share of the overall MEA handset market jumped 13 percentage points year on year to reach 40% in Q2 2014, with that figure reaching as high as 75–80% in some of the region's more developed countries.

Within Africa, Egypt and South Africa posted the largest year-on-year handset shipment growth, at 37% and 32%, respectively. In the Middle East, that honor was taken by the UAE and Qatar, with respective growth of 27% and 32%.

Saudi Arabia: Number of Web users exceeds 18 million

The number of Internet users in the Kingdom reached 18.3 million this year. Subsequently, there is an increased demand for Internet and broadband connection services (both mobile and home-based). Due to this, subscriptions for broadband services across mobile networks in the Kingdom have continued to increase during 2014 to complement this, reaching approximately 20.7 million subscriptions so far this year.

The most common subscriptions include data services, voice communication services and data packages, thus reflecting the dramatic increase in smartphone ownership and usage in recent years. Additionally, the number of subscribers to mobile communications services reached 51 million by the middle of 2014, with the percentage of prepaid subscriptions amounting to 87.1 percent. According to a report released by the Communications and Information Technology Commission, approximately 4.7 million fixed landlines will have been installed by the end of 2014.

The demand for broadband services has also significantly increased in the aftermath of increased government support for high-tech projects, which requires good digital infrastructure, as well as the widespread availability of Internet services for social networking, business applications, word processing, software protection tools and entertainment.

Egypt needs billions to upgrade telecom infrastructure

Egypt is seeking billions of dollars in investment to upgrade its telecommunications infrastructure as part of efforts to attract multinationals and restore growth after three years of political upheaval, the telecoms minister said.

Atef Helmy said Egypt needs investment of $5-$6 billion to build broadband internet across the nation and some $3 billion more to build seven technology parks it hopes will lure multinationals and provide employment. Some of these opportunities will be presented at an economic summit aimed at encouraging investment in Egypt that will be held in February in the resort town of Sharm al-Sheikh.

"There is no doubt that the telecoms and technology sector is one of the most competitive sectors when it comes to investment and as part of building our new Egypt. (it) is a cornerstone," he said in an interview as part of the Reuters Middle East Investment Summit. Helmy, himself an executive with Oracle, said Egypt had managed to retain big multinationals, including his former employer, despite the recent turbulence.

The Smart Village, a technology park of manicured lawns and water features outside the sprawling capital, is home to the gleaming offices of major international firms as well as the Communications and Information Technology Ministry; a testament to the kind of Egypt Helmy wants to build.

Algeria Telecom selects Ericsson for broadband network transformation

Algeria Telecom has chosen Ericsson for the transformation of their broadband aggregation network. Under the terms of the agreement, Ericsson will consolidate the existing network functions for a simple and scalable architecture using the Ericsson SSR 8000's Provider Edge (PE) and BNG applications.

With the Ericsson SSR 8000, Algeria Telecom will competitively meet the growing demand for residential broadband connectivity and offer secure, high-speed virtual private network (VPN) services for its enterprise customers. The new modernized network will enable Algeria Telecom to quickly meet this challenge as well as offer added-value triple play services with IPTV and video on demand for a feature rich, end-user experience. In addition, the new converged, scalable IP infrastructure based on the multi-application SSR 8000 platform enables Algeria Telecom to implement new business models and provide multiple service offerings and addresses new opportunities with a quicker time to market.

The agreement includes Broadband Network Gateways (BNG) and Provider Edge (PE) applications based on the Ericsson SSR 8000 family and professional services such as project management, solution architecture, deployment and migration services.

Mobile distributor SiS to spin off e-payments subsidiary in Bangladesh

Mobile devices distributor SiS International Holdings plans to spin off its electronic payment services business in Bangladesh, Information Technology Consultants Limited (ITCL). In its regulatory filing on Thursday, SiS said its subsidiary will be separately listed on the Dhaka Stock Exchange and the Chittagong Stock Exchange in Bangladesh.

"The proposed spin-off and listing will provide ITCL with a separate platform for raising funds from both equity and debt capital markets," SiS said. "ITCL will also have access to bank financing on potentially more advantageous terms than are presently available to it."

The company expected to retain a 37.60 per cent interest in ITCL after the listing is completed. It currently owns a 43.60 per cent stake. Lim Kiah Meng, the vice-chairman at SiS, held 9.80 per cent of the shares in ITCL through a related corporation.

TRA launches the world most Advanced Automated Spectrum Management System

Eng. Yousuf Abdullah Al Balushi
Vice President - Spectrum Management Affairs

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
Sultanate of Oman

The increase and sophistication in the use of communities of modern technologies that use radio frequencies have highlighted the importance of spectrum and the ways to develop its management process as an important resource that represents a foundation for developing the telecom infrastructure. The modern societies depend on the rapid communications such as mobile, maritime and air communications, satellite communications and broadband services, and broadcast services and other services, which require access to information at any time and any place. This has resulted in increased pressure on the regulatory bodies responsible for managing the spectrum to ensure speed and efficiency in radio licensing processes and to follow the market approach in terms of speed of processing, as these new challenges cannot be met without modern systems that are integrated and automated for spectrum management which provides the services electronically.

To this end and in continuation of Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) endeavors to promote the level of e-services for frequency spectrum users in the Sultanate of Oman, and in keeping abreast of the e-government policy, TRA launched on 7 April 2014, the Advanced Automated Spectrum Management System (AASMS).

The new AASMS specification is a new quality compared with everything known so far. The new system takes care for all kind of possible and even unusual cases. Up to 60 different and very complex business processes is adapted by the system as well as loads of technical analysis stuff which even the International Telecommunication Union ITU in Geneva did only define but had never put in software properly. The new system is WEB enabled and does everything automated.

The new advanced system for spectrum management is an important step for the TRA as the system will contribute significantly to upgrading its operations that are provided by the Spectrum Management Unit through providing spectrum licensing services electronically via the Internet, which would be considered a significant contribution to the achievement of the National Strategy for Oman Digital Society and e-government and for meeting the growing need to manage the spectrum resource effectively and adopt optimum methods for using it.

Acquiring such System by the TRA will meet the needs of users of spectrum in the Sultanate which include speed in issuing, submitting and processing licenses electronically, especially for microwave links for operators of telecomm services, issuance of aviation and ships licenses, enabling getting the radio license automatically within a few hours, instead of 14 working days before, which would be considered as an achievement at the level of the entire region.

The new system opens new prospects for managing the spectrum efficiently in the Sultanate as the spectrum users will be able to complete most of their transactions electronically from their own places and without the need to visit the TRA's office, such transactions include issuance, renewal, cancellation and amendment of radio licenses; printing the documentation related to licensing, technical amendments, pre-calculation of fees, billing , billing information and

payment and electronic follow-up for licensing process.

As for the project objectives, this new system facilitates the tasks and organizational and technical procedures in managing the spectrum and will ensure economic and effective use of the spectrum according to the National Plan for the spectrum blocks allocation and the national and international regulations. It also ensures a high level of security for database of the Advanced Automated Spectrum Management System, speed in processing transactions, human errors reduction through automated and instant mechanism of data validation and automated technical analysis for the coordination of spectrum across international borders.

In addition, the new system helps the TRA Spectrum Management in carrying out its functions that are related to spectrum management, such as assisting in managing the daily work flow , the processing operations related to spectrum allocation, planning and distribution , spectrum engineering , coverage forecast, electromagnetic analysis, calculating the carrier-to-interference –ratio, complaints management , scheduling inspection procedures, controlling the spectrum, developing an interface between spectrum management and spectrum monitoring systems , as well as the provision of geographic information system to determine the geographical locations of frequencies Compared with the systems as currently in operation around the world, the TRA Oman Spectrum Management System is actually the world most advance automated spectrum management system. According to LS telcom, system vendor, the assortment of possibilities of the new AASMS and how it is realized will for many years built a standard, which not only the region but definitely world-wide spectrum regulators will have to compare their own solutions with.

REGULATORY NEWS

Regulatory News

Telmex fined USD3.7m for monopolistic practices

Mexican telecoms regulator the Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones (IFETEL) has fined America Movil (AM)-owned Telmex for monopolistic practices in the long-distance call termination market. As such, the watchdog imposed a fine of MXN49.32 million (USD3.66 million) on the incumbent, bringing to an end an investigation that was initiated by Mexico's Comision Federal de Competencia (CFC) in May 2011. IFETEL's final decision upheld a complaint from rival operator Axtel, which had accused Telmex of failing to respond to interconnection requests; denying it information regarding the location of its central offices; and playing recorded messages to Axtel users warning them of the possibility that their service could be suspended. The financial penalty represents the maximum fine allowed by law.

Lycamobile representatives meet with Pakistan telecom regulator ahead of prospective launch

UK-based mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) group Lycamobile has set its sights on Pakistan as part of its ongoing international expansion drive. According to the Express Tribune, Minister of State for Information Technology Anusha Rahman hosted a two-man Lycamobile delegation from the UK this week, which was headed by senior business executive Faheem Shehzad. The minister reportedly said that she appreciated the company's keen interest in investing in Pakistan, assuring Lycamobile of the government's full support. The delegates apprised the minister of the global business potentials and key features of their company ahead of what is expected to be a formal approach for an MVNO concession. According to TeleGeography's GlobalComms Database, back in October 2009 the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) courted controversy when it increased the price of an MVNO licence from USD10,000 to USD5 million. The Ministry of Information and Technology (MoIT) asked the PTA to reconsider its stance, and representatives of major players Mobilink and Telenor Pakistan criticised the framework, arguing that it discouraged new operators from entering the market. However, the PTA refused to back down and the MVNOmarket remains something of a pipedream. Lycamobile, which was founded in OCTember 2006, is currently active in 17 markets: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States. Lycamobile's commercial launch in an 18th market, Romania, is anticipated in the near future. Initially targeted at expatriate communities in Europe, in recent years Lycamobile has increasingly set its sights on developing a global brand. At the end of 2013, the company claimed a global MVNO base of more than 30 million users.

EU Commission clears ISPs in "Net Neutrality" anti-trust probe

Net neutrality has become one of the biggest and most important topics in the telecoms industry as it could change the shape of the internet as we know it. An anti-trust probe was launched by the European Commission into whether quality-dependant OTT players such as Netflix were being "slowed down" in favor of the ISPs own services. The inspections were launched to investigate whether the ISPs were taking advantage of their market position to control and cause an unfair playing-field on the internet; destroying the values which has helped it to grow and become so important to the global economy. In an announcement made by the Commission today, it stated: "the Commission found no evidence of behavior aimed at foreclosing transit services from the market or at providing an unfair advantage to the telecoms operators' own proprietary content services". Proposals to the FCC in the US from ISPs call for the regulator to allow the creation of "fast lanes" for big OTT players whose users generate a lot of bandwidth. This has caused fierce backlash, with the deadline for comments against the proposals having to be pushed-back several times from the sheer amount which had been submitted. The Sunlight Foundation analysed over 800,000 of these comments and found that 99% of them are in support of stronger protection for net neutrality. Meanwhile, a petition from Google with the rallying call of "A free and open world depends on a free and open web" has been signed by over three million people. Neelie Kroes, departing Vice President of the European Commission, spoke about OTT players and their relationship with telcos in her farewell speech: "The current situation of European telcos is not the 'fault' of those OTT's. Today, all EU homes have broadband coverage; 76% have a connection; almost half can access it on their mobile," she said. "They are demanding greater and greater bandwidth, faster and faster speeds, and are prepared to pay for it." She continues: "But how many of them would do that if there were no over the top services? If there were no Facebook, no YouTube, no Netflix, no Spotify? OTT players are the ones driving digital demand, demand for your services! That is something you can work with, not against." The memo, which detailed the launch of the investigation back in July, stated the companies who are being investigated would not be made public at such an early-stage. Due to being cleared of the investigation, none of the telcos will be named to prevent damages to their reputation

France's 700MHz auction expected in 2015

French president Francois Hollande has reportedly announced that telecoms regulator the Autorite de Regulation des Communications Electroniques et des Postes (Arcep) will initiate the process of auctioning frequencies in the 700MHz band for telecoms services in 2015, Advanced Television reports. Addressing previously expressed concerns of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) broadcasters that the allocation would interfere with the plans to migrate the DTT platform to MPEG-4 AVC by 2015 and DVB-T2 by 2023, President Hollande said that France needed an audiovisual sector that could broadcast broadly, effectively and securely, adding: 'This is the objective of transferring the 700MHz band to the telecom sector. The state will ensure that the available resources are guaranteed for broadcasting'. As such, Arcep is expected to launch a tender for the 700MHz spectrum band in November 2015, with projections that the auction could generate up to EUR3 billion (USD3.8 billion) for the treasury.

Zambia: ZICTA calls for private sector investment in ICT

The Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority (ZICTA) is calling on the private sector to take the lead in creating demand in ICT, by injecting heavier investments into the sector. The move has been proposed in order to give consumers access to affordable solutions. ZICTA director general Margaret Mudenda stated that: "There is need to enhance infrastructure development in rural parts of the country." According to Zambia's Daily Mail, Mudenda said a society that has access to ICTs is exposed and contributes to the development of the economy. "To some extent, infrastructure development in the ICT sector is vital in increasing access among the people in remote areas," she said.

MoITT unveils draft Telecom Policy; includes provisions for net neutrality, spectrum sharing and OTT

Pakistan's Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) has published a draft Telecommunications Policy for wider stakeholder consideration and comments from the general public. The draft is based on recommendations from consultants, the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) and the Frequency Allocation Board (FAB), as well as telecom operators and organisations. The broad aim of the policy is to implement the government's 'vision' for the sector: 'Universally available, affordable and quality telecom services provided through open, competitive, and well managed markets and used by all to the benefit of the economy and society.' The policy covers a range of topics including: competition, licensing, interconnection, right of way, internal networks, infrastructure and resource sharing, quality of service (QoS), universal service provision, research and development (R&D) and satellite services. Notably, the policy sets out rules to allow for spectrum trading to take place, although it will only be permitted under certain specific conditions. Similarly, operators will be permitted to share spectrum resources, although the MoITT notes that sharing spectrum does not absolve the licensee from any rollout obligations that they might be subject to. Elsewhere, the PTA and the federal government will develop regulatory instruments to enable the provision of voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) and over-the-top (OTT) services, where the service provider may not have any equipment installed within the territory of Pakistan. These measures must take into consideration the potential requirement for scarce resources (i.e. numbering) and the requirement for lawful interception as well as interconnection and access to emergency services. The issue of Net Neutrality is also covered, and attempts to reach a compromise between providing operators with commercial options and preventing anti-competitive practices. The draft policy allows internet service providers

(ISPs) to throttle and shape traffic on the condition that they provide access to 'all services without discrimination through the technical characteristics of the service.' Further, backhaul, transit services and gateways between operator networks may not discriminate between the access provider's own services, or services that the access provider favours, and other services.

'Hybrid' Regulations for Open Internet Gaining Traction

Talk of hybrid regulatory regimes and the likelihood of litigation for the Federal Communications Commission's Open Internet proceeding held sway at an Oct. 7 FCC roundtable discussion at the agency. The FCC concluded a series of public panels on the Open Internet notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) (GN Docket No. 14-28) with a focus on the FCC's legal authority and possible scope of the regulations. At the heart of the issue is whether to reclassify broadband Internet services under Title II of the Communications Act, to regulate under Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, or construct some combination of both. This last approach, in various permutations, has increasingly been put forward as a possible compromise between public policy groups, Internet service providers like AT&T Inc. and Comcast Corp., and edge providers such as Netflix, Inc. Classification of broadband services as Title II telecommunications services would give the FCC the express and expansive authority to regulate so-called common carrier services—something that is roundly opposed by broadband providers because such a decision would impose a strict regulatory regime. "Both of the possible bases for the Commission's jurisdiction here each have their own weaknesses," said Pantelis Michalopoulos, a partner in Steptoe & Johnson LLP's Washington office and head of its Telecom, Internet & Media Group. Michalopoulos represented the Open Internet Coalition as intervenors in the law suit filed by Verizon Communications Inc. against the FCC over its 2010 Open Internet rules (Verizon Commc'ns Inc. v. FCC, 2014 BL 9154, 740 F.3d 623 (D.C. Cir. 2014). The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled Jan. 14 that the FCC's no-blocking and non-discrimination rules too closely resembled Title II common carrier regulations. By combining facets of both the Section 706 and Title II regimes, the FCC could construct bright line rules under the broadband provision that would prohibit pay-to-play on the part of ISPs, said Michalopoulos. "At the same time, the FCC should conclude that the transport component of Internet access service can be separated from the information service and therefore is a telecommunications service," he said. The FCC could choose to forbear from common carrier Title II regulation of such service, "so long as it is not necessary," said Michalopoulos. "We believe, that instead of being mutually exclusive, the choices are complementary and mutually reinforcing," he said. Nuala O'Connor, president for the Center for Democracy and Technology, said the FCC could choose to classify business-to-business broadband Internet service, such as between ISPs and edge providers, as a Title II service, while retaining rules under Section 706 for ISP-to-consumer transactions.

Vodafone Wins $520 Million Indian Tax Dispute

Vodafone has won a court case in India overturning a request for Rs32 billion (USD520 million) in taxes following an audit of transfer pricing issues. The issue, which is increasingly common, is a dispute over the cost of services provided by one part of a company to another. It is often used by some firms as a way of transferring profits from one jurisdiction to a lower taxed location, but the transfer pricing still needs to be set at market rates. India's income tax department alleged that a Vodafone subsidiary based in India owed taxes because shares issued by the company to its parent were deliberately undervalued in order to lower its tax exposure. The Bombay High Court has now heard the case, and decided that Vodafone was not at fault. "We feel that there is no taxable income on share premium received on the issue of shares," said chief Justice Mohit Shah, and Justice M.S. Sanklecha. The case is the latest in a long line of tax disputes Vodafone is fighting in the country, including the USD2 billion tax demands from its 2007 purchase of Hutchison Essar India.

French Regulator Cites Operators for Missing 3G Rollout Obligations

The French telecoms regulator, ARCEP has cited three mobile networks as having missed rollout obligations for their 3G networks in the French overseas departments. The proceedings concerned three mobile operators: Guadeloupe Téléphone Mobile, Martinique Téléphone Mobile and Guyane Téléphone Mobile, authorized in 2008 to establish a fourth 2G/3G mobile network in their respective departments. The investigation phase made it possible to ascertain that, to date, these operators had not performed any 2G or 3G network rollouts to provide mobile services. As a result, on October 7, 2014, the ARCEP body responsible for settling disputes, legal proceedings and investigations ("RDPI") decided to give a formal notice to these three operators, to provide 2G and 3G mobile services covering the entire population that was to be covered under the terms of their respective spectrum licenses, by January 15, 2016, with two interim deadlines set for January 15 and April 15, 2015. Should these three operators fail to meet these obligations, they could face the loss of their operating license.

Spectrum Scarcity Sparks Need for Regulatory Support and Research

The never ending demand for mobile data and ubiquitous connectivity in today's wireless world is driving service providers towards network improvements for spectral efficiencies as well as significant investments in new technology resources to densify their networks. However, those advancements alone are not adequate to meet the challenges posed by future mobile data traffic when only limited spectrum is available. Regulatory support and industry research is needed to determine the optimal use of spectrum resources. 4G Americas, a wireless industry trade association representing the 3GPP family of technologies, has published a white paper, on the benefits of innovation in regulatory policy and its ability to provide a potentially helpful tool for the shortfall of available spectrum resources. "Like fish need water to survive, the mobile connected world relies on exclusive licensed spectrum as its fuel for growth; however, key stakeholders are aware that limited spectrum is a factor which stunts significant advancements," stated Chris Pearson, President of 4G Americas. "We see an excellent opportunity for government regulators and the wireless industry in the region to participate in positive dialogue regarding the best practices for spectrum sharing that will benefit the connected society in which we live." The paper discusses key regulatory and technical factors that should be considered when developing successful spectrum sharing policies and explores spectrum sharing mechanisms using coordinated, uncoordinated and hybrid approaches. It also details the challenges of spectrum sharing, including interference management between disparate systems sharing same or adjacent spectrum bands. The paper highlights the need for further technology research, development, testing and refinement of models to ensure that it provides sufficient protection to the primary users of the spectrum while providing beneficial new broadband capacity. Spectrum shared properly by incumbents and mobile operators will help to maximize the use of this limited resource. Spectrum Sharing recommends a regulatory regime that provides greater certainty and predictability to prospective licensees in order to help ensure that the spectrum is put to its highest and most productive use. For sharing to be successful, the sharing environment must be well understood, commercially feasible and suitable for the provision of the envisioned services. "The proper and best use of spectrum is a hot topic in the current era of mobile technology," commented Neeti Tandon, Lead Member of Technical Staff (LMTS) at AT&T, and 4G Americas work group leader and editor of the paper. "Spectrum sharing is an important option to consider for the mobile broadband capacity challenge; however, regulatory support and substantial additional research and development efforts are needed to move these technologies into mainstream use."

TRA sponsors Arab ICT Forum 2014

The Arab ICT Forum 2014 starts under the Patronage of the Chairman of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) of the Kingdom of Bahrain Dr. Mohammed Al Amer. The two-day Forum is organized by the ICT Committee, the Federation of Arab Engineers and the Bahrain Society of Engineers. A number of concerned speakers and ICT experts as well as representatives of the operators, suppliers, major local companies and the ITU gather to interact in a positive dialogue and discussion on the latest global developments that would pave the way for more cooperation opportunities and joint work among key entities involved in the sector. The Forum which is also attended by a number of TRA staff, will cover several important topics addressing the latest challenges faced by service operators and the latest development opportunities leveraging the recent advanced technologies, in addition to the latest ICT regulation patterns. The Forum will also discuss the important role of ICT in different sectors, such as learning, economy, health, tourism, engineering and the ICT role in developing applications for commerce, government and business management.

Unified license still pending as some issues still to be resolved

Egypt's recently approved unified licensing regime has yet to come into full effect, Reuters reports, citing communications minister Atef Helmy. It is understood that continued delays have come about in light of the fact that some issues remain unresolved with regards to the regulatory plans. According to Mr. Helmy, the local telecoms regulator is still finalizing certain details related to the licensing scheme, though the unified concession itself – which will allow fixed line incumbent Telecom Egypt (TE) to enter the mobile sector under its owns steam – is expected to be activated within weeks. 'The work is going on and we are expecting within the coming few weeks to be able to finalize everything and announce it,' the minister was cited as saying. With the unified licence law having stipulated the creation of a new company dedicated to developing Egypt's telecom infrastructure – a role so far carried out by TE – Helmy noted that military-controlled companies would play an important part in this new entity, though denied that the army would have a controlling stake; with existing telcos and other firms also involved in the venture, precise roles are still to be determined. Meanwhile, Egypt is said to be seeking investment of up to USD9 billion with a view to upgrading the country's telecommunications infrastructure as part of efforts to attract multinational businesses and restore growth. According to Helmy, between USD5 billion and USD6 billion is required for the rollout of broadband services across Egypt, while a further USD3 billion will be used for the construction of seven technology parks which could lure multinational companies to invest in Egypt and create local job opportunities. With a number of these investment opportunities expected to be presented at an economic summit due to be held in Sharm-al-Sheikh in February 2015, the minister was cited as saying: 'There is no doubt that the telecoms and technology sector is one of the most competitive sectors when it comes to investment and as part of building our new Egypt...(it) is a cornerstone.'

DoT invites bids for e-auction

The government has finally initiated the process of auction of spectrum. The department of telecommunications (DoT) has invited bids from e-auction companies for this process. A Times of India's sister concern was responsible for conducting earlier auction of spectrum. DoT has asked for Request of Proposal for selection of an agency to conduct e-auction of spectrum on simultaneous multiple-round ascending auction (SMRA) pattern in the 22 telecom service areas (TSAs).

Interested parties should submit bids by November 11, 2014. DoT will hold a pre-bid conference with interested parties on October 27, with the companies that are interested in e-auction. For last round of auction, DoT paid Rs five crore fixed fee.

Government will regulate video-sharing sites

The Ministry of Culture and Information will soon regulate all video and image-sharing websites on the Internet to ensure they comply with the country's laws, an expert said here Sunday. Hamza Al-Ghubaishi, organizer of the Digital Visual Forum that concluded in Riyadh on Sunday, said the ministry's General Authority for Audio and Visual Media has been entrusted with this task. During the first session of the forum, Al-Ghubaishi said many young people do not know that they have to get permits to produce content on YouTube and similar sites. "Many such clips contain ethical and religious violations. There has been no government body until now to supervise or regulate such channels, or issue permits," he said. He said an additional task of the authority is to raise awareness among young people on the importance of quality production. Al-Ghubaishi said the authorities are still considering the establishment of cinemas in the Kingdom. Rami Damanhouri, human resources development officer at MBC Group, said that Shahid, the leading video-on-demand service, was launched in 2008 to increase the number of Arabic viewers by 5 percent. He said most Shahid viewers are Saudi, and 40 percent watch television on the Internet. Abdul Rahman Al-Tariri, media consultant at Rotana Group, said his group sees the Internet as a platform to watch television. He said Rotana Khalijia set up six channels on YouTube to feature weekly programs. Faisal Al-Saif, a Saudi television presenter, said there is a lack of tourism programs on the Kingdom on these websites. He said there has been an increase in viewers on YouTube compared to official television networks. Jawaher Haydar, who set up a television channel, said: "I established the channel, Hayati Sucar (My Life is Sugar) because I have diabetes and wanted to raise awareness on the issue." Several participants spoke about their personal experiences using Instagram. The forum catered to those with hearing and visual disabilities. It held the initiative in collaboration with the Prince Mohammed bin Salman Charitable Foundation. (October 28, 2014) Arab News 2014

All set for 4G spectrum auction

There may finally start to be an answer for a long-standing demand from mobile phone users for better service with this Friday's auction of 4G spectrum that would lead to faster and more efficient wireless communications in the country. Telefónica Móviles Argentina (Movistar), Telecom Personal, AMX Argentina (Claro) and the national Vila-Manzano-owned Arlink are the four bidders expected to compete for the 180 mhz available, which the Communications Secretariat will grant to the winners for the next 15 years. A rapid migration of users to 4G is expected, with Motorola already setting up an assembly plant for 4G-compatible mobile phones in Tierra del Fuego province. The company announced last week that production would start in the first quarter of 2015. Mobile phone services in Argentina have long suffered from chronic underinvestment and the impact of a growing number of users using increasing amounts of data. The result for users has included weak telephone signals, choppy connections and dropped calls. Since November, companies have been able to begin setting up the support infrastructure they would need for the shift to 4G. When ready, the technology is expected to multiply data-transfer speeds by a factor of 10 and make the use of antennas more efficient, allowing more people to be covered by each antenna without affecting speed. As users move from older technologies to 4G, radio spectrum should also be freed up in the older and currently very congested 2G and 3G services, meaning an improvement in quality across the board.

The emergence of 4G on the market could "indirectly modify users' habits and the way in which they handle the flow of communications and entertainment, through the improvement of mobile Internet connections to access services and apps," said University of Quilmes expert Martín Becerra. Video-on-demand services or mobile voice communications would be much more feasible with 4G technology.

Regulatory consequences

The call for tenders specifies in article 23 of the current regulation that the successful bidders would be forced to share infrastructure. This means companies already in the telecommunications business would not be able to deny access to 4G technology to new companies. Other regulations gave newcomers an additional six months to comply with minimum coverage area requirements. Initially, three surprising new bidders signed up to compete with the classic big-three telecommunication companies of Telefónica, Telecom and Claro. But Nextel and Cablevisión —

which had also paid the 200,000 pesos required to buy the tender documents — decided to opt out of the October 31 auction at the last minute. Speculation about the method of payment surrounded these decisions, with Cablevisión's owner Grupo Clarín complaining about the government "favoring foreign companies" citing the difficulty that national firms have in accessing financing. Both Clarín and Arlink have argued against the clause that specifies that payment has to be made in dollars or dollar-denominated bonds instead of pesos. Last week, Clarín newspaper claimed that the government had abandoned its decision to force payment in dollars after Cablevisión opted out of the auction, but the Planning Ministry denied that was the case.

A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN SAMENA REGION

Regulatory Updates

Algeria

President: Mr. Toufik Bessai
[Regulatory Authority for Post & Telecommunication (ARPT)]

Telecoms operators in Algeria may be subject to a new system of financial penalties in 2015, should a draft Financial Act be approved by the National People's Congress (NPC). The proposed amendment notes that financial penalties must be in line with the severity of the violations committed. The new approach seeks to introduce more transparency in terms of the application of penalties against offenders. (October 16, 2014) Agence Ecofin

Algerian mobile operator Orascom Telecom Algeria (OTA), operating in the country under the Djezzy brand, has been certified by telecoms watchdog the ARPT to deploy commercial 3G services in four 'optional' wilayas (provinces), following an evaluation of its coverage and quality of service (QoS) obligations, as outlined in Decision No.108/ PC/ANRT/2014, dated OCTember 24, 2014. According to a press release, the cellco has met its obligations to provide 3G services in Algiers, Constantine, Ouargla, Oran, Blida, Skikda, Mostaganem, El Oued, Bechar, Ain Defla and can now launch its 3G network in four additional provinces, namely: Setif, Tizi-Ouzou, Boumerdes and Djelfa. In October 2013 the ARPT issued 3G concessions to Mobilis, Nedjma and Djezzy. Djezzy received 2×15MHz paired blocks in the 1960MHz-1975MHz and 2150MHz-2165MHz bands. The operator's 3G network went live in seven provinces in July 2014. Under the terms set out by its license, the company must provide 3G services in Ain Defla, Algiers, Bechar, Blida, Boumerdes, Constantine, Djelfa, El Oued, Mostaganem, Oran, Ouargla, Setif, Skikda and Tizi-Ouzou by the end of 2014.

(October 6, 2014) telegeography.com

Bahrain

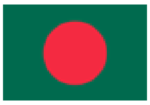
Chairman: Dr. Mohammed Al Amer
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Batelco has signed a new transformation agreement with Ericsson under which the Swedish vendor will upgrade its 4G network. The infrastructure enhancements, which are already underway, will reportedly provide faster mobile broadband speeds, improved voice quality, new services and offers,

as well as increased coverage. Commenting on the development, Batelco Group CEO Alan Whelan was cited as saying: 'The 4G network enhancement is a part of a series of rollouts being implemented as a result of our ongoing investment in [Bahrain's] infrastructure.' Batelco accounted for 43.5% of Bahrain's mobile market at end-June 2014, ahead of Bahrain's other main players, Zain Bahrain (32.3%) and Viva (24.2%).
(October 14, 2014) telegeography.com

Zain Bahrain has announced the results of its initial public offering (IPO), in which 48 million shares (15% of the company's issued shares prior to offering) were allotted in the period OCTember 2 to OCTember 30, 2014. Bahraini retail and Bahraini/GCC country-based institutional investors subscribed to around 16.7 million shares amounting to 34.8% of the offering while the remaining 31.2 million shares (65.2% of the IPO) were subscribed to by the underwriter. Based on the IPO price, the company would be valued at BHD60.8 million (US$161.2 million), although a report by Mubasher Financial Services said the IPO price was at a discount to fair value, and instead valued Zain Bahrain at BHD88.2 million, implying a 26% upside to the IPO price.
(October 3, 2014) TradeArabia News

Bangladesh



Chairman: Sunil Kanti Bose
[Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)

The telecom regulator is rearranging some of its valuable spectrums in 700-megahertzband earlier allocated to other companies and also planning the country's largest auction by June next. Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) recently in a commission meeting decided to replace an Internet Service Provider (ISP) – Always On Network Bangladesh Ltd (AONB) – with another band spectrum from its allocated 6+6 Megahertz (704-710/734-740). But the commission failed to decide where to relocate AONB. The spectrum came in 2006 from AONB, an America-based company that has so far established 46 Base Stations for serving 13 lakh customers, according to BTRC statistics. The band will facilitate offering a better, less costly and more expanded mobile broadband service by the mobile operators than now. "We want to earn much from the auction of spectrum in the 700 megahertz band and that's why it is mandatory to cancel the AONB allocation and we are going to do it," a senior official of BTRC told the Dhaka Tribune before. BTRC sources also said the regulatory commission has a plan to earn more than Tk 9,300 crore from 90 MHz of spectrum in the 700 bands in 2014-15fiscal year while its total earning target is Tk13,829 crore from this fiscal. In last fiscal, BTRC earned more than Tk 4,257 crore from 3G spectrum auction which was held in OCTember 2012, the biggest auction ever in the country. Referring to different sources, the telecom watchdog expects that mobile operators will attend this auction and tend to this spectrum in a bid to promote their network efficiency. A senior official of BTRC said in between 698 and 806 megahertz they have 90 megahertz of spectrum in the lot, but they can hardly offer 40 megahertz for auction if AONB's presence is there. The telecom watchdog in its meeting said the Radio Regulation of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) defined the 90MHz as a mobile band. "And on this ground, BTRC decided to relocate AONB to elsewhere though it violated the ITU's radio regulations recently while allocating spectrum for Ollo," a senior official of BTRC told. In October 2013, BTRC allocated 40 megahertz of spectrum in 2,500 and 2,600 band for Bangladesh Internet Exchange Ltd, a foreign ISP, as per the price of 2008 auction and got a WiMAX license. "At that time BTRC did not bother about the ITU regulation, but when the AONB spectrum cancelation issue came, it now introduces ITU regulations," the regulatory official also said. The telecom regulator also formed a special committee to prepare auction procedure for 700 band spectrums in a commission meeting as part of a draft roadmap to sell out the most valuable spectrum as of now. The telecom experts said the government could earn more revenues from this spectrum than any others as the 700 band covers more people than other band spectrums. This band is also cost-effective for the operators, they added. The mobile operators will decide how much spectrum they will buy after going through the BTRC's final documents. (October 17, 2014) dhakatribune.com

Egypt

Executive President: Eng. Hesham El Alaily
[National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA)]

Egypt's recently approved unified licensing regime has yet to come into full effect. It is understood that continued delays have come about in light of the fact that some issues remain unresolved with regards to the regulatory plans. According to Telecom Minister Mr. Helmy, the local telecoms regulator is still finalizing certain details related to the licensing scheme, though the unified concession itself – which will allow fixed line incumbent Telecom Egypt (TE) to enter the mobile sector under its owns steam – is expected to be activated within weeks. 'The work is going on and we are expecting within the coming few weeks to be able to finalize everything and announce it,' the minister was cited as saying. With the unified license law having stipulated the creation of a new company dedicated to developing Egypt's telecom infrastructure – a role so far carried out by TE – Helmy noted that military-controlled companies would play an important part in this new entity, though denied that the army would have a controlling stake; with existing telcos and other firms also involved in the venture, precise roles are still to be determined. Meanwhile, Egypt is said to be seeking investment of up to US$9 billion with a view to upgrading the country's telecommunications infrastructure as part of efforts to attract multinational businesses and restore growth. According to Helmy, between US$5 billion and US$6 billion is required for the rollout of broadband services across Egypt, while a further US$3 billion will be used for the construction of seven technology parks which could lure multinational companies to invest in Egypt and create local job opportunities. With a number of these investment opportunities expected to be presented at an economic summit due to be held in Sharm-al-Sheikh in February 2015, the minister was cited as saying: 'There is no doubt that the telecoms and technology sector is one of the most competitive sectors when it comes to investment and as part of building our new Egypt (it) is a cornerstone.' (October 22, 2014) reuters.com

Egyptian cellcos Egyptian Company for Mobile Services (MobiNil) and Vodafone Egypt have reportedly been offered the option of renewing their respective concessions through to 2031 at a cost of EGP1 billion (US$140.8 million) each. In a statement sent to the Egyptian stock exchange by MobiNil confirming the offer of a longer term for its license, the cellco is currently studying the draft proposal. Last month the Egyptian authorities approved a new unified telecoms license regime under which fixed line incumbent Telecom Egypt is allowed to enter the wireless market under its own steam, subject to paying a EGP2.5 billion fee. All three of the countries mobile network operators, meanwhile, now have the option of paying EGP100 million to upgrade to a unified concession under which they would be allowed to offer services over TE's fixed infrastructure. As such, it is understood that should MobiNil or Vodafone Egypt opt to pay to prolong their existing licenses, this extension would cover all areas of operation, including mobile, and fixed, should either upgrade to a unified concession. (October 16, 2014) Ahram Online

A new report from the mobile trade association GSMA and written by Plum Consulting suggests that Egypt needs to develop its mobile broadband opportunities if it is to benefit from associated economic gains. With one of the world's lowest levels of spectrum assigned to mobile and a limited fiber capacity, the report calls for a change of regulatory policies to aid mobile operators. By taking action to increase mobile broadband penetration, the GSMA says the Egyptian government could unlock an additional $43 billion in GDP and help create 1.2 million new jobs across the economy by 2030. In response, Mr. Atef Helmy, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, invited the mobile industry to convene a joint task force to address the current constraints and assess the demand and supply requirements to fast-track mobile broadband roll-out. "Following successful discussions, it is now time for the government and industry to take concrete steps to foster innovation and growth through mobile," said Helmy. "This cooperation is a critical part of our joint effort to enhance the lives of our citizens and position Egypt as a leader in the region." The report calls for the adoption of a stable regulatory environment to support private sector investment in both fibre and mobile networks, together with the development of a new national broadband plan. However, Egypt already has an official broadband plan in place, which was adopted in 2011. But the report's authors say its targets are no longer relevant – the country is a huge way off its 2015 fixed broadband target (75 per cent of households having 2Mbit/s access by next year...) but has already exceeded its mobile broadband one. Only last week, the ITU's Broadband Commission released its annual report, which showed that Egypt ranks a lowly 104th in terms of fixed broadband penetration, with 3.3 per cent take-up (please note, the ITU defines broadband as a ridiculously low 256kbit/s or more). In terms of household Internet access, Egypt has 34.5 per cent penetration. However, it fares better with mobile broadband, ranking 62nd with 31.1 per cent. The GSMA estimates that there were approximately 100 million mobile connections and 24 million mobile broadband connections as of June this year. So if Egypt has met and passed its mobile broadband target of 10 per cent penetration (8m people), why not celebrate the fact? The report argues that the key is in "unconstrained access" to mobile broadband, and that the market today, despite its success, is too constrained. The GSMA also wants to see the urgent release of additional spectrum in the 700MHz, 800MHz, 1.8GHz and 2.1GHz bands, and access to transmission infrastructure at acceptable prices for all market participants. Quite a long wish list, really. Egypt's mobile operators, says the report, are becoming increasingly constrained in terms of network capacity and the profitability of their services. The country currently has three operators – Mobinil, Vodafone and Etisalat – but will soon be joined by fixed telco Telecom Egypt. However, Telecom Egypt doesn't have any spectrum, so will have to create an MVNO with one of its rivals. Meanwhile, Egypt's mobile broadband penetration (which is in the range of 28 to 31 per cent, depending on who's measuring) lags behind its regional neighbors in the Gulf; Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, UAE and Saudi Arabia; although ahead of Tunisia, Sudan and Syria. "These constraints, combined with a lack of radio spectrum to support the latest mobile broadband technology, are stifling economic growth," said Tom Phillips, chief regulatory officer at the GSMA. "Policies that encourage investment in mobile broadband and enable additional spectrum to be allocated for mobile services are critical to transforming Egypt's economic future." (October 2, 2014) telecomtv.com

Iran

Minister of Communication & Information Technology:
Mr. Mahmoud Vaezi
[Communication regulatory Commission (CRC)]

The International Court of Arbitration in the Netherlands has delivered a ruling against Turkcell in its six-year case against the Iranian government over the revocation of a GSM license in 2004. A consortium led by Turkcell was approved as the winning bidder in a tender to take a 51% stake in the newly created national mobile licensee Irancell in February 2004, but the deal with Turkcell ran into difficulty, with conservative Iranian politicians unhappy with the involvement of a Turkish firm in one of the country's main communications networks. Turkcell had been seeking a majority stake in Irancell but the government pushed through legislation in April 2005 to limit its stake to 49%; the cellco says it then faced a number of other blocking tactics and it was left with little choice but to walk away from the deal. The Turkish firm went on to launch its legal case against Iran in January 2008. Meanwhile, MTN of South Africa took Turkcell's place in the consortium in October 2005 and Irancell has gone on to take second spot in the country's mobile market, with 42.7 million subscribers at the end of June 2014. (October 20, 2014) telegeography.com

Iraq

Chairman: Dr. Saffa Al Din
[Communication & Media Commission (CMC)]

The government is asking the nation's cellcos to pay US$307 million each for 3G spectrum, despite the impact of the region's ongoing security crisis. The trio of operators – Zain Iraq, Asiacell (partly owned by Qatar's Ooredoo Group), and Korek Telecom (part-owned by

Orange Group) – have fiercely criticized the proposal, pointing out that the spectrum would only be valid for the remaining eight years of their current operating licenses and highlighting the substantial increase in operating costs due to the violent uprising in the country. The government granted the three operators permission to use the 3G frequencies in May this year, ostensibly reversing the previous decision to allocate the spectrum via auction. (October 15, 2014) reuters.com

Jordan

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

Zain Jordan has signed a deal with Chinese vendor Huawei for the supply and construction of Kingdom's first 4G network. Zain assessed bids from five potential providers based on their financial offers and technical standards. The cellco has already begun laying the groundwork for the launch of 4G, Zain CEO told press, noting that it had invested JOD10 million (US$14.05 million) in 2014 to upgrade its backhaul network, including the implementation of Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) and Multiprotocol Lapel Switching (MPLS) technologies. Zain expects to spend JOD50 million during the current financial year further upgrades to support its Long Term Evolution (LTE) launch. The operator is sticking to its target of making the service available before the end of the year, although it will not be launched nationwide until 2015.
(October 6, 2014) telegeography.com

Kuwait

Minister of Communication:
Eisa Ahmad Alkandari
[Ministry of Communication (MOC)]

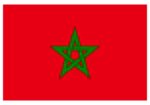
Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), the country's sovereign wealth fund, has announced that it would sell its stake in Kuwait Investment Co (KIC) in 1H 2015, while its share in telecoms operator Zain Group and the Kuwait Finance House would be offered to the public 'at a later time'. KIA said that it will continue to support the local market by reinvesting capital raised from offloading the shares in investment products and funds. Following the announcement, the Kuwaiti Stock Exchange (KWSE) suspended trading of KIC, Zain Group and Kuwait Finance House shares, pending more clarification of KIA's plans; trading of the stocks will resume on October 26, 2014. Zain Group had market capitalization of KWD2.853 billion (USD10.07 billion) at end- OCTember 2014, placing it in the top 20 ranking of the largest Middle Eastern companies. KIA owns a 24.61% stake, while the largest private shareholder is Kuwaiti-based Kharafi Group with a 15.47% stake (up from around 9.5% in 2008). 9.83% of Zain's stock is held as treasury shares, with the remainder floated on the Kuwaiti bourse. (October 24, 2014) telegeography.com

Lebanon

Acting Chairman & CEO: Dr. Imad Hoballah
[Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA)]

Alongside the extension of the private management contracts of state-owned cellcos Touch and Alfa for an undefined period, Lebanese telecoms minister Boutros Harb yesterday (2 October 2014) presented three options to the cabinet regarding the future of Lebanon's mobile networks, the Daily Star reported. 'The minister extended the contract with us for an unlimited period until he returns with a clear answer from the cabinet on his new proposals,' a spokesperson for Alfa (managed by Egypt's Orascom Telecom Media & Technology Holding) told the paper on the day of contract expiry (30 OCTember), while Kuwait-based Zain Group's contract for managing Touch was also extended on the expiry date. Harb has asked fellow ministers to opt for one of the following options: renew the contracts with the existing management firms under new conditions; launch a new tender open to prospective international market entrants; or allow the telecoms ministry to manage the mobile networks itself (keeping on all the existing staff at Touch and Alfa except 'management'). The cellular networks generate over USD1.5 billion in annual combined revenue for the treasury, making it the third largest source of state income after customs and VAT, but Touch and Alfa have been criticised for poor quality mobile connections. (October 3, 2014) telegeography.com

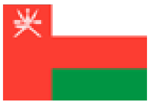
Morocco



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

The turnover of the sector of information and communication technology (ICT) in Morocco jumped from € 750 million in 1999 to € 3 billion in 2013, revealed the National Agency of telecommunications Regulation (ANRT). The sector has thus become the biggest tax-payer in the country and grabs much of the foreign direct investments injected in the Kingdom. Morocco has over 43 million subscriptions to mobile telephony with a penetration rate of 130 pc and 8 million Internet customers, who are mainly connected through 3G (88 %.) The figures were disclosed by ANRT during the 12th annual meeting of the Francophone Network of telecommunications regulation (FRATEL) held recently in Marrakech. The ICT sector is a major lever for the development of an information society and the emergence of a digital economy in Morocco which needs to take up the challenge of meeting the increasing demand and boosting the networks capacity and flows, said the ANRT, which insisted on the key role played by the sector in the country's overall economic and social development. The ICT sector in Morocco is very attractive to foreign investors. Last May, Middle-East Telecom giant, Etisalat, finalized the acquisition of 53pc of stakes held by the French company Vivendi in Morocco's leading telecom operator, Maroc Telecom, for $4.4 Billion. By January 1, 2015, French telecom group "Orange" is expected to increase by 9 % its share in the capital of Méditel, the second telecom operator in Morocco, and is said to have started finalizing the takeover. The takeover was provided for in the shareholders' agreement of 2010, under which Atlas Services Belgium, a subsidiary of Orange group, acquired 40% of Méditel for € 640 million. After the transaction, Orange will own 49% of Méditel while the two other shareholders, Finance Com and La Caisse de Dépôt et de Gestion (CDG) will keep 25.5% of shares each. The 130 participants in the Marrakesh meeting focused debates on the exponential growth in mobile traffic that can saturate the available frequencies and on means to increase capacity and flows in future mobile networks to provide very high speed mobile services to customers. The meeting stressed the need to enable developing countries have access to affordable technical solutions in line with the democratization of information technology which has direct impacts on economic development. (October 10, 2014) northafricapost.com

Oman



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

The Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA) has stepped in to check mobile phone users from unofficially transferring their phone numbers to others for a sum. The telecom watchdog has said that any such transfer for money is illegal. "It is forbidden under the law to trade in GSM numbers. The TRA has banned it. Under certain circumstances, individuals are allowed to transfer the numbers to their close family members," a TRA spokesperson said. There are several establishments that trade GSM numbers. A TRA statement said, "It is the TRA's intention to educate subscribers that the payment of a fee to acquire these numbers does not bring about the transfer of ownership to the person allocated the number. TRA reserves the right to withdraw any number allocated to a user if required in public interest." TRA further said trading in telephone numbers is punishable under the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority Act. Action will also be taken against those who obtain and misuse phone numbers issued to expats who are no longer resident in Oman. (October 25, 2014) muscatdaily.com

Pakistan

Chairman: Dr. Syed Ismail Shah
[Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)]

Pakistan has won a seat on the ITU Council in elections held in Bushan, South Korea earlier today. The country had lost its place in elections held in 2010 but managed to get back its seat in this year's elections by one vote. International Telecommunication Union is a specialized agency of the United Nations that deals with issues concerning information and communication technologies. These issues include but are not limited to improving communication services and allocation of radio frequencies and satellite orbits. The ITU also strives to improve the access of ICT to underserved communities across the world. The ITU recently held the 19th ITU Plenipotentiary Conference which decided 12 members of the Radio Regulations Board (RRB) and 48 members of the ITU Council through an election. In the Asia and Australasia region, 13 seats were available for 18 candidates in which Pakistan secured its position with a total of 101 out of 167 votes. Pakistan first became part of the ITU Council in 2002. PTA then managed to retain membership in 2006 but lost it in 2010 when Mian Muhammad Javaid was nominated as candidate. State Minister Anusha Rehman Khan represented Pakistan at this year's Conference. The ITU Council acts as the governing body of the organization in-between conferences which take place every four years. The Council plays a major part in telecommunication policy and strategy development. Being part of the ITU Council will allow Pakistan to have a voice in the future direction of global information and communication technologies. The countries that will be representing the region alongside Pakistan for the next four years will be China, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Australia, Bangladesh, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, India and Pakistan. Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Iran and Bahrain failed to secure any position. In other news from the Conference, Houlin Zhao was elected as the next ITU Secretary General. Zhao has held the position for the previous two terms and received a unanimous vote. His term will begin on the 1st of January 2015. (October 27, 2014) propakistani.pk

Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) has published a draft Telecommunications Policy for wider stakeholder consideration and comments from the general public. The draft is based on recommendations from consultants, the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) and the Frequency Allocation Board (FAB), as well as telecom operators and organizations. The broad aim of the policy is to implement the government's 'vision' for the sector: 'Universally available, affordable and quality telecom services provided through open, competitive, and well managed markets and used by all to the benefit of the economy and society.' The policy covers a range of topics including: competition, licensing, interconnection, right of way, internal networks, infrastructure and resource sharing, quality of service (QoS), universal service provision, research and development (R&D) and satellite services. Notably, the policy sets out rules to allow for spectrum trading to take place, although it will only be permitted under certain specific conditions. Similarly, operators will be permitted to share spectrum resources, although the MoITT notes that sharing spectrum does not absolve the licensee from any rollout obligations that they might be subject to. Elsewhere, the PTA and the federal government will develop regulatory instruments to enable the provision of voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) and over-the-top (OTT) services, where the service provider may not have any equipment installed within the territory of Pakistan. These measures must take into consideration the potential requirement for scarce resources (i.e. numbering) and the requirement for lawful interception as well as interconnection and access to emergency services. The issue of Net Neutrality is also covered, and attempts to reach a compromise between providing operators with commercial options and preventing anti-competitive practices. The draft policy allows internet service providers (ISPs) to throttle and shape traffic on the condition that they provide access to 'all services without discrimination through the technical characteristics of the service.' Further, backhaul, transit services and gateways between operator networks may not discriminate between the access provider's own services, or services that the access provider favors, and other services. (October 10, 2014) telegeography.com

Qatar

Executive Director: Mr. Graeme Gordon
[Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA)]

Telecoms group Ooredoo has posted consolidated revenue in the third quarter and first nine months of 2014 which dropped year-on-year by 1% and 3% respectively to QAR8.335 billion (US$2.267 billion) and QAR24.839 billion. Group EBITDA also shrank, by 7% and 9% in 3Q14 and 9M14 respectively to QAR3.365 billion and QAR10.234 billion, although net profit attributable to Ooredoo shareholders increased by 11% to QAR375 million in Q3 and rose by 0.5% in January-OCTember to QAR2.079 billion. Consolidated customer base across the group grew by 7% to 95.7 million at 30 OCTember 2014, up from 89.6 million a year earlier. Ooredoo's earnings release attributed the negative group revenue trend to the challenging market environments in Indonesia, Kuwait, Iraq and Tunisia, which offset positive performances in Qatar, Oman and Algeria; excluding the impact of Indonesian foreign currency exchange (FX), group revenue would have increased by 1% in 9M14. Ooredoo added that, excluding the impact of Indonesian FX and start-up costs in its newest market Myanmar (where its 3G network launched in mid-August 2014), EBITDA would have decreased by 3% compared to the reported 9% reduction in 9M14. Announced alongside the financial results, Ooredoo's Omani subsidiary, formerly branded Nawras, has now officially adopted the Ooredoo brand. Ooredoo also noted in its earnings release that its Indonesian subsidiary Indosat has taken a 'prudent' provision of QAR416 million against the pending final outcome of a court case relating to a 2006 contract under which Indosat's subsidiary IM2 leased capacity on its parent's 3G network for mobile dongle-based services; on 16 OCTember 2014 a fine against IM2 was reportedly decided on, but formal notification of the decision is awaited. (October 28, 2014) telegeography.com

Mobile and fiber broadband operator Vodafone Qatar has reached a non-binding agreement to buy state-owned passive broadband infrastructure operator Qatar National Broadband Network (QNBN), and expects to complete the deal by the end of 2014 pending further due diligence and regulatory approval. UK/Qatari-backed Vodafone Qatar proposed to buy 100% of QNBN, comprising 21 million shares at a par value of QAR10 (US$2.75) per share (equating to a total of QAR210 million, although the company did not confirm if it offered to pay par value). QNBN provides wholesale fiber broadband capacity to Vodafone and its larger mobile and fixed rival Ooredoo (which reciprocally contributes shared fiber infrastructure to QNBN). QNBN began a nationwide passive fiber network rollout in 2012 under a plan to finish construction in three years. Vodafone Qatar stated: 'Completion of the transaction is conditional upon regulatory approvals and consents, completion of due diligence, agreement on the consideration payable, the arrangement and provision of funding to finance the acquisition and entry into of a definitive share purchase agreement.' (October 3, 2014) reuters.com

Saudi Arabia

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

The Ministry of Culture and Information will soon regulate all video and image-sharing websites on the Internet to ensure they comply with the country's laws, an expert said. Hamza Al-Ghubaishi, organizer of the Digital Visual Forum that concluded in Riyadh, said the ministry's General Authority for Audio and Visual Media has been entrusted with this task. During the first session of the forum, Al-Ghubaishi said many young people do not know that they have to get permits to produce content on YouTube and similar sites. "Many such clips contain ethical and religious violations. There has been no government body until now to supervise or regulate such channels, or issue permits," he said. He said an additional task of the authority is to raise awareness among young people on the importance of quality production. Al-Ghubaishi said the authorities are still considering the establishment of cinemas in the Kingdom. Rami Damanhouri, human resources development officer at MBC Group, said that Shahid, the leading video-on-demand service, was launched in 2008 to increase the number of Arabic viewers by 5 percent. He said most Shahid viewers are Saudi, and 40 percent watch television on the Internet. Abdul Rahman Al-Tariri, media consultant at Rotana Group, said his group sees the Internet as a platform to watch television. He said Rotana Khalijia set up six channels on YouTube to feature weekly programs. Faisal Al-Saif, a Saudi television presenter, said there is a lack of tourism programs on the Kingdom on these websites. He said there has been an increase in viewers on YouTube compared to official television networks. The forum catered to those with hearing and visual disabilities. It held the initiative in collaboration with the Prince Mohammed bin Salman Charitable Foundation. (October 28, 2014) Arab News 2014

The penetration rate of mobile phones among Saudi nationals climbed to 170 percent and outperformed the global rate of 93 percent, according to a financial report. The Kingdom came in the 9th and 3rd positions at the global and Arab-Gulf levels, respectively, in terms of the mobile penetration rates compared to their respective populations, the report, compiled and analyzed by Al-Eqtisadiyah daily, said. (October 10, 2014) zawya.com

Revenues of the telecom sector in the Kingdom are poised to grow by 2 percent by year-end and 4.7 percent by the end of next year (2015), local media said quoting a financial report. "We expect the sector to record a revenue growth of 2 percent in 2014 and 4.7 percent in 2015 to reach SR82.6 billion," said equity research analyst at NCB Capital. He said valuations will remain attractive for the Saudi Telecom Co. (STC) and Etihad Etisalat Co. (Mobily) boosted by strong fundamentals, dividend outlook and opening of Saudi stock market to international investors. For future outlook, the analyst gave "overweight" for STC and Mobily and "neutral" for Zain Saudi Arabia, the paper said. The slowdown in the telecom sector remains a key concern, he said. Despite the expected growth of revenues, key strengths of the sector come from attractive valuations and high dividend yield, he said. He gave preference to STC based on its strong balance sheet, potential of higher dividends and attractive P/E of 12.0X for next year (2015), the paper said. The report said frequent and high dividend yields are the sector's key strength. The current dividend yield for the telecom sector is 4.3 percent compared with nearly 2.6 percent for the Saudi stock market (TASI). STC and Mobily are among few companies in the market that pay quarterly dividends, the report said. The analyst expected that growth in the telecom will continue in the next two years driven by the data sector and, further, by the growing penetration rates of the low-cost Smartphone sets. (October 5, 2014) arabnews.com

Tunisia

President: Mr. Hassoumi Zitoune
[National Telecommunication Commission (I NTT)]

Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, Information Technology and Communication (Mincom) has confirmed that it completed all preparations for issuing concessions for mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) services in May this year, but has not yet received any applications for the licenses. Local news portal THD writes that Mincom has requested that any interested parties that filed applications prior to that date complete the final pieces of paperwork. Once the last documents have been submitted, Mincom will issue letters of support to the would-be MVNOs 'to facilitating the contractual and administrative procedures with the intervening structures, such as other government agencies and public network operators.' Mincom has also urged any other prospective providers to submit an application. (October 20, 2014) telegeography.com

Turkey

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

Consolidated revenues at Turkish telecoms group Turkcell climbed by 6% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2014 to TRY3.162 billion (US$1.415 billion), up from TRY2.981 billion in 3Q13, driven by higher growth in mobile broadband and fiber broadband revenues. Group EBITDA rose by 3% to TRY1.050 billion in the three months ended OCTember 30, 2014, compared to TRY1.016 billion in the year-ago period, although the EBITDA margin declined to 33.2% from 34.1% y-o-y, resulting largely from increased sales and marketing expenses (due to intense competition in the Turkish mobile market, higher Turkish mobile interconnection and network costs, and increased operational expenses of other subsidiaries). Group quarterly net income rose by 8% to TRY755 million (TRY699 million). Turkcell's mobile business in Turkey recorded y-o-y revenue growth of 5% to TRY2.477 billion in Q3 2014, while posting a 33.5% (down from 34.5%) EBITDA margin; Turkish quarterly mobile broadband revenues jumped by 38% to TRY530 million (from TRY385 million) while voice revenues also rose, by 0.7% to TRY1.676 billion. Combined revenues of other subsidiaries increased by 11% y-o-y to TRY685 million and EBITDA of subsidiaries rose by 11% to TRY222 million. Turkish broadband operator Turkcell Super online grew its revenues by 38% y-o-y in Q3 on the strength of a growing fiber customer base. Ukrainian cellco Astelit's revenues increased by 16% in local currency terms to UAH1.145 billion (US$88.4 million) but declined by 21% in group reporting (TRY) terms due to 62% currency devaluation in Ukraine.
(October 27, 2014) telegeography.com

United Arab Emirates

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

Du has achieved Voice over LTE (VoLTE) functionality in its live network recently, following the deployment of Nokia's VoLTE solution and Professional Services. Nokia designed, tested and integrated VoLTE into du's multi-vendor LTE network and achieved the implementation in just 80 days, marking this as the world's fastest implementation. Recent tests in Nokia Networks Smart Labs show that VoLTE clients are network friendlier than other clients as overall data volume consumed over a period of time show significantly lower consumption for VoLTE, thanks to its more efficient behavior during stand-by mode. VoLTE clients also consume less Smartphone battery compared to other clients and put less signaling load on networks. For this project, Nokia's VoLTE solution consisting of its Liquid Core based IMS was supplied while its Professional Services carried out the network planning and optimization, smooth system integration, and network implementation in the complex multi-vendor environment. In addition, Nokia Networks provided LTE radio access to du's commercial network.
(October 6, 2014) cellular-news.com

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE SAMENA REGION

Regulatory Updates

Argentina

Telecom Italia (TI) has accepted an offer from investment firm Fintech Group to amend and restate their original existing agreement regarding the sale of the Italian company's entire interest in Telecom Argentina. Last November TI agreed to sell its Argentine unit to Mexican billionaire David Martinez's Fintech for US$960 million, but the telco has been forced to extend the deadline for completion of the sale as it awaits regulatory approval from antitrust authorities in Argentina. Under the amended agreement, the sale of TI's 51% controlling interest in Sofora – the holding company that controls Telecom Argentina – is conditional upon receiving regulatory approval from the Secretaria de Comunicaciones (SeCom), which is expected to take place 'within the next two and a half years'. In the interim, a 17% minority interest in Sofora will be sold to Fintech by the end of this month. The total aggregate consideration of the transaction remains unchanged at USD960 million, of which US$113.7 million has already been received by TI, while US$215.7 million will be paid for the 17% stake in Sofora by the end of October. A further US$550.6 million will be paid as consideration for the sale of TI's 51% controlling interest in Sofora, with the remaining US$80 million to be paid following closing of the transaction, pursuant to additional agreements related to the sale. If the sale of 51% of Sofora to Fintech is not completed within two and a half years, TI may then elect to either terminate the agreement with Fintech and receive a six-month call option to purchase the 17% minority interest in Sofora previously sold to Fintech pursuant to an agreed formulation, or sell its 51% stake in the holding company to a third party purchaser, subject to regulatory approval. In this case, Fintech has agreed to guarantee that TI will receive an overall amount of at least USD630.6 million. (October 27, 2014) telegeography.com

Regulator SECOM has confirmed that it has completed its pre-qualification analysis of the four applications it received from companies hoping to participate in this month's auction of 3G and 4G licenses. As such, mobile operators Claro Argentina, Telecom Personal and Telefonica Moviles (Movistar), alongside media conglomerate Arlink (Grupo Uno), will now go head-to-head for the spectrum later this month. SECOM is offering national 4G LTE spectrum in the 700MHz and 1700MHz/2100MHz (AWS) frequency bands, as well as surplus regional 3G spectrum in the 850MHz (SRMC) and 1900MHz (PCS) ranges. Winning bidders of the 4G spectrum will be required to provide coverage of all localities with more than 500 inhabitants (around 98% of the population) within five years, with the licenses valid for a period of 15 years. The 3G licenses have been divided up into three geographic areas: North, South and Buenos Aires metropolitan area. The government is expected to hold the auction on October 31, with spectrum permits awarded in mid-November. (October 8, 2014) telegeography.com

AUSPI

CDMA lobby group the Association of Unified Service Providers of India (AUSPI) has criticized the regulator's recommendation of creating an extended GSM band (e-GSM) by utilizing 800MHz frequencies previously reserved for CDMA services. AUSPI – which represents the nation's CDMA and dual-technology providers – has warned that any bid to harmonize the 800MHz range with the e-GSM band would 'grossly undermine' their businesses, in which they have invested billions of rupees to deploy CDMA networks, which are reliant on 800MHz frequencies. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has not yet made decision on the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI's) proposals, which threaten to marginalize CDMA providers in favor of their GSM-based rivals. The TRAI has also suggested that the valuation of 800MHz spectrum should take into consideration its potential use for 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) services, although AUSPI and its members are calling for the government to lower the prospective reserve price for 800MHz spectrum. (October 17, 2014) The Economic Times

Belgium

The European Commission (EC) has reportedly referred Belgium to the European Court of Justice, claiming that the country had ignored a formal request to ensure the independence of its telecoms regulator, the Belgian Institute for Postal Services and Telecommunications (BIPT). With the EC having called on the Belgian government to give up powers to suspend decisions taken by the BIPT last April, at that date the European Union (EU) executive had argued that such a situation could affect the watchdog's ability to ensure fair competition. Commenting on the situation, the EC had noted: 'The Commission considers that these elements limit the independence of the BIPT when implementing EU telecom rules and that this can have negative consequences for competition in the sector.' Having referred the case to the apex court, this could now mean Belgium would be forced to update legislation so that the state can no longer interfere in the BIPT's decisions or require that the regulator submit its multi-annual strategy for approval. (October 17, 2014) telegeography.com

Brazil

The auction of 700MHz Long Term Evolution (LTE)-suitable spectrum in Brazil concluded watchdog ANATEL has announced, generating a total of BRL5.85 billion (US$2.39 billion) – well below the regulator's BRL7.71 billion target. The country's three largest mobile operators by subscribers – Vivo, TIM Brasil and Claro – all picked up nationwide spectrum blocks, generally paying slightly over the asking price, while one regional player – Algar Telecom – boosted its spectrum holdings in its existing service area. Oi, Brazil's fourth-largest mobile operator did not participate in the auction. America Movil (AM)-backed Claro paid BRL1.947 billion for 'Lot 1', representing a 1% increase on the reserve price, while TIM Brasil bid the same for 'Lot 2' (0.99%). Vivo, meanwhile, met the reserve price of BRL1.928 billion attached to 'Lot 3', while Algar paid BRL29.57 million (0.02%) for spectrum covering 87 municipalities in the states of Goias, Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso do Sul and Sao Paulo ('Lot 5'). However, 'Lot 6', covering the municipalities of Londrina and Tamarana in the state of Parana, where Sercomtel operates, did not attract any bidders. Neither did 'Lot 4', which offered national coverage with the exception of the areas covered by Lot 5 and Lot 6. The use of the 700MHz spectrum band, currently in use by TV broadcasters, is expected to allow the country's mobile operators to extend their LTE networks into rural areas; currently 4G in Brazil is provided using the 2500MHz band, which was auctioned in June 2012. Although the government originally hoped that the analogue switch-off would take place in 2016, there will now be a staggered transition between 2015 and 2018; any analogue transmitters continuing to operate will serve rural areas. (October 1, 2014) telegeography.com

Bulgaria

The auction of 700MHz Long Term Evolution (LTE)-suitable spectrum in Brazil concluded watchdog ANATEL has announced, generating a total of BRL5.85 billion (US$2.39 billion) – well below the regulator's BRL7.71 billion target. The country's three largest mobile operators by subscribers – Vivo, TIM Brasil and Claro – all picked up nationwide spectrum blocks, generally paying slightly over the asking price, while one regional player – Algar Telecom – boosted its spectrum holdings in its existing service area. Oi, Brazil's fourth-largest mobile operator did not participate in the auction. America Movil (AM)-backed Claro paid BRL1.947 billion for 'Lot 1', representing a 1% increase on the reserve price, while TIM Brasil bid the same for 'Lot 2' (0.99%). Vivo, meanwhile, met the reserve price of BRL1.928 billion attached to 'Lot 3', while Algar paid BRL29.57 million (0.02%) for spectrum covering 87 municipalities in the states of Goias, Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso do Sul and Sao Paulo ('Lot 5'). However, 'Lot 6', covering the municipalities of Londrina and Tamarana in the state of Parana, where Sercomtel operates, did not attract any bidders. Neither did 'Lot 4', which offered national coverage with the exception of the areas covered by Lot 5 and Lot 6. The use of the 700MHz spectrum band, currently in use by TV broadcasters, is expected to allow the country's mobile operators to extend their LTE networks into rural areas; currently 4G in Brazil is provided using the 2500MHz band, which was auctioned in June 2012. Although the government originally hoped that the analogue switch-off would take place in 2016, there will now be a staggered transition between 2015 and 2018; any analogue transmitters continuing to operate will serve rural areas. (October 1, 2014) telegeography.com

Bosnia

According to the latest data produced by Bosnian telecoms watchdog the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) there were 3.385 million mobile subscribers in the country at the end of June 2014, up less than 1% from the 3.356 million recorded three months earlier. BH Telecom accounted for the largest share of the total – 44.70%, down from 44.87% at end-March 2014 – while Telekom Srpske and HT Mostar claimed 42.09% (1Q14: 42.32%) and 13.03% (12.55%), respectively. Mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) IZI Mobile had just over 5,400 customers at the end of the reporting period, giving it 0.16% of the market, down against the roughly 8,400 (or 0.25%) it had three months earlier. Rounding out the market, fellow MVNO

BlicNet, which launched in December 2013, saw its subscriber base increase to just over 1,000, or 0.03% of the market, as at end-June 2014. Meanwhile, according to the CRA's data at the end of June 2014 there were a total of 528,893 fixed line broadband accesses, up 2.2% quarter-on-quarter. Both xDSL- and cable-based connections were up against the previous quarter at 298,006 and 164,887, respectively, while FTTx accesses stood at 325 at end-June 2014, compared to 313 three months earlier. Fixed-wireless, leased line and 'other' technologies all see declines, however, falling to 63,954 (64,856), 1,310 (1,316) and 411 (440), respectively.
(October 15, 2014) telegeography.com

Bulgaria

The telecoms regulator Communications Regulation Commission (CRC) has opened a public consultation with regards to the potential use of available spectrum in the 1800MHz band, with Decision No.645, dated OCTember 23, 2014. According to a CRC press release, the decision was prompted by 'growing interest' in the available resources in the 1710MHz-1785MHz and 1805MHz-1880MHz frequency bands. The regulator has invited all interested parties to submit their suggestions and comments on the topic by December 29, 2014.
(October 8, 2014) telegeography.com

The Supreme Administrative Court of Bulgaria has backed a decision by the Commission for Consumer Protection (CCP), which accused wireless operator MobilTel (M-Tel) of 'unfair commercial practices'. According to a CCP, the cellco wrongly claimed that leased handsets coded to work only with M-Tel's SIM cards could be unlocked for free after the end of the fixed-term contract. However, the CCP found out that subscribers are required to pay a fee in order to obtain the unlock code; 'this information is provided solely on the company website, and users without access to the internet may take uninformed decision', the CCP said. Following the latest amendments to the consumer protection law, users now have the right to terminate their contract with a given provider and claim compensation – if the operator has been found in breach of the legislation. (October 6, 2014) CCP

Colombia

Ministry of Information Technology and Communication (MinTIC) has teamed up with the National Spectrum Agency (ANE) to prepare a draft resolution regarding the proposed distribution of spectrum in the 900MHz and 1900MHz bands. The planned tender will comprise 22MHz of spectrum in the 900MHz band (894MHz-905MHz paired with 939MHz-950MHz) and a 5MHz block in the 1900MHz (1850MHz-1990MHz) band. Mobile operators which manage to secure spectrum in the tender will be obliged to offer preferred national roaming rates and share infrastructure, among other conditions. In addition, as part of the license conditions, 1900MHz spectrum winners must extend services to 40 inaccessible locations, while 900MHz licensees must offer connectivity in 50 unserved areas. MinTIC invites interested parties to submit their comments on the resolution by 31 October. (October 22, 2014) telegeography.com

Costa Rica

Costa Rican telecoms regulator SUTEL has installed a national system for managing and monitoring the use of radioelectric spectrum. The agency has constructed four fixed stations in Perez Zeledon, San Rafael de Heredia, Oreamuno Cartago and Liberia Guancaste, to monitor spectrum usage, and also uses two mobile units to take measurements anywhere in the country. The four fixed stations and the two mobile units are linked to each other, and feedback information to the monitoring centre in SUTEL's headquarters. Engineer and Sutel board member Gilbert Camacho Mora was quoted in a press release from the regulator as saying: 'This is the first time that the country has had a Radio Spectrum Monitoring System, which will measure the coverage and quality of different telecommunications services in order to verify that licensees...comply with regulations, and [will] quickly and easily identify any illegal use of spectrum or interference, which will improve the quality perceived by users.' (October 6, 2014) telegeography.com

Cote d'Ivoire

The Ivorian telecoms watchdog L'Autorite de Regulation des Telecommunications/TIC de Cote d'Ivoire (ARTCI) has confirmed that it is set to revoke the mobile license held by mobile market minnow Aircom (Cafe Mobile). Reuters quotes ARTCI director general Diemeleou Bile as saying: 'There are seven licenses. We aim to cut the number of mobile operators and keep only those who are performing very well. Their case has been referred to the regulatory council for their license to be rescinded.' Bile also noted that a number of licenses are up for renewal in 2015, which could spell trouble for underperforming operators such as Comium and LAP Green-backed GreenN, both of which occupy a less than 10% share of the market. In May this year communications minister Bruno Kone publicly urged Comium, GreenN and Cafe Mobile to merge their operations in an effort to stay competitive, and create a stronger fourth player capable of challenging Orange, MTN and Moov. Vietnam's Viettel Group had previously been linked with a takeover for cash-strapped Comium, although no deal materialized, and the company turned its attention to other African markets. Cafe Mobile's future looked bleak in August, when the ARTCI omitted the company from its most recent quarterly statistical overview, which covered the three month period ended March 31, 2014. The cellco, which launched in April 2012 – almost twelve years after receiving its original operating concession – had amassed just 17,865 subscribers by December 31, 2013, equivalent to a meager 0.1% market share, and its lack of progress prompted widespread speculation over the viability of its ongoing operation.
(October 22, 2014) telegeography.com

Cyprus

Telecoms watchdog, the Office of the Commissioner of Electronic Communications & Postal Regulation (OCECPR), has launched a public consultation regarding the assessment of bundled telecoms services offered by the country's telcos. The regulator has pointed out that the proposed approach is designed to prevent the possibility of bypassing ex ante regulation or distorting competition by letting telcos offer bundled services without greater scrutiny. The OCECPR has invited all interested parties to submit their comments by October 24, 2014, while the regulator's final decision on the subject will be published in November 2014. (October 15, 2014) telegeography.com

ECTA

ECTA (the European Competitive Telecommunications Association) has backed the opinion published earlier this week by BEREC (the Body of European Regulators of Electronic Communications) which asserted that it is premature to remove the retail fixed telephony access and wholesale fixed call origination markets (Markets '1' and '2') from the list of regulated telecommunications markets as recommended by a European Commission (EC) decision earlier this month. Contrary to the EC recommendation, BEREC considers that the two fixed line markets should stay on the regulated list, given that regulators' decisions in a significant number of Member States indicate that these markets are not competitive and therefore justify the continuation of regulation. ECTA points to the fact that, out of 28 European regulators, only three to date have deregulated the retail access fixed telephony market (Finland, Netherlands and Romania, whilst Germany has deregulated a specific high-end segment of the market); and similarly, only three regulators (Estonia, Finland and Romania) have deregulated the wholesale fixed call origination market. Another regulator, the Belgian Institute for Post and Telecommunications (BIPT), has indicated it will act in accordance with the EC recommendation in the retail and wholesale fixed line markets, according to an announcement last month reported by CommsUpdate. Erszebet Fitori, director of ECTA, stated the position of the organization (which represents more than 100 alternative telcos): 'Premature deregulation represents a step back in the liberalization process. Regulation is there to ensure that those markets which are structurally uncompetitive receive the right push towards competition. Forcing the removal of regulation prematurely will drive competitors out of the market, raise prices for users, stifle innovation and take away hard won benefits from European consumers.' An opposite view to the BEREC/ECTA consensus on fixed line deregulation is – unsurprisingly perhaps – held by incumbent telecoms operators, who have argued the move towards deregulation will help boost investment in broadband infrastructure. Backing the incumbents, lobby group the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO) was cited last month as saying: 'Competition from alternative platforms and over-the-top [OTT] service competition are today well established, and this [EC] recommendation is the right instrument to adapt regulation to the new market reality.' Another crucial aspect of the recent EC recommendation was a modified wholesale framework recognizing that 'virtual access products' – which include virtual unbundled local access (VULA) – can be considered substitutes to physical unbundling when they fulfill certain characteristics. ECTA expressed concern at this development in the wholesale field, as it said 'physical access is key to ensure that alternative operators can effectively compete and innovate at the retail level, by building pioneering and affordable offers, which end users can benefit from.' ECTA added that it was disappointed that BEREC's published opinion 'did not take a more pro-competitive stance and has not tackled other issues of great importance such as the need to ring-fence physical access.' On additional related issues, ECTA stated: 'The over-emphasis on geographic segmentation of the broadband markets should have also been tackled [by BEREC] and a bolder position on the need to segment the market designed to serve business customers would have also been desirable.' On the other hand, BEREC's published opinion did include a call for EC guidance on how to tackle joint dominance and oligopolistic market structures. ECTA underlines that the EC must now take the BEREC opinion into account in a review of its recommendations. Potentially this could lead to the fixed voice markets being 'put back' on the regulated list, whilst ECTA also urges that the other issues it has highlighted are tackled in the review process, including the question over maintaining physical LLU.

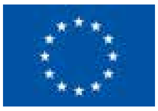
(October 16, 2014) telegeography.com

El Salvador

Telecoms regulator SIGET has announced that it has lowered the maximum rate that fixed and mobile operators can charge for calls. On November 1, 2014 the price cap for mobile calls will fall from US$0.17153 to US$0.14902 per minute (including VAT) for on-net calls and will drop from US$0.20576 to US$0.18105 per minute for off-net calls, while wireless calls to landlines may be charged at no more than US$0.12525 (on-net, down from US$0.14356) and US$0.12445 per minute (off-net, down from US$0.14299). Meanwhile, the maximum cost of landline calls will fall from US$0.04360 to US$0.04253 (on-net) and from US$0.04295 to US$0.04167 (off-net) per minute at the start of next month. Calls from fixed line to cellular networks may be charged at no more than US40.14296 (on-net, down from US$0.16736) and US$0.15654 (off-net, down from US$0.17856) per minute. SIGET has also reduced the maximum monthly fixed telephony subscription charge from US$6.75 to US$6.08 per residential line and from US$12.29 to US$10.23 per business line per month (including VAT). Meanwhile, on 1 November 2014 mobile interconnection rates will fall slightly from US$0.01468 to US40.01467 per minute and fixed interconnection fees are scheduled to drop to US$0.04657 from US$0.05938 per month.

(October 6, 2014) telegeography.com

European Union



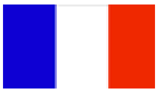
The European Commission, in agreement with member states, has decided that two telecom markets should no longer be subject to regulation in Europe, and that two more should be redefined to reflect market and technology developments. The rules take effect immediately. The liberated markets are the retail market for access to fixed telephony; and the wholesale market for fixed call origination. The Commission will also redefine two broadband markets, in order to limit regulatory burdens to what is strictly necessary for competitive broadband access and investment. The EC is increasing its focus on the distinct needs of business users, to make sure that competitive connectivity can unleash growth across the economy. There has been a decrease in volume of fixed calls as customers have turned to alternative solutions, such as voice-over-IP (VoIP) and mobile calls, but also to alternative providers, like over-the-top (OTT) players, a trend that has underpinned the decision to liberate the fixed telecoms markets. Also those customers who still use fixed telephony are now able to purchase fixed access from a number of different platforms, such as traditional telephone network, fiber or cable networks, and also from alternative operators offering broadband and voice services over unbundled local loops, so competition has been increased. The decision also flowed from a public consultation on the revision of the recommendation that took place between October 16 back in 2012 and January 8, 2013 (see IP/12/1105). The Commission also commissioned an external report, published in October 2013. The BEREC Opinion on the recommendation on relevant markets was adopted in June 2014. However, some markets remain regulated because some telecoms markets competition is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. This recommendation from the EC redefines the boundaries of the broadband markets, which consist of wholesale products needed for the provision of retail broadband services (new markets 3a, 3b and 4 replacing markets 4, 5 and 6 of the 2007 Recommendation). The new rules recognize that "virtual access products" can be considered substitutes to physical unbundling when they fulfill certain characteristics. (October 14, 2014) ftseglobalmarkets.com

The European Commission Vice President, Neelie Kroes, has delivered a farewell speech to the members of the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO); in which she urged telcos to embrace over-the-top (OTT) players, and stated her dream for the European telecommunications sector after the current Commission's tenure ends at the end of October. Kroes began her speech with an acknowledgement of the turbulent relationship that she has enjoyed with the telecoms sector. "You will know this is among our last moments together," she said. "In fact, you're probably all looking forward to the very near future, when the Juncker Commission takes office, when you won't have to put up with me anymore." It's true, the telecoms operators and Kroes haven't always seen eye to eye. Kroes has occasionally pointed at an uncooperative telecoms market as a key factor holding back the progression of the Commission's Digital Single Market proposal. Meanwhile, action regulating roaming revenues saw a reduction of roaming data fees by 55% in 2014 compared to 2013, and between 20% and 30% reductions in call and messaging fees. Kroes also went on to urge operators to change their views of OTT players in the industry, and highlighted digital content providers as a key motivator for consumer use of broadband services. "The current situation of European telcos is not the 'fault' of those OTT's. Today, all EU homes have broadband coverage; 76% have a connection; almost half can access it on their mobile," she said. "They are demanding greater and greater bandwidth, faster and faster speeds, and are prepared to pay for it. But how many of them would do that if there were no over the top services? If there were no Facebook, no YouTube, no Netflix, no Spotify? OTT players are the ones driving digital demand, demand for your services! That is something you can work with, not against." Rounding off her somewhat sentimental speech to ETNO, Kroes reminded the operators' that the Digital Single Market proposal will be maintained and advanced during the tenure of Jean-Claude Juncker, who begins in office as the European Commission's President on 1st November. "This is a project that will continue under the next mandate; as Jean-Claude Juncker has made clear," She said. "A project that can ensure our digital future, where a strong telecoms sector supports every European. That is was I long for, and that is what all of you should long for too." (October 2, 2014) telecoms.com

Finland

The Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (FICORA) has announced that EUR6 million (US$7.7 million) in state aid has been granted for fiber-optic broadband projects in Sodankyla and Ranua. Of the total, EUR3.7 million has been set aside for the Sodankyla project, with EUR2.3 million to be spent in Ranua; both projects are also being funded the by the respective municipalities where work is taking place. With the state aid having been granted as part of the Broadband 2015 project, Paivi Peltola-Ojala, head of Broadband and Media Group atFICORA, noted: 'The projects in Sodankyla and Ranua are a good example of such broadband building where a municipality and local players took things forward themselves because nationwide operators were not interested in providing high-speed connections their area.' In terms of specifics of the projects, Tahtikuitu Oy will build an advanced broadband network covering the entire area of the municipality of Sodankyla, with the estimated length of the network being 1,200km, covering some 2,220 premises. Construction is already underway, and the project is expected to be completed by end-2016. Meanwhile, in the municipality of Ranua a fiber-optic network will be built by Ranuan Kuituverkot Oy, with a 900km link providing services to around 1,200 premises; work on this project is forecast for completion by end-2017. Finland's 'Broadband 2015' initiative is supporting telcos in the roll out of new infrastructure in sparsely-populated regions of the country. Where funding is available operators are required to cover at least 34% of the costs, with the remainder funded by the state, municipalities and the European Union's (EU's) Rural Development Fund. According to the FICORA, with the Finnish government having set aside EUR64 million for the initiative for the period 2009-15, it has allocated 70% of that figure so far. (October 17, 2014) telegeography.com

France



The competition body has given the go-ahead to Altice's €13.5 billion takeover of SFR, subject to a number of conditions, including the requirement for Numericable to open up its cable network to competing operators. Altice agreed to acquire mobile operator SFR from Vivendi in April with a view to merging it with its cable unit Numericable. Vivendi selected Altice's offer since it promised a smoother regulatory approvals process than a rival bid from Bouygues Telecom, which would have brought together two of France's four mobile network operators. The tie-up between a mobile operator and a cableco is less likely to worry competition bodies. However, France's Authorité de la Concurrence has attached certain conditions to its approval of the deal, noting that the merger will give Numericable a "prominent position in the telecoms market." It identified a number of areas in which competition could be affected, including the consumer high-speed broadband market, where Numericable has an advantage thanks to its cable network and SFR is in the process of rolling out fiber. As such, it requires Numericable to allow alternative operators to have access to its cable infrastructure. In order to offset a reduction in competition in the business services market, Numericable must offload its Completel DSL network to another player and offer wholesale access to its fiber infrastructure. The cableco must also divest its Outremer Telecom business, which offers services in Reunion and Mayotte in order to address competition concerns in those territories. And it is required to ensure it does not collaborate with Vivendi, which will take a stake in Numericable as part of the takeover deal, in the pay TV market. The approval of the Authorité de la Concurrence paves the way for Altice to close the deal in the coming months. (October 28, 2014) totaltele.com

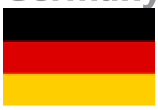
Telecoms regulator ARCEP has confirmed that it has opened 'pre-trial proceedings' against the trio of licensees owned by Curacao-based mobile group United Telecommunication Services (UTS), namely: Guyane Telephone Mobile (GTM), Guadeloupe Telephone Mobile (GTM) and Martinique Telephone Mobile (MTM). All three would-be cellcos were licensed in June 2008, but have failed to show any signs of rolling out 2G and 3G

networks, as stipulated by their respective concessions. ARCEP has extended the initial rollout schedules tied to the licenses – all companies were obliged to cover 90% of the country by 2013 – and now the trio must offer full coverage by 15 January 2016, with interim deadlines of January 15, 2015 and April 15, 2015. If the operators fail to meet the new targets they are likely to see their licenses revoked, potentially paving the way for the redistribution of the mobile concessions.
(October 20, 2014) telegeography.com

Telecoms regulator ARCEP has published the results of a public consultation on a proposed fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) network access pricing model, stating that most stakeholders approve of the general principles of the suggested model, while expressing some reservations about certain aspects of its implementation. ARCEP submitted the draft pricing model for accessing optical local loops outside 'very high density areas' for public consultation back in November 2013; by employing a benchmark methodology, the model aims to serve as a reference tool during pricing negotiations between the different wholesale market undertakings. The regulator plans to continue working with all stakeholders on expanding the operational scope of the pricing model, in order to 'take into account the sections located upstream from the concentration point, and downstream from the optical branching unit'. A refined method will be subject to consultation before the end of 2014, and if necessary, a new updated pricing model will be published, ARCEP added. (October 8, 2014) telegeography.com

President Francois Hollande has reportedly announced that telecoms regulator the ARCEP will initiate the process of auctioning frequencies in the 700MHz band for telecoms services in 2015, Advanced Television reports. Addressing previously expressed concerns of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) broadcasters that the allocation would interfere with the plans to migrate the DTT platform to MPEG-4 AVC by 2015 and DVB-T2 by 2023, President Hollande said that France needed an audiovisual sector that could broadcast broadly, effectively and securely, adding: 'This is the objective of transferring the 700MHz band to the telecom sector. The state will ensure that the available resources are guaranteed for broadcasting'. As such, ARCEP is expected to launch a tender for the 700MHz spectrum band in November 2015, with projections that the auction could generate up to EUR3 billion (USD3.8 billion) for the treasury. (October 3, 2014) telegeography.com

Germany



Germany plans to auction off spectrum earmarked for mobile broadband services in the second quarter of next year and to that end has issued a draft document regarding the allocation process. Germany's federal network agency the Bundesnetzagentur earlier this week confirmed that it will award frequencies in the 700-MHz, 900-MHz, 1500-MHz and 1800-MHz bands. "The rapidly growing demand for broadband connections requires a timely provision of spectrum for the expansion of mobile broadband in Germany," Bundesnetzagentur president Jochen Homann, said in a statement. The regulator added that it is especially keen to promote the development of mobile broadband services in rural areas. It also noted that the recently-completed merger of Telefonica's O2 Germany with E-Plus has "changed the structure of the market" and that allocating new spectrum in an open and transparent way will enhance competition. The 700-MHz spectrum, which the regulator refers to as a second digital dividend, is currently in use by broadcasters though. As such, federal and state governments must reach agreement on its allocation before the auction can take place. The state is aiming for the second quarter of 2015 and intends to follow the same auction format as it used in 2010. Interested parties have until 26 November to submit comments on the draft document.
(October 24, 2014) totaltele.com

The European Commission (EC) has called on the Federal Network Agency (FNA, also known as Bundesnetzagentur or BNetzA), Germany's telecoms regulator, to amend or withdraw its current mobile termination rate (MTR) proposals. According to a press release from the EC, with the BNetzA having sought to introduce MTRs for mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) sipgate Wireless, which are up to 80% higher than in most other European Union (EU) Member States, EC Vice President Neelie Kroes was cited as saying: 'I am very concerned by the fact that Germany continues to ignore the reasonable demands of the European Commission – setting it apart from all other Member States. Its approach towards mobile termination rates flies in the face of the internal market, and is detrimental to consumers.' With an investigation into the matter having gotten underway back in May 2014, the EC claims the German authorities have 'failed to provide justified reasons during the investigation ... as to why it should be granted special treatment and be exempt from following the method calculating MTRs set out in the EU telecoms rules'. Further, it is understood that the Body of European Telecoms Regulators (BEREC) has expressed its full support for the Commission's position. As such, the FNA is now required to either amend or withdraw its MTR proposal, and should it fail to comply with the EC's recommendation legal action could be initiated. (October 21, 2014) telegeography.com

Ghana

Minister of Communication, Dr. Edward Omane Boamah, has hinted at the government's intention of appointing a company that would take charge of the country's interconnect clearing house by the end of this year. The Communication Minister believes that the operation of an interconnect clearing house in the country will help in the monitoring of calls, both local and international, on one common platform to avoid the incidence of SIM boxing. The Communication Minister also highlighted the availability the Mobile Network License and urge Ghanaian entrepreneurs to take advantage of the opportunity to acquire these licenses. "Again, cabinet has approved what we call the Mobile Virtual Network License and this is a system that is empowering Ghanaians so that we can also take advantage of the telecommunications industry which is largely driven by non- Ghanaian interests. We think that it is important that we allow foreign investment into our country but there has to be an equitable ratio of Ghanaian interest and by this we are encouraging entrepreneurs to take advantage of the Mobile Virtual Network Operation License that cabinet has approved," he said. (October 17, 2014) biztechafrica.com

The National Communications Authority (NCA) has revealed that the mobile voice subscriber base has increased from 29.37 million at the end of July to 29.53 million as at the end of August 2014. According to reports, MTN had an increase of 110,042 from July to end the month of August with 13.54 million. Whereas Airtel's subscriber base increased by 97,016 to end August with a total figure of 3.76 million, according to the NCA. Glo had an increase of 35,711 in its subscriber base to end the month under review with 1.4 million. Expresso had a rise in its subscriber base from July's 122,356 to end August at 123,825. On the other hand, Vodafone recorded a figure of 6.69 million at the end of August, a drop of 60,721 in its subscriber base. Tigo also recorded a decrease and ended the month under review with 4.02 million. The report also revealed that the number of mobile data subscribers fell by 156,026 from 14.77 million in July to 14.62 million in August. MTN's subscriber base for August increased by 53,325 to end the month with a figure of 7.76 million. Tigo recorded an increase of 56,248 in its subscriber base for the month under review to end August 2014 with a figure of 2.09 million. Airtel's mobile data subscriber base ended the month of August at 2.07 million, up by 36,897 subscribers. Glo recorded a subscriber base of 584,222, indicating an 86,227 increase in subscribers. Vodafone Ghana ended August with a figure of 2.07 million, down by 387,600. Also recording a decrease was Expresso, which lost 1,123 subscribers, ending August with a subscriber base of 36,135. (October 8, 2014) itnewsafrica.com

Greece

The National Telecommunications & Post Commission (EETT) released results from its sale of frequencies in the 800MHz (digital dividend) and 2600MHz bands for 4G mobile services. Cosmote, Vodafone and Wind Hellas acquired two paired 5MHz blocks (2×10MHz) in the 800MHz band each, paying EUR103 million (US$130.5 million), EUR103.1 million and EUR103.01 million respectively. Half of the 800MHz spectrum was distributed in a preliminary stage at a fixed price (EUR51.5 million per 2×5MHz), with the remainder issued via a competitive second-round auction. Additionally, the three cellcos shared 14 paired blocks of 2×5MHz in the 2600MHz band, each paying EUR4.70 million per block (Cosmote acquiring six blocks [2×30MHz], with Vodafone and Wind claiming four blocks [2×20MHz] apiece). Furthermore, Vodafone and Cosmote each acquired two unpaired 10MHz blocks in the 2600MHz band (priced at EUR1.3 million per block). The frequency sales raised a total of EUR381.1 million for Greece, virtually equal to the minimum bidding value, due to there being no other bidders competing with the three incumbent cellcos. Cosmote paid a total of EUR134.79 million, Vodafone spent EUR124.50 million and Wind bid EUR121.83 million for its frequencies which will support its plan to enter the 4G LTE segment against its two larger rivals, both of whom have well-established LTE operations. The licenses have a term of 15 years, effective from February 28, 2015. (October 14, 2014) eett.gr

GSMA

Telecom industry association GSMA has issued guidelines for the Internet of Things (IoT) market that outline how devices and applications should communicate via mobile networks. Telecom operators AT&T, China Mobile, China Telecom, China Unicom, Deutsche Telekom, Etisalat, KT Corp, Orange, NTT DOCOMO, Tata Teleservices, Telefonica, Telenor Connexion and VimpelCom as well as ecosystem partners including Sierra Wireless and Jasper are backing the GSMA guideline. The guidelines include a number of best practice areas such as data aggregation within devices, non-synchronous network access, application scalability and guidance on how to manage signaling traffic from de-activated or out-of-subscription SIMs, said GSMA. GSMA Intelligence estimates that the total number of mobile connections is expected to reach 7.4 billion in 2014 rising to 10 billion by 2020. The GSMA guidelines will help IoT device and application developers expand the number of devices connecting to mobile networks, whilst preventing service outages and ensuring optimal performance that will ultimately enable the market to scale across a diverse range of sectors including automotive, transportation, utilities and health. GSMA is also undertaking a project to develop a common set of acceptance tests for IoT devices and applications to ensure best practices are being followed. The project will establish a single, standard set of connection efficiency tests for IoT devices and applications, enabling players across the industry to develop and deploy IoT services with confidence. (October 13, 2014) telecomlead.com

Honduras

Telecoms watchdog CONATEL has opened a public consultation on a draft resolution for the establishment of a national Internet Exchange Point (IXP-HN). According to a press release, the document provides for the establishment of a new executive body – the Executive Committee of the Internet Exchange Point Internet Honduras (CEIXP-HN) – which will be tasked with the operation of the national IXP. CEIXP-HN's main functions will include: establishing the provisions for rights and responsibilities of members and observers; arranging the provisions, policies and procedures to carry out the implementation of the IXP; securing preliminarily approval of the technical specifications regarding the implementation of the IXP; stipulating policies and standards of operation, post-implementation; and ensuring compliance with the existing legal framework. The regulator has invited all interested parties to submit their comments from October 6 to October 10, 2014. (October 6, 2014) telegeography.com

Hungary

The Hungarian telecom authority NMHH has sold 4G spectrum licenses to 4 operators in the country, raising HUF130.6 billion (US$530.25 million). Licenses were issued for airwaves in the 800MHz and 2.6GHz bands, along with unallocated 900MHz and 1.8GHz spectrum. The winning bidders were Magyar Telkom (a subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom), newcomer Digi Telecommunications, and Vodafone and Telenor's Hungarian units. Magyar Telkom was the biggest spender, lashing out HUF58.65 billion on its licenses. It is tailed by Telenor (HUF31.73 billion) and Vodafone (HUF30.23 billion), while Digi Telecommunications has bid a significantly lower HUF10 billion. NMHH has stated that it intends to "quicken the setting up of broadband networks, to develop the Hungarian digital economy and to boost economic competition". The authority also noted that Digi Telecommunications, a privately-owned Romanian company, was rewarded as a newcomer, since evidence from other markets indicates that a new entrant "mobilizes and revitalizes the market, enhances price competition and engenders new services". Digi's network build out will take around 18 months, while the existing operators will be able to deploy services using their new spectrum in the next few days. NMHH noted that 800MHz spectrum's "favorable propagation characteristics" could enable operators to expand broadband coverage to regions where it has previously fallen short, capitalizing on the market's potential. According to NMHH, the 20-year validity of the licenses "ensures the dynamic growth of the economy and represents a guarantee for the sustainable development of the mobile market while offering predictable terms for fostering industry investments". Market leader Magyar Telkom and number two Telenor have both already launched 4G services, but neither offering has been widely adopted. Magyar Telkom had around 5.4 million subscribers at the end of Q2 2014, with Telenor in second place with 3.2 million and Vodafone in third with 2.6 million. (October 1, 2014) developingtelecoms.com

India

India's next sale of spectrum could be the biggest—in terms of both the quantum of spectrum and the amount the government could raise from the sale India's next sale of spectrum, or radio waves that telcos need to offer their services, could be the biggest-in terms of both the quantum of spectrum on offer and the amount the government could raise from the sale. The department of telecommunications (DoT) wants to add spectrum in the 2,100MHz, 2,300MHz and 2,500MHz frequency bands to the planned February auction of spectrum in the 800MHz, 900MHz and 1,800MHz bands. It will soon send a note to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to suggest a reserve price for the spectrum. DoT will also ask TRAI whether spectrum can be sold with a validity period of less than 20 years, according to internal DoT documents seen by Mint. That last may provide some relief to telcos, many of which have spectrum in the same band and same operating area or circle but expiring years apart-thanks, in part to the ad hoc way in which radio waves used to be allocated in the country. The sale could generate a maximum of Rs.2 trillion for the government, said a telecom analyst who asked not to be identified. He cautioned that this was a number based on his assessment of the two successful spectrum auctions of the government and that the actual number could be very different because even the quantum of radio waves available for sale isn't known yet. The government first auctioned spectrum for communications services in 2010, raising around Rs.1.06 trillion. It sold telecom frequencies in the 2100MHz bands, needed for 3G (third generation) services, for almost Rs.70,000 crore and 2,300MHz bands, needed for 4G (fourth generation) services, for around Rs.40,000 crore. Subsequently, DoT held two more auctions in November 2012 and March 2013. Both were considered failures; they resulted in the sale of a fourth of the available spectrum at the time and garnered a total of around Rs.13,000 crore (Rs.9,407.64 crore for 1,800MHz in the first one and Rs.3,639.48 crore for 800MHz in the second). The fourth auction, conducted in February this year, was considered a success with the government successfully selling almost all the available spectrum in the 900MHz and 1800MHz bands and collecting around Rs.61,162.22 crore. According to the documents seen by Mint, currently there is no vacant 3G spectrum. DoT expects to get 5MHz of 3G spectrum in 17 circles from the defense forces, though a discussion on this is still ongoing. There is also another 5MHz of 3G spectrum available. This was withdrawn from STel Ltd, after the 2 February 2012 Supreme Court decision to cancel the Chennai based telco's licenses, along with 119 other licenses allocated to eight other companies. In the 2300MHz band, known as broadband wireless access (BWA) spectrum, DoT has just around one block of 20MHz available for sale in February (this is because the defense forces' own demand for this spectrum has increased). BWA spectrum is still being deployed by successful bidders from the 2010 auction As Mint reported ON 7 October, many of the holders of this spectrum have asked for an extension of five years for the deployment on this band as the eco-system itself is maturing slowly. According to the documents, DoT is also looking at auctioning spectrum in the 2500MHz band that was surrendered by state-run telcos Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd earlier this year in many of the 22 circles across the country. The telecom regulator has already started the process of auctioning spectrum in the 800MHz, 900MHz and 1800MHz bands. Most of the 900MHz spectrum on offer is from expiring licenses of the older telcos that were allocated the airwaves in non-metro areas in 1995, a year after they were allocated the airwaves in the metro areas. The 1800MHz spectrum going on sale is mostly that which was unsold in the previous auction. Around 184MHz of spectrum in the 900MHz band and 104MHz in the 1800MHz band could be up for the auction; the former is likely to be the most sought after band due to its greater efficiency and low deployment cost. An analyst said it was a good idea to include more spectrum in the sale. "Considering that we are a spectrum-starved country, DoT must release as much spectrum in all bands as possible. Overall, it will help to decongest the networks and improve customer service and help in the Digital India program of the government," said Hemant Joshi, a partner at Deloitte Haskins and Sells Llp. The Digital India program refers to the National Democratic Alliance's new and ambitious digital initiative that spans e-governance and hardware manufacturing.
(October 14, 2014) en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com

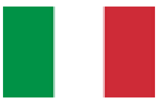
The government moved the Supreme Court, challenging the legality of the 3G intra-circle roaming pacts that allow carriers to offer services in circles where they don't possess 3G bandwidth. The development once again casts shadow on the future of Bharti Airtel, Vodafone India and Idea's 3G services in circles where they do not have 3G airwaves but are offering it using each other's' network. Tata Teleservices, Aircel and Reliance Communications have also entered into a similar pact among themselves. In April, the telecom disputes tribunal, TDSAT, had overturned the DoT's ban on the 3G intra-circle roaming (3G ICR) pacts, saying Bharti Airtel, Idea and Vodafone's roaming arrangements for 3G airwaves with each other in circles where one of them didn't possess the airwaves was legal. GSM industry lobby group COAI has said the move to challenge the TDSAT verdict will lead to a tumult in the industry. COAI secretary-general Rajan S Mathews said the move would inject further uncertainty and dampen the telecom sector's growth story. The issue has been a bone of contention between the two sides. The government first banned the arrangement in 2011 on grounds that it amounted to sharing of spectrum, which is not permitted even today. The telecom operators, on the other hand, claimed that the telecom department had clearly communicated in queries raised on the 3G spectrum auction rules that 3G roaming pacts would be permitted. Citing the 2G intra-circle roaming arrangements allowed under the telecom permits, the TDSAT had said that the provision for ICR was already embedded in the telecom licenses. The two judge bench headed by Justice Aftab Alam had come down heavily on the government for not allowing operators to enter into roaming pacts despite clarifying their doubts on the issue earlier. The bench had also quashed the Rs 1,200-crore penalty levied on the operators for entering into roaming pacts. COAI has said that operators were already complaining of spectrum shortage and that is why suggestive guidelines for spectrum sharing have come up from the sector's regulator. DoT's move will prove to be a spoilsport for telcos. "We should move forward and ensure that the 3G ICR provision be optimized to reap maximum benefits for the people who would be provided more coverage, better quality data services and more options across the country," Mathews added.

(October 10, 2014) economictimes.indiatimes.com

Indonesia

The Telecommunication Regulatory Body (BRTI) is calling on the government to allow the use of 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology in 'certain business districts' in the country, to enable mobile operators to make a return on their investments more quickly. BRTI member Riant Nugroho said that his association has filed a white paper to the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), arguing that the technology should initially be deployed in business districts to help companies make better use of e-commerce and related business transactions, and allow cellcos to charge higher rates for the service. The official says that one of the challenges faced by operators when it comes to 4G centres on fears over them making an adequate return on investment: 'Even six years after the inception of the 3G network, most telecommunication operators providing the service have not had a return on investment yet,' Riant said, noting that most domestic operators have been forced to lower their data services tariffs. Backing this assessment, XL Axiata chief executive Hasnul Suhaimi is quoted as saying that his company makes a 10% loss on each gigabyte of data provided to its customers. In a bid to drive the development of 4G – and mindful that the government looks likely to miss its target to launch LTE by the year-end – Riant says: 'What's in our white paper is that operators, in collaboration with vendors, may first deploy LTE Frequency-Division Duplexing [LTE-FDD] in a handful of business areas in Jakarta.' However, Riant's call has been questioned by some, not least by the chairman of the Indonesian Telematics Society (Mastel), Setyanto P Santosa, who argues that the incumbents need to expand their 3G coverage before moving to 4G. 'The 3G network coverage currently stands at only 30%. To prepare for 4G, operators have to migrate the 2G network to the 3G network,' he argues. Adding to the headache, the country is still wrangling over what frequency spectrum to use for LTE. The matter needs urgent discussion from all sides but despite the government having already issued 4G licenses to a number of companies in the 2.3GHz band, a consensus is growing that frequencies in the 1800MHz and 1900MHz band would be more efficient for 4G. (October 15, 2014) The Jakarta Post

Italy



The government has unveiled plans to spend around EUR5 million (US$6.3 million) over the next three years to push the deployment of free Wi-Fi hotspots in thousands of public spaces and on public transport to help boost the country's broadband internet usage. Sergio Boccadutri, a member of the ruling Democratic Party, put forward the proposal, stating: 'Free Wi-Fi would have a big cultural impact and help the economy recover, starting from industries such as tourism.' The proposals have the support of more than 100 members of parliament. (October 27, 2014) reuters.com

ITU

Member States of the International Telecommunication Union have completed the election process that confirms candidates in the organization's five elected posts, as well as the 12 members of the Radio Regulations Board and the 48 Members of ITU Council, the administrative body that governs ITU in between quadrennial Plenipotentiary Conferences. Houlin Zhao of China was successful in his bid to become the next Secretary-General of the Union, after eight years as Deputy-Secretary General and a further eight years in the elected post of Director of ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Bureau. He won with 152 votes, with 152 countries present and voting. Malcolm Johnson of the United Kingdom was announced as ITU's new Deputy Secretary-General in the fourth round of voting, with 104 votes and 168 countries present and voting. In his address to assembled delegates in the Plenary session on Friday afternoon, Mr. Johnson paid tribute to the quality of candidates for what proved this conference's most fiercely-contested post: "Having such a qualified and diverse field of candidates is testament to our commitment to the Union and bodes well for its future. I hope we can rely upon their continuing participation in ITU and I look forward to working with them over the next four years." The elections for the posts of Director of ITU's Radiocommunication Bureau, Telecommunication Standardization Bureau and Telecommunication Development Bureau began late in the working day on the afternoon of 24 October. The three elections were run concurrently. Current incumbent François Rancy was confirmed in a second term as the Director of ITU's Radiocommunication Bureau. He contested the position unopposed, and received 166 votes with 166 countries present and voting. In his post-election address to delegates, Rancy stressed ITU's central role in coordinating the equitable global use of spectrum resources. "During these four years, remarkable results have been achieved by the ITU radiocommunication sector in delivering and managing the frequency spectrum worldwide, in adopting standards and best practices and in disseminating information and know-how to the entire ITU membership. Much remains to be done however to ensure that the management of spectrum and orbit resources by the ITU continues to feed the development of radiocommunications, and connectivity to all citizens of the world," he said. Brahima Sanou, the incumbent Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, also contested his bid for a second term unopposed, and was re-elected with 166 votes, with 166 countries present and voting. On announcement of the election results, Sanou told the conference: "The Member States have decided for continuity and as the acknowledgment of the work of the BDT staff that I have had the honor of directing for the past four years. My re-election is a renewal of a commitment to deliver to members and with members, and I am committing to this because I know that I can count on the very dynamic team in the BDT." For the local Korean media, the biggest news of the conference was the successful candidature of Korea's Chaesub Lee for the post of Director of ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB). Lee obtained the necessary overall majority in the first round, with 87 votes and 169 countries present and voting. Mr. Lee told the conference "As the newly elected Director, I will enhance the values of ITU-T activities and products, as well as efficiency and effectiveness in collaborating within and outside ITU-T. ITU-T is at one of its most important moments for the continuous development of future ICT and telecommunications." The conference also elected the twelve members of the Radio Regulations Board (RRB), the body which deals with global radiocommunications matters which fall under the purview of ITU.

The winning candidates for each region were:

- Americas: Ricardo Luis Terán, Argentina; Joanne Wilson, United States.
- Western Europe: Lilian Jeanty, Netherlands; Alfredo Magenta, Italy.
- Eastern Europe/Northern Asia: Ievgen Khairov,

Ukraine; Victor Strelets, Russian Federation.

- Africa: Mustapha Bessi, Morocco; Stanley K. Kibe, Kenya; Simon Koffi, Côte d'Ivoire.
- East Asia & Australasia: Nasser bin Hammad, United Arab Emirates; Doan Quang Hoan, Viet Nam; Yasuhiko Ito, Japan.
- Of 60 candidate countries for the 48 seats on ITU Council, the elected countries were:
- Americas: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Paraguay, USA, Venezuela.
- Western Europe: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey.
- Eastern Europe & Northern Asia: Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation.
- Africa: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda.
- East Asia & Australasia: Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea (Republic), Kuwait, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates.
- PP-14 is hosted by Korea's Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning (MSIP), and is taking place at Busan's BEXCO exhibition and conference centre from October 20 - November 7. (October 27, 2014) itu.int

The ITU has kicked off three weeks of wrangling over the future of the Internet – the 2014 Plenipotentiary – with a ministerial statement that's likely to spark concerns about the direction of the coming summit. The Busan Declaration, issued at the close of the Busan ICT ministerial meeting, is filled with high-minded language about inclusion and the spread of the Internet, but there are angles that will worry those who believe the ITU is preparing a takeover of the Internet. The declaration isn't ITU policy, but it could be seen as indicating how countries present at the ministerial conference might hope things will proceed over the next few weeks in Korea. The declaration, here, says telecommunications and ICT should be "viewed comprehensively, beyond the aspects of infrastructure and technology, to encompass economic development, enhancement of the quality of people's lives and social integration".

On their own, such phrases are sound like harmless bromides, but in the context of the coming plenipotentiary, it's likely to be seen as an attempt to extend the remit of the body beyond its history of technical standardization, spectrum management, and the like. In that context "moving beyond" infrastructure is exactly what supporters of the 'net's existing multi-stakeholder governance fear. Item 14 of the declaration will similarly be eyed warily. The 50 countries say that development of telecommunications and ICTs should including minimizing "the negative impact" of things like cybersecurity threats, potential harms to the vulnerable (specifically nominating children), and "negative effects on the environment". While an ITU call for a focus on security seems unobjectionable at first viewing, it's a topic which again plays into concerns that national governments might, via the ITU, seek to expand its remit using security as a justification for a brief to push the treaty organization "up the stack" towards content.
(October 20, 2014) theregister.co.uk

Luxembourg

The European Commission (EC) has taken Luxembourg to court with claims that the country's regulator, the Institut Luxembourgeois de Regulation, has broken European Union (EU) rules and failed to conduct recent analysis of the telecommunications' market. Three-yearly reviews of the wholesale and retail sectors are meant to be carried out by national regulators in countries across the EU in order to ensure competition is fair and regulations in place are up-to-date. However, Reuters reports that the EC says that the last analysis in Luxembourg took place in 2007. The Commission is cited as saying: 'Given the significant delays, it is imperative to urge swift completion of the analysis to determine whether these obligations are still justified in view of how competition in the market has developed since.' Leased lines in Luxembourg are due to be reviewed in November 2014 but dates for analysis of fixed access and market competition are yet to be established.
(October 17, 2014) telegeography.com

Malawi

The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) is planning to establish a universal access fund (UAF) to ensure that rural areas of the country are served by mobile services. 'The fund is expected to facilitate the provision of services to those areas where operators are currently facing challenges to provide services,' Clara Mulonya the regulator's communications officer said. She added that a specialized committee will be responsible for the evaluation of areas that are currently not served by mobile telephony services and to determine how much investment will be required to supply such communities. Under the scheme, subsidies will then be offered to telecoms operators as an incentive to roll out services to unserved and rural areas.
(October 10, 2014) Biztech Africa

Mexico

Telecom Regulator IFETEL has fined America Movil (AM)-owned Telmex for monopolistic practices in the long-distance call termination market. As such, the watchdog imposed a fine of MXN49.32 million (US$3.66 million) on the incumbent, bringing to an end an investigation that was initiated by Mexico's Comision Federal de Competencia (CFC) in May 2011. IFETEL's final decision upheld a complaint from rival operator Axtel, which had accused Telmex of failing to respond to interconnection requests; denying it information regarding the location of its central offices; and playing recorded messages to Axtel users warning them of the possibility that their service could be suspended. The financial penalty represents the maximum fine allowed by law. (October 1, 2014) telegeography.com

Telecom Regulator IFETEL have reportedly signed a series of framework agreements which will allow the country's planned open-access 700MHz network to launch in 2018. Although there has been a degree of confusion regarding the timeline for the project up until now, deputy communications minister Jose Ignacio Peralta has now confirmed that interested parties can submit their tenders in December this year, with the spectrum likely to be freed up by August 2015. Despite the lack of a formal tender, the authorities received their first bid to build the state-owned mobile network last month, from an as-yet-unidentified consortium; telecom equipment providers Alcatel-Lucent and Ericsson helped the mystery consortium craft the proposal, which could be worth as much as US$10 billion over the course of the next decade. (October 13, 2014) telegeography.com

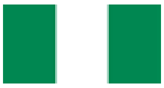
Netherland

KPN and the Dutch units of Vodafone and T-Mobile are to be granted extensions on their 3G mobile licenses in the 2100MHz band under a notification issued by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs on October 7, 2014. The current concession expiry date of December 31, 2016 will be extended by four years to December 31, 2020, as disclosed in a document published online by regulatory agency Agentschap Telecom. The decision follows a change made to rules in July of this year by the ministry, allowing the extension of licenses, and will give more time for future distribution of the spectrum to be decided. There is a six-week period for interested parties to submit comments on the decision. (October 15, 2014) Telecompaper

Nicaragua

The enigmatic Chinese telco Xinwei is finally poised to launch operations in Nicaragua – in January 2015 – but the scale of its deployment is vastly reduced from that set out in its January 2013 license conditions. The company will launch mobile telephony and broadband connectivity in seven isolated communities in the North Atlantic Region in the new year. Despite promising to invest US$700 million in its initial launch, it now transpires that Xinwei's inaugural rollout has in fact been funded by the World Bank, which has supplied it with US$800,000. (October 21, 2014) confidencial.com

Nigeria



Bitflux Communications, the winner of a national spectrum license in the 2.3GHz frequency band earlier this year, plans to roll out wholesale wireless broadband services in three Nigerian cities in January 2015. A consortium of VDT Communications, BitCom Systems and Superflux International, Bitflux emerged as the winner of the Nigerian Communications Commission's (NCC's) 2.3GHz spectrum auction in February with a bid of US$23.251 million, beating Globacom's offer of US$23.050 million. The 30MHz of spectrum will be used to provide wholesale wireless broadband access services to internet service providers (ISPs) and other retail telecoms service providers, which in turn will offer retail high speed internet services to consumers. Biodun Omoniyi, CEO of VDT Communications, said that Bitflux is deploying LTE network infrastructure in major cities and will begin operations next year: 'Bitflux will be rolling out in three major states in the first instance and these include Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt in January 2015. Already, our vendors are deploying equipment for us and necessary installation will follow.'
(October 28, 2014) The Guardian

The executive vice chairman of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) Dr. Eugene Juwah, has blamed the strings of bad loans from Nigerian banks for the collapse of several Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) network operators in the country. Juwah, who delivered a keynote address at the 2014 Telecom Executives and Regulator's Roundtable organized by the Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria (ATCON) in Lagos recently, said poor financial management occasioned by the huge loans sourced from banks led to the implosion among CDMA network operators. He said: "The CDMA operators dying because they borrowed heavily from banks and they could not pay back." Juwah said the operators over-borrowed, and most of the loans were effectively deployed to the growth of their networks orchestrating their eventual collapse. The massive growth recorded in the Nigerian telecommunications space since the liberalization of the industry which started with the return to democratic rule, has eroded as over a dozen telecommunication operating companies have virtually collapsed. Apart from MTN, Globacom, Airtel, Etisalat and Visafone which added subscribers to their network in 2013 and 2014, most of the other telecom service providers have become inactive. Starcomms and Reliance Telecoms (ZoomMobile) among other CDMA operators have ceased to operate their network thereby contributing nothing to the overall subscriber base in the last two years, while Multi-Links has moved away from voice telephony to wholesale data services. Latest figures released by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) on its website shows that smaller telecommunication operators have disappeared as stiff competitive environment, inability to access sufficient funds, technology obsolesce, and poor management has wiped them out from the telecom field. The fixed/fixed wireless telecom operators who did not add a single subscriber to their network throughout 2013 and 2014 include Starcomms Limited, Multilinks, Reliance Telecoms (Zoom), Intercellular Nigeria Limited, VGC Communications which is owned by MTN, MTS 1st Communications, Disc Communications, WiTEL, O'Net (Odua Telecom), Rainbownet Limited, Monarch Communications, XS Broadband (also owned b MTN) Webcom, IPNX and NITEL. (October 21, 2014) leadership.ng

The Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) has set a revenue target of N34.8 billion (US$224 billion) from the auction of 2.6 Gigahertz (GHz) spectrum licenses slated for December 2-5, 2014, in Abuja. The commission is offering 14 licenses of 2 X 5 MHz FDD paired spectrum in the 2.6 GHz band ranging from 2500 – 2570MHz and 2620 to 2690MHz (totaling 2 X 70 MHz) for auction on a technology neutral basis. The NCC set a generic reserve (GR) price, the minimum price at which a license shall be sold for one lot of 2 X 5MHz for N2.49 billion ($16 million). The executive vice chairman of the NCC, Dr. Eugene Juwah, said for roll-out of services, the regulator intends to follow the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) recommendation setting aside spectrum in the 2.6GHz band for the provision of Advanced Wireless Broadband Services to support the delivery of broadband wireless services nationally. The NCC had in February this year auctioned 30MHz band in the 2.3GHz spectrum which was won by Bitflux Communications with the bid price of $23.25 million above Globacom's offer of $23.05 million for the same spectrum license. According to the Information Memorandum (IM) released on the NCC website, the commission decided to adopt for the licensing of 2X70 MHz paired spectrum available in the 2.6 GHz band. The proposed licensing of 2.6 GHz spectrum was influenced by the need to open up the space for the delivery of present and future generations of broadband services to subscribers in consonance with the Nigerian National Broadband Plan of 2013. Juwah said the NCC has consulted with the relevant industry stakeholders to determine the demand and the best way to issue the spectrum. "Based on these and observations of developments in international licensing trends, the commission has decided to license the available 2X70 MHz slot in slots of 5 MHz to be aggregated by applicants through the spectrum auction process. "Each lot of 2X5 MHz represents one eligibility point. An applicant that pays the IBD for six lots will have a total of six eligibility points. The reserve price for an applicant will be calculated as the GR multiplied by the number of lots applied for by the applicant. (October 17, 2014) leadership.ng

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has said that it is set to award the first two of seven regional infrastructure company (InfraCo) licenses in the next two weeks. NCC executive vice chairman Eugene Juwa said that the two permits will cover Lagos State and the North Central Zone, allowing for the deployment of metropolitan fibre-optic infrastructure and associated transmission equipment on an open access, non-discriminatory and price-regulated basis. As outlined by the regulator's 'Open Access Next Generation Fiber Optics Broadband Network' paper, which was published late last year, the InfraCos will be responsible for providing a national broadband network to service providers. The NCC says that the Open Access Model for fiber-optic network deployment is best suited to bridge the digital divide, facilitate the development of local content, and deliver fast and reliable broadband services to households and businesses. It is expected to help address the challenges of fiber deployment in towns and cities, promote infrastructure sharing and reduce right of way issues. (October 3, 2014) The Daily Independent

OTT Providers

Over-the-top service providers are together spending more than $30 billion per year on physical infrastructure, according to Analysys Mason. Pure-play OTTs like Amazon, Google, Facebook and Netflix, as well as multiplatform players like the BBC and New York Times, are investing heavily in fiber networks, data centers, servers and routers to host and deliver content and services more efficiently to end users. To that end, between them they spent more than $100 billion between 2011 and 2013, said Analysys Mason in a new report on Tuesday. Hosting accounted for the lion's share – approximately $29.6 billion per year – due mainly to the proliferation of online video, both professionally-produced and user-generated video. In addition, OTTs are making widespread use of content delivery networks, whether they are building their own or using an external provider. Analysys Mason estimates that 60% of the world's Internet traffic uses a CDN. "Internet players are already putting big money on the table – and into the ground and under the sea. They are getting into increasingly large partnerships with investors and telecom operators," said a statement from principal analysts David Abecassis and Andrew Kloeden, co-authors of Analysys Mason's report, which was commissioned by Google. "That comes in addition to investment in their core business of content and software." On a regional basis, Europe accounts for £10 billion of OTTs' annual infrastructure spending thanks to its role as a global hub for Internet traffic. This is closely followed by North America at $9.3 billion and Asia-Pacific at $7.7 billion. Online content and service providers are now "large contributors to the physical fabric of the Internet," said Analysys Mason.

(October 1, 2014) totaltele.com

Peru

According to sector regulator OSIPTEL the launch of Bitel and the rebranding of Nextel del Peru to Entel has led to an 81% increase in the number of users switching provider via mobile number portability (MNP). New deals offered by the duo saw MNP figures increase to 21,396 for the period from October 1-23, compared to 11,844 for the whole month of OCTember. The watchdog added that in the five years since its introduction, 310,661 customers have used MNP, 47,439 of which since July 16 when OSIPTEL reduced the maximum porting time to 24 hours. Entel saw the greatest net benefit, adding a total of 11,724 new subscribers, whilst Bitel added 982 users. Local heavyweights Claro and Movistar booked net losses of 4,438 and 8,268 respectively. (October 27, 2014) telegeography.

Poland

The Central Statistical Office (GUS) has reported that the country added 400,000 new mobile SIM cards in the third quarter to end-OCTember 2014, taking the total number of cellular users to 57.25 million and raising mobile penetration to 148.7%. The year-on-year increase in the number of SIMs stood at 1.271 million. Poland is home to four main mobile operators, T-Mobile Poland, Orange Polska, Polkomtel and P4/Play, while two smaller firms – Aero2 and Centernet – account for fewer than one million subscriptions between them.

(October 28, 2014) telegeography.com

The Office of Electronic Communications (UKE) has announced its latest plans to auction 19 national frequency licenses which are suitable for 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology in the 800MHz and 2600MHz bands. In the 800MHz band the sale will cover five 5MHz lots of paired spectrum in the ranges 791MHz-816MHz and 832MHz-857MHz, while at 2600MHz 14 lots of 2×5MHz will be offered between 2500MHz-2570MHz and 2620MHz-2690MHz. Bidding will close on November 24 and no entity is allowed to bid for more than two lots in the lower band, and four lots in the higher range. A minimum price of PLN250 million (US$75.6 million) has been set for each packet of 800MHz spectrum, while the minimum bid for lots in the 2600MHz band is PLN25 million. The concessions will be valid for 15 years. UKE originally launched the 800/2600MHz auction in January this year, but from the start the sale was dogged by controversy, including threats from Polkomtel that it would boycott the tender over allegations that the terms discriminated against the cellco whilst aiding its rivals. On February 11, UKE decided to cancel the auction after a technical glitch prevented operators from accessing documents relating to the sale. The fault left potential bidders with just a few hours to read the regulator's response to requests for clarification on the terms of the sale. The watchdog initially decided to postpone the bidding until February 14 to give it time to rectify the situation, but it subsequently announced that it would scrap the auction and renew the process. Explaining its decision to abandon the sale, the regulator said that it had a 'duty to provide participants with a stable, transparent and predictable environment in which there is no room for the slightest legal doubt'. Separately, Poland's fourth largest cellular operator P4, which trades as Play, has announced that its 4G LTE networks now cover 63% of the population, with infrastructure installed in some 1,500 communities, including 932 with a population of more than 1,000 people. Meanwhile, number three cellco Polkomtel claims 66.7% LTE population coverage, while the two largest providers, Orange and T-Mobile, claim 58% coverage from their shared 4G infrastructure.

(October 14, 2014) Rzeczpospolita

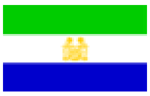
Romania

The telecoms watchdog the National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications (ANCOM) has published for public consultation its draft action plan for 2015. ANCOM highlighted in a release on its website that, amongst other projects, it will continue reviewing the relevant internet access markets including leased lines, identifying potential providers with significant market power and establishing appropriate regulatory measures. ANCOM also plans to allocate additional spectrum resources for broadband communications by holding an auction for spectrum licenses in the 3.4GHz-3.8GHz frequency band. The authority will also support the transition to digital terrestrial television (DTT) via a tender in the second quarter of 2015 for the remaining digital multiplexes while technically authorizing the DTT multiplexes granted in 2014. (October 24, 2014) telegeography.com

Russia

The Office of the Federal Bailiff Service (UFSSP) in Moscow has prohibited the State Radio Frequency Commission (SRFC) from disposing of spectrum frequencies in the 1980MHz-2000MHz band, which are currently held by Antares Telecom – led by the businessman Yevgeny Roitman. The decision, which was signed on Friday 10 October, is the latest development in a long-running dispute over the telco's plan to use the frequencies to launch a 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) network in the country. Previously, the Federal Arbitration Court of the Moscow District found the SRFC guilty of non-compliance with its order to allocate Roitman's company a license to use the 1980MHz-2000MHz frequencies for the construction of its LTE network. In April 2012 the Federal Supervision Agency IT, Communications & Media (Roskomnadzor) granted the telco permission to use its long-held frequencies to deploy a network based on LTE technology. The frequencies are held by the Russian firm and its regional subsidiaries Arktur and Integral, and were originally granted in early-2008, covering the period April 18, 2008 to April 18, 2013. Previously, in March 2012 the watchdog reacted angrily to reports that Antares was set to embark on an LTE trial in Moscow, refuting suggestions that the company was in possession of the necessary permissions. However, Roitman's group is frustrated over the impasse and is pursuing legal proceedings against the regulator for its inactivity and heel dragging. In May 2013, the SRFC claimed it had fulfilled a court order by considering Antares Telecom's application, but still refused to grant the frequencies. Subsequently, Roitman has submitted two requests to the court – losing in both instances – however, it then won on appeal with the courts ordering the SRFC to grant Antares the frequencies. Most recently, in August this year the company filed a petition with the Court of Arbitration to impose a fine on the regulator for not complying with the court decision; the hearing is scheduled for 20 October. (October 13, 2014) ComNews

Sierra Leone



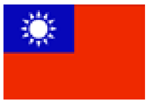
Telecoms watchdog, the National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM), has announced that effective October 13, 2014, the operational license granted to Comium Sierra Leone will be revoked, following the company's failure to settle its debts. The regulator said in a Public Notice published on October 7, 2014 that it has held 'several meetings with representatives of the company in a bid to have the financial liabilities of the company addressed in the interest of the sector', but talks ultimately proved 'futile'. In January 2014 NATCOM issued Comium with a 21-day notice of suspension of its license and the utilization of the resources allocated to it. Following an intervention by the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC), the debt-ridden operator was given a three-month extension period to pay its creditors; the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was further prolonged on two occasions, in May and August 2014.

(October 10, 2014) Global Times

South Africa

The government is reportedly considering selling its minority stake in telecoms operator Vodacom Group as it seeks funding to bolster struggling electricity supplier Eskom. According to unnamed sources, state officials have approached financial advisers with regards to the potential disposal of its 13.9% stake in the operator, which is valued at around ZAR26 billion (US$2.3 billion). One source disclosed that the share would most likely be sold to institutional investors rather than a private buyer, adding that a deal is not imminent. However, Vodacom spokesman Richard Boorman said the company was not aware of any plan by government to sell its stake, while South Africa's treasury said in a statement that if the state considers changing its 'involvement in particular sectors', it would have to 'handle information with extreme care, bearing in mind that some of the entities are listed and any decision involving them is market-sensitive and is governed by strict laws and regulations.' Vodacom Group is majority owned by the UK's Vodafone Group (65%), while the South African government holds a 13.9% stake; the remaining shares are distributed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. (October 16, 2014) Bloomberg

Taiwan



The National Communications Commission (NCC) has reportedly granted Asia Pacific Telecom (APT) a 4G operating license, allowing it to offer mobile services over the 700MHz band. Earlier this month the watchdog was said to have granted the operator a block of one million mobile numbers that can be used for its LTE-based service. APT submitted its application for the operating concession on October 8, 2014, with the regulator approving it just yesterday, and the cellco now has six months to begin offering commercial 4G services. Back in July 2014 the NCC was said to have issued a permit to APT allowing it to move forward with the construction of its proposed 4G network. At the same date it was confirmed that Ambit Microsystems, a subsidiary of the Foxconn Technology Group (Hon Hai) had also received a network construction concession. Earlier that month it had been confirmed that APT and Ambit would merge via a share swap deal. OCTember 2014 saw the NCC confirm it had still yet to make a decision regarding the proposed merger, however. Meanwhile, according to this latest report, in addition to the rollout of its own infrastructure by vendors Nokia and Alcatel-Lucent, APT will also partner with Taiwan Mobile Company to share network resources. This tie-up, it is claimed, will enable APT to offer greater coverage at launch.

(October 23, 2014) The China Post

Tanzania

The government is proposing the introduction of new taxes on the telecoms industry, including further levies on airtime, data usage and mobile handset costs. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, in his 2014 Mid-term Fiscal Policy Review Statement, noted: 'Government faces a challenge to raise additional revenue to finance non-discretionary expenditures. I therefore propose to levy excise duty of 5% on airtime for voice and data, with effect from OCTember 15, 2014.' He went on to say that an earlier reduction of taxation on the purchase of new cellular handsets, which was implemented in August 2009, had had the desired effect of stimulating growth in the cellular market, and he would therefore be upping the tax rate on device sales to 25% from mid-OCTember. (OCTember 15, 2014) BiztechAfrica

Trinidad & Tobago

Country has launched a local internet exchange point (IXP) under the name TTIX, enabling internet service providers (ISPs) to connect their users to local content and services cost-effectively, securely and efficiently. TTIX has seven ISP members at launch, namely Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT), Columbus Communications (Flow), Digicel, Massy Communications, Open Telecom, Greendot and Lisa Communications, all connecting to a local network switch physically located at the Fujitsu data centre in Barataria. Chairman of TTIX, Kurleigh Prescod – of Columbus Communications – described the launch as 'a very significant milestone,' adding that the IXP will improve local internet performance and 'act as an incentive to attract content providers, such as Netflix, Akamai and Google, to establish a point of presence in Trinidad and Tobago.' Of over 350 IXPs around the world, Trinidad and Tobago becomes the ninth in the Caribbean, joining British Virgin Islands (BVIX), Curacao (AMS-IX), Dominica (DANIX), Grenada (GREX), Haiti, St Maarten (OCIX), St Lucia (SLIX) and the Dominican Republic. Jean-Paul Dookie, executive vice president of government business for Fujitsu described the new exchange point as 'an essential building block towards the development of the Trinidad and Tobago knowledge economy.' (October 10, 2014) Daily Guardian

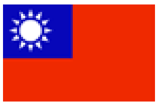
Uganda

At only 15 percent internet penetration the data service segment of business is still Uganda's fresh frontier for new growth in the telecom sector. The challenge according to sector players however is the cost of data at wholesale which has driven retail data prices up making it unaffordable to many.
(October 23, 2014) ntvuganda.co.ug

Ukraine

The Cabinet of Ministers has approved the terms of the planned competitive tender for 3G (UMTS) 2100MHz mobile licenses, according to one minister, Ostap Semerak, who disclosed that the government made the decision 'two weeks ago' but has not officially publicized it as the telecoms regulator NCCIR is yet to file the final decision with the signature of the Prime Minister. Mr. Semerak, whose title is Minister of the Cabinet of Ministers (appointed in February 2014), also stated that, in line with previous reports, the cabinet's position is to ensure that Russian companies – or companies with 'a large share of Russian capital' – cannot participate in the competition for 3G licences in Ukraine. On the face of it, this ruling excludes both Ukraine's two largest cellcos, wholly Russian-owned MTS Ukraine and Kyivstar (wholly owned by majority Russian-backed Vimpelcom). (October 3, 2014) ProIT

Taiwan



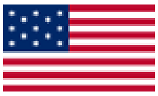
The Broadband Forum said it is pushing ahead with interoperability testing of G.fast technology and aims to begin certifying the first products during the second half of 2015. The industry body has selected the University of New Hampshire Interoperability Laboratory (UNH-IOL) to conduct the tests. "Operators have told us that interoperability will be key to the success of G.fast, so we are developing test plans based on their requirements, which UNH-IOL will certify based on those plans," said Robin Mersh, CEO of the Broadband Forum, in a statement. G.fast uses higher frequencies to enable every DSL sub-channel to carry significantly more data. It is particularly susceptible to crosstalk though, limiting its effectiveness to very short lengths of copper of around 100 meters or less; therefore it has to be deployed in tandem with vectoring. The Broadband Forum expects technologies like G.fast to play an important role in extending the reach of ultrafast broadband because it can deliver Gigabit speeds without the cost of deploying fiber all the way to the premises. Operators also see the potential in G.fast, with BT, Telekom Austriaand TeliaSonera in particular pushing ahead with trials. "Our goal is to begin initial testing of G.fast products during the first half of 2015 and deliver the first certifications during the second half of the year," said Lincoln Lavoie, senior engineer of broadband technologies at UNH-IOL. The announcement came as global fixed broadband connections reached 700.19 million this week, according to research firm Point Topic. "Our latest data sees another milestone passed with steady growth in most countries," said Point Topic CEO Oliver Johnson. "As we start to figure out how to use what we have and perhaps more importantly how to coordinate the services and extract the synergies, we'll see more and more positive outcomes in the coming years." (October 21, 2014) totaltele.com

British fixed line incumbent BT is reportedly facing technical issues that could see its return to the consumer mobile market delayed, The Telegraph reports, citing unnamed sources at the company. It has been claimed that BT is struggling with technology designed to ensure that as much voice call and data traffic as possible is carried over Wi-Fi networks, rather than via a 4G mobile network. With BT aiming to undercut the nation's incumbent cellcos on price, such technology is critical for BT as it would enable it to keep the cost of providing its wireless voice service low by carrying the bulk of traffic on its infrastructure rather than via EE's mobile network; BT has a deal to rent capacity from EE to help fill in coverage gaps between its 5.4 million Wi-Fi hotpots. According to the report, however, BT has had trouble with the 'handover' between Wi-Fi and the mobile networks, with a source noting: 'The handover is absolutely essential for BT to do what it wants to do with mobile. It's possible the launch will slip into the second quarter of next year now.' (October 6, 2014) telegeography.com

The chief executive of U.K. telecoms regulator OFCOM will leave his post at the end of the year. The search for Ed Richards' replacement is already underway and the post will be advertised nationally in the near future, OFCOM announced on Thursday. It added that expects to complete the recruitment process early next year. It did not give a reason for the move, although Richards himself indicated that his decision was motivated by the amount of time he has spent in the role. "It is never easy leaving a job that you enjoy greatly but I have always felt that once I had completed eight years as chief executive this would be the right time to move on," he

said in a statement. Richards joined the OFCOM board in March 2003. He became the regulator's chief operating officer just over two years later and took on the top job in October 2006, replacing Stephen Carter. "Under his leadership, OFCOM has helped to deliver superfast broadband, 4G, lower prices, innovation, competition, and sustainable public service broadcasting in the U.K.," said OFCOM chairman Patricia Hodgson.
(October 2, 2014) totaltele.com

United States



The US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has indicated that it expects the voluntary re-auction of broadcast spectrum for mobile usage to be delayed until early 2016 from a previous mooted timetable of mid-2015, Telecoms.com reports. Gary Epstein, Chair of the FCC's Incentive Auction Task Force, pointed to delays likely to be caused by TV broadcasters' court challenges to the auction rules, which he estimated would take six months or so to be completed in court. The National Association of Broadcasters, which launched the lawsuit, issued a statement saying: 'We reject suggestions that our narrowly focused lawsuit is cause for delay ... We look forward to a speedy resolution of our legal challenge and a successful auction that preserves access to free and local TV for every American.' FCC confirmed back in early 2010 that it would not force broadcasters to give up spectrum holdings for wireless broadband use, but would instead establish a 'voluntary marketplace mechanism' so that TV stations have a choice in how they want to use their spectrum, including relinquishing all, part of, or none of their frequency resources. (October 28, 2014) telegeography.com

The Federal Communications Commission's ambitious plan to auction off 600 MHz spectrum licenses returned by broadcasters has been pushed until at least 2016. The FCC was looking to hold the auction proceeding in mid-2015. In a blog post, Gary Epstein, chair of the FCC's Incentive Auction Task Force, cited the complexity of the proceedings as well as a recent court challenge brought about by the National Broadcasters Association, which claimed the FCC in its 600 MHz incentive auction rulemaking changed the "methodology used to predict local television coverage areas and population served, which could result in significant loss of viewership of broadcast TV stations after the FCC 'repacks' TV stations into a shrunken TV band." Epstein explained that the court earlier this week issued a briefing schedule that calls for final briefs to not be due until late January 2015, with oral arguments not expected until a later date. That timeframe likely would push a final court decision beyond the mid-2015 period. "We are confident we will prevail in court, but given the reality of that schedule, the complexity of designing and implementing the auction, and the need for all auction participants to have certainty well in advance of the auction, we now anticipate accepting applications for the auction in the fall of 2015 and starting the auction in early 2016," Epstein said in a statement. "Despite this brief delay, we remain focused on the path to successfully implementing the incentive auction." The FCC has aggressively been moving forward on the incentive auction proceedings, including the recent rollout of a notice of proposed rulemaking connected to bidding plans, and the release of an information packet targeted at television broadcasters. FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler has noted that the greatest challenge for the planned 600 MHz incentive auction process will be in convincing broadcasters to participate in the "reverse" auction process, noting at a recent speech that the opportunity was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to garner financial compensation for underutilized airwaves. "Seldom have I seen such a risk-free opportunity as that represented to broadcasters by the incentive auction, including the opportunity to continue their existing business on shared spectrum and take home a check for the spectrum they vacate," Wheeler said in March at an event at the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C.
The FCC has estimated that wireless operators will be willing to pay up to $38 billion for spectrum allocation. The court has agreed to expedite the case, but a ruling is not expected until early 2015. Wheeler reiterated his focus on the proceedings at the recent Competitive Carriers Association and CTIA trade shows where he encouraged mobile operators to participate in the proceedings. CCA and CTIA both came out with supportive comments on the most recent delay. "The FCC's decision to delay the time frame for the incentive auction is not particularly surprising, and one could say a delay was actually expected," said CCA President and CEO Steve Berry. "The incentive auction is still on track, even with the slight delay. There is an old saying that, 'If you want it bad, you will get it bad.' I know our members want it right, and the FCC is just trying to 'get it right.' I have been impressed with the quality and progress of the work of the FCC team so far. This is a reasonable, if not expected, short delay for a very complicated auction and will allow time for the industry to plan for the acquisition and integration of the most valuable low-band spectrum made available to the wireless industry in over a decade. Everyone remains interested in the 600MHz spectrum auction and every carrier needs low band spectrum. CCA will continue to monitor the progress closely." "While any delay in spectrum auctions is unfortunate, we appreciate the thoughtful focus the FCC has brought to this complex auction to ensure it is conducted properly to the benefit of all Americans," said Scott Bergmann, VP of regulatory affairs at CTIA. "Today's action underscores the need to resolve the pending litigation over the FCC's rules expeditiously. When the auction is held, mobile companies will have their checkbooks ready to participate in this critical auction that will be key to our nation's wireless future." Sprint, which is set to sit out the upcoming AWS-3 auction presumably in order to focus its efforts on the 600 MHz proceedings, also supported the move. "Given the circumstances, the FCC made a wise choice to revise the start date of the 600 MHz incentive auction," said Jeff Silva, manager of corporate communications at Sprint. "While the auction schedule has changed, the policy focus has not. To that end, we look forward to continuing our dialogue with federal regulators to help develop auction rules that best promote vibrant, sustainable competition in the wireless space." (October 24, 2014) rcrwireless.com

FCC published a Notice of Inquiry (NOI) to investigate the possibility of using frequencies above 24GHz for cellular wireless systems — specifically, for next-gen mobile data standards such as 5G. Given how we've essentially run out of spectrum in the cellular sweet spot, and how Europe and Asia have already started on their own 5G inquiries, it's high time for the FCC to dig into the possibility of super-fast cellular networks in the Super High and Extremely High Frequency bands that are as capable as standard wireline (DSL and cable) broadband. All mobile network systems currently operate on frequencies in the UHF (Ultra High Frequency) band, which comprises of 300MHz to 3GHz. The UHF band is considered the "sweet spot" of cellular today, with a decent mix of frequencies that travel far

and wide (low-band spectrum) and frequencies that provide substantial capacity for data performance (high-band spectrum). Mobile network operators use a mix of low-band and high-band spectrum to provide optimal coverage and capacity to meet the needs of their subscribers. However, the amount of available spectrum that can be allocated for cellular wireless systems in the UHF band has dwindled away in recent years — which is why we're now considering new blocks of spectrum that are very much outside the sweet spot. The FCC inquiry centers on the usage of frequencies in the upper portion of the SHF (Super High Frequency, 3GHz to 30GHz) band and the lower portion of the EHF (Extremely High Frequency, 30GHz to 300GHz) band for cellular systems. Specifically, the FCC is examining the possibility of licensing 24GHz to 90GHz for use of cellular mobile network services. SHF and EHF bands are very high capacity, but traditionally these high frequencies can only travel a very short range. EHF (also called millimeter wave, or mmWave) band frequencies are currently in use for high-bandwidth wireless systems that do not require much distance, like WiFi on 60GHz. The reason for this is simple: the higher the frequency, the harder it is for it to pass through obstacles. Conventionally speaking, EHF requires unobstructed line-of-sight connections (which is why 60GHz WiFi generally needs it to be useful).
(October 22, 2014) extremetech.com

A group of U.S. cities have come together and formed an association tasked with helping communities attract investment in high-speed broadband networks. Called Next Century Cities (NCC), it boasts 32 founding members from all corners of the country. They will share knowledge and information about how to leverage next-generation networks to attract businesses, create jobs, and improve healthcare and education. "Across the country, city leaders are hungry to deploy high-speed Internet to transform their communities and connect residents to better jobs, better healthcare, and better education for their children," said Deb Socia, executive director of NCC, in a statement. "These mayors are rolling up their sleeves and getting the job done," she said. "Next Century Cities will be right alongside them to help them make their goal of communities across the country having access to fast, affordable, and reliable Internet a reality." If they are too burdensome, local rules and regulations tied to physical infrastructure can play a significant role in hindering broadband deployment. NCC said it has been set up to help communities understand what works – and what doesn't – when it comes to developing an NGN strategy. "Cities will also work together to raise awareness of this important issue to all Americans," said NCC. Inaugural members include Austin, Boston, Kansas City in Kansas as well as Kansas City in Missouri, Palo Alto, and Santa Monica. "Boston is home to world-renowned academic and medical institutions and important technology companies that rely on broadband Internet to educate, heal and innovate. We see continued improvement in broadband speed and affordability as an essential element to driving growth and creating economic opportunity," said Boston mayor Marty Walsh, in a statement. "Collaboration with other municipalities is essential to discovering the full potential of high-speed Internet. Sharing the experiences and insights of different cities will help spark new ideas and maximize the impact of this technology nationwide," added Lee Leffingwell, mayor of Austin.
(October 21, 2014) totaltele.com

The Federal Communications Commission issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) that would limit joint bidding efforts in the commission's upcoming spectrum auctions and make it easier for smaller companies to bid for licenses. The NPRM would revise some of the Part 1 Competitive Bidding Rules (WT Docket No. 14-170) to allow small businesses, rural telephone companies, and minority- and women-owned businesses—collectively known as designated entities (DE's)—to receive up to a 35 percent credit on the purchase of spectrum, in order to encourage greater participation in the auction. The NPRM would also raise the bidding credit eligibility thresholds for larger DE's, as well as modify the former defaulter rule, eliminate duplicative reporting requirements, eliminate the attributable material relationship rule, and modify certain consortium bidding rules. The proposed rules would also seek to eliminate the facilities-based requirement for DE businesses to provide primarily retail, facilities-based service directly to the public. Elimination of the rule would allow DE's to more easily lease their spectrum to other wireless carriers, including the four largest companies, Verizon Wireless, AT&T Inc., Sprint Corp., T-Mobile US Inc., while still maintaining their DE status. (October 10, 2014) bna.com

The U.S. Telecom Association sent a petition to the FCC asking that some old broadband regulations be tossed out. The petition argues that some of the broadband regulations, written decades ago, only apply to voice-only telephone systems and have nothing to do with the current high-speed Internet system that uses broadband. The petition covers several aspects of the current regulations that cause problems with innovation and advancing technology. "It identifies specific barriers to investment in advanced telecommunications technology, impediments to more robust broadband competition, and disincentives to deployment of new Internet infrastructure that the Commission can eliminate through regulatory forbearance – in precisely the way Congress intended by enacting Section 706 as a tool for accelerating the availability of advanced telecommunications capability to all Americans," the petition states. The USTA cites FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler's recent talk at 1776 about innovation and competition in the field as part of the inspiration for the petition. Removing the regulations would actually increase competition according to the letter. As that's been a theme that Wheeler has harped on repeatedly during his tenure, it's a smart move to try and appeal to that interest to convince him and the other commissioners. According to the group, the regulations "don't apply to cable companies or any of our competitors, and to the extent that they ever served a purpose that purpose has long since evaporated." How many of the regulations the FCC will agree with the USTA about getting rid of is uncertain at this point, but that doesn't mean that there won't be major updates and changes to broadband regulations that will affect how broadband providers regulate services. At the very least, all of the net neutrality issues that the FCC is supposed to soon resolve will have a domino effect that hits all kinds of telecom regulation, including broadband. The USTA will just have to hope that their pet regulation changes are among them, even if its phrasing is quite positive about its chances. "[T]oday, we invite the Commission to innovate with us," the letter states. We offer a set of reforms that will establish an improved policy environment for innovation, investment, competition, and consumer choice." (October 7, 2014) inthecapital.streetwise.co

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has received 80 applications to take part in November's auction of AWS-3 mobile spectrum. As expected, the bidders include major mobile operators AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile US, but not Sprint, which earlier this month confirmed to the newswires that it would not take part. Satellite TV provider Dish Network is also on the list published by the FCC; it will reportedly take part under the name American AWS-3 Wireless. The U.S. regulator said that of the 80 applications it had received, 33 were considered complete. Those companies will be permitted to take part in the auction, provided they pay the deposit required by October 15. AT&T's application was on the incomplete list, but that will not necessarily exclude it from the auction. The companies that lodged incomplete applications have until mid-October to re-submit. The FCC's document noted that the auction will begin on November 13. 1,614 AWS licenses will be up for grabs in the 1695-1710-MHz, 1755-1780-MHz and 2155-2180-MHz bands. The regulator plans to release final list of all qualified bidders in early November. At the same time it will publish details of the bidding schedules for the mock auction, due to take place on 10 November, and for the first day of the actual auction. As announced in July, the FCC expects to make upwards of US$10 billion from the sale of spectrum. It has set a reserve price of $10.65 billion for the frequencies. (October 2, 2014) totaltele.com

Uruguay

Telecoms regulator URSEC has reported that the country ended June 2014 with 5.358 million mobile subscribers, an increase of 4.5% from 5.128 million twelve months earlier. Pre-paid subscribers accounted for the majority of users (3.579 million, 66.8%), while the number of post-paid customers climbed from 1.649 million at mid-2013 to 1.778 million twelve months later. State-owned Antel remains the market leader with 50% of total mobile subscribers at 30 June 2014, followed by Telefonica of Spain's Movistar with 35% and Claro (owned by America Movil) with 15%. Mobile broadband customers totaled 1.814 million at the end of June 2014, compared to 1.292 million a year earlier. URSEC reported that Uruguay ended June 2014 with 1.059 million fixed lines in service (up from 1.048 million at the start of the year), with residential lines accounting for the lion's share (82%) at that date. The number of fixed broadband subscribers reached 795,804 at mid-2014, up 18.0% from the 652,797 reported twelve months earlier, with DSL and FTTx accounting for 98% (779,140) of all fixed broadband accesses. Meanwhile, pay-TV customers increased from 620,926 at 30 June 2013 to 685,591 twelve months later. (October 20, 2014) telegeography.com

Vanuatu

Telecoms watchdog TRR has disclosed that the two domestic cellcos – Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL) and Digicel Vanuatu – have signed an amendment to their interconnection agreement from April 2014. The updated agreement, which was negotiated without the involvement of the TRR, now includes a new service that provides for the origination, handing over and termination of calls to toll free numbers that are assigned to the two respective operators. The TRR notes that interconnection between the two wireless operators is a requirement under Section 26 of the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulation Act. When the telecoms market in Vanuatu was liberalized in 2008, the two providers signed an Interim Interconnection Agreement for the period June 25, 2008- June 25, 2010, which was subsequently replaced by a new agreement on June 8, 2012, effective June 26, 2012 for a period of two years. The most recent agreement between the telcos was signed on April 1, 2014. (October 9, 2014) telegeography.com

Javaid Akhtar Malik
Regulatory Affairs
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

WHOLESALE NEWS

WHOLESALE Updates

MTN SA reduces roaming rates for Saudi Arabia

MTN South Africa launched a roaming promotion for the benefit of members of the Muslim community who will be travelling for The Hajj annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The roaming promotion commences with immediate effect and runs until 10 October and sees greatly reduced voice, SMS, and data rates during The Hajj annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The special rates will only be valid for MTN customers roaming in Saudi Arabia on the Mobily network. Local calls will be charged at R2.5 per minute and calls to South Africa and the rest of the world at R5 per minute. SMS will be charged at R2 per message while data will be available at R2 per megabyte.

Cell C likely to challenge ICASA's final MTRs in court

Jose Dos Santos, CEO of South African wireless operator Cell C, has revealed that the company is likely to challenge telecoms regulator ICASA's final decision relating to mobile termination rates (MTRs). TechCentral cites the executive as saying: 'From where we sit ... we are not left with too much choice but to take this as a legal challenge. It is what it is. We are still reviewing [the regulations, but] we will probably have a legal challenge on our hands in the coming days and weeks.' Mr. Santos however did not disclose on what legal basis the company intends to fight the new regulations. Previously, in early OCTember Cell C expressed its disappointment with the regulator's proposed termination rates and accused it of making 'a dramatic U-turn' by stating that 'the massive proposed reduction in asymmetry completely eliminates any pro-competitive remedy.'

The regulator revealed its final MTRs for the period October 1, 2014 to OCTember 30, 2017, which give smaller players 'slightly better asymmetry' than the one proposed in its draft regulation from early OCTember. From October 1, 2014, the asymmetry MTR rate is set at ZAR0.31 (USD0.03) per minute, before dropping to ZAR0.24 per minute (38%) in October 2015. A further reduction, to ZAR0.19, will occur in 2016. Previously, ICASA proposed to cut the asymmetry MTR rate to ZAR0.30 from October 1, 2014, ZAR0.22 per minute (March 2015), ZAR0.16 (2016) and ZAR0.10 (2017).

Safaricom suspends introduction of reduced roaming rates to Rwanda

Kenyan wireless operator Safaricom, the country's leading cellco in terms of subscribers, has announced that it will suspend the introduction of reduced roaming charges to Rwanda, following a Rwandan government directive which installed new levies on international calling and roaming tariffs between the two countries. Safaricom's CEO Bob Collymore disclosed that the new development 'makes it impossible' for operators in Kenya and Rwanda to go ahead with the planned downward revision of roaming tariffs under the 'One Network Area' program. 'We will therefore revert to the previous tariffs even as we push on with efforts to ensure that we have affordable calling rates for the region'. Safaricom planned to cut the voice call rate to/from Rwanda to KES10 (USD0.11) per minute, less than half the current rate of KES25 per minute. The CEO also said that the company has entered into discussions with the Ministry of Information and Communications and telecoms regulator the Communications Authority (CA), seeking a revision of the position taken by the Rwanda government.

Telecom operators in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda committed to cap the minimum roaming charges in the three countries from 1 October 2014; South Sudan was set to join the initiative later this year, with other countries in the region also expected to follow suit. The five EAC member states – Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda – have seen cross-border roaming charges increase dramatically over the last few years, prompting cellcos to demand that the roaming fees should be scrapped. In 2012 Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA) increased the charges for receiving a call to RWF144.3 (USD0.2) from the previous charge of RWF59, while regulators in Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania introduced similar taxes. Calls to Uganda and Burundi previously cost RWF60, which was hiked to RWF120 and RWF350, respectively.

SingTel offers lower data roaming rates in Malaysia

SingTel customers travelling to Malaysia can now pay similar data rates as what they enjoy in Singapore under a new add-on service launched. The DataRoam Saver Malaysia (Monthly) 1GB service will give customers 1GB of roaming data in Malaysia at just S$10 per month. Any excess data usage will be capped at S$0.10 per MB, the lowest rate here. Previously, customers were limited to the daily data roaming service (S$15 per day) or the DataRoam Saver Malaysia (Monthly) 100MB option, which cost S$5 per month. Existing subscribers to the 100MB service are set to have a free upgrade to a 200MB plan. More than 250,000 SingTel customers travel to Malaysia every month, noted Mr Johan Buse, SingTel's Vice President of Consumer Marketing. SingTel is partnering with Malaysian network Maxis to offer the rate. A Network Lock feature prevents customers from accidentally roaming onto a non-preferred network and incurring additional charges.

Denmark inks roaming agreement with China

Denmark and China have signed a bilateral agreement that will make it cheaper for Danes to use mobile phones when visiting China and vice-versa via lower roaming prices.Danish and Chinese mobile phone companies will sign a similar co-operation deal that will bind them to negotiate lower prices. "Today, it costs a Dane 400-1,200 kroner to stream a three-minute video on your cell phone using roaming in China," Henrik Sass Larsen, the business and growth minister, said in a press release. "That's far too expensive so I am pleased that we have signed a co-operation agreement with the Chinese government to reduce roaming prices."SingTel customers travel to Malaysia every month, noted Mr Johan Buse, SingTel's Vice President of Consumer Marketing. SingTel is partnering with Malaysian network Maxis to offer the rate. A Network Lock feature prevents customers from accidentally roaming onto a non-preferred network and incurring additional charges.

MTNSlashes Data, Call, SMS Roaming Rates to Saudi Arabia

MTN, has slashed its data roaming rates to Saudi Arabia at the most affordable price of one kobo per kilobyte. The initiative is part of its effort to ensure that Muslim pilgrims continuously keep in touch with family and friends during Umrah & Hajj seasons, through access to data services.

According to MTN, customers can also make calls for as low as N30 per minute, send text messages for N20 per SMS and receive SMS for free while roaming in Saudi Arabia. General Manager, Consumer Marketing, MTN, Kola Oyeyemi, explained that, the key strategic focus for the reduced tariff plans is to ensure that its Muslim subscribers and other people travelling to Saudi Arabia this Holy season do not lose touch with their loved ones. "We are always committed to the total wellbeing of all our customers as we strive to make their lives brighter through our propositions, products and value-added services. The thrust of this initiative is to ensure friendly roaming tariff rates for our customers who travel to Saudi Arabia and can still feel at home, browsing at the most affordable rate of one kobo per kilobyte," Oyeyemi said. He added, "Apart from the data rate, customers can also make calls at an affordable rate; send text message at a reduced rate and receive SMS from their loved ones at no cost, while enjoying other affordable friendly roaming services that MTN offers." Speaking on how to enjoy the reduced roaming rates, Oyeyemi explained that while in Saudi Arabia subscribers should go to the 'setting' of their phones, scroll to 'network selection', and choose 'manual'. All available networks will be displayed and Select 'Mobily' or 'Zain' network and this allows you to enjoy lower call, SMS and data roaming rates.

MTN sponsored 20 of its Muslim subscribers in an all-expense paid trip to the holy land for this year's Hajj. The subscribers were selected through a computer-based random selection, on the digital value added services like the daily devotionals, Islamic quotes, sermons, Islamic songs, prayers, Islamic callertunez and other spiritually uplifting and faith enriching contents they subscribed to. MTN was at the various Hajj Camps across the country and distributed over 20,000 travel kits including bags, money waist pouch, bathroom slippers and free MTN SIMs card. Over the years, MTN has continued to go beyond borders in providing exciting innovative initiatives geared at enhancing its customers' whole new digital experience. In the process it has always ensured its subscribers constantly enjoy friendly innovative products and services, while engaging them at their passion points with life-enriching experiences.

Denmark inks roaming agreement with China

Denmark and China have signed a bilateral agreement that will make it cheaper for Danes to use mobile phones when visiting China and vice-versa via lower roaming prices. Danish and Chinese mobile phone companies will sign a similar co-operation deal that will bind them to negotiate

lower prices. "Today, it costs a Dane 400-1,200 kroner to stream a three-minute video on your cell phone using roaming in China," Henrik Sass Larsen, the business and growth minister, said in a press release. "That's far too expensive so I am pleased that we have signed a co-operation agreement with the Chinese government to reduce roaming prices."

Government moves Supreme Court, appeals against 3G intra-circle roaming agreements

The government on Thursday moved the Supreme Court, challenging the legality of the 3G intra-circle roaming pacts that allow carriers to offer services in circles where they don't possess 3G bandwidth. The government on Thursday moved the Supreme Court, challenging the legality of the 3G intra-circle roaming pacts that allow carriers to offer services in circles where they don't possess 3G bandwidth. The development once again casts shadow on the future of Bharti AirtelBSE -2.96 %, Vodafone India and Idea's 3G services in circles where they do not have 3G airwaves but are offering it using each other's' network. Tata TeleservicesBSE -1.73 %, Aircel and Reliance CommunicationsBSE -2.67 % have also entered into a similar pact among themselves. In April, the telecom disputes tribunal, TDSAT, had overturned the DoT's ban on the 3G intra-circle roaming (3G ICR) pacts, saying Bharti Airtel, Idea and Vodafone's roaming arrangements for 3G airwaves with each other in circles where one of them didn't possess the airwaves was legal.

Terms of cancellation of international roaming in CIS unveiled

Russia is ready to obtain full abolition of roaming between the CIS countries' cellular operators. The Federal Antimonopoly Service (FAS) informed that it is preparing the amendments to the international roaming agreements, so that mobile operators could lower tariffs for international roaming to a level of rates within their own countries. In the countries of the Customs Union (4 out of the 11 CIS countries) it is going to happen in 2018. FAS considers today's margin of operators serving foreign customers is 85%. According to FAS calculations, international roaming services are beneficial to operators around the world. In the tariff drawn up to a subscriber the company whose SIM-card was purchased gets an average of 26% and the foreign operator, transmitting traffic via its network (inter-operator tariff) gets 53% more. Expenditures on service and "other expenses on roaming" make only 17% and 4%, respectively. In the inter-operator tariff the real costs make up only 15%.

Globe flat data roaming rate now in 75 countries

Forty more countries have been added to Globe's coverage of P599 ($13.32) daily, flat data roaming rate. The Ayala-led telecommunications firm now has 75 countries – including popular tourist destinations such as Brazil, France, Greece, Japan, the Netherlands – covered by "worry-free mobile surfing experience wherever they are around the world," Globe said. By turning on data roaming, customers will automatically be connected to a Globe partner carrier at their current destination to start surfing, checking e-mails, and updating on their social networking accounts. Globe ensures that with the daily P599 flat rate, its 2.1 million postpaid customers will have 24 hours data roaming access, without registering with other promos. The standardized rate also allows "hassle-free experience" without memorizing registration keywords, monitoring multiple data roaming rates, and tracking different time zones to avail of the "best" offers. The offer also aims to shield customers from bill shock, Coco Domingo, Globe Platinum Business and Roaming vice president, said. "In this day and age where Internet connection and social media are part of one's travel essentials, we find it fitting to expand the coverage of our default data roaming rate of P599 per day and benefit more users as they travel abroad for business or pleasure," Domingo added. Apart from the expanded coverage, Globe's postpaid customers are automatically entitled to enjoy free TravelCare insurance. With a TravelCare insurance package, customers can be covered up to P200,000 ($4,449.53) worth of protection from travel inconveniences like delayed or cancelled flights, lost or damaged luggage, including accidental death or medical emergencies. Globe customers can now avail of the 24 hours of data roaming at only P599 when they are in Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, and Hong Kong.

Other countries covered by the unlimited daily data roaming services include Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macau, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, United Kingdom, Uruguay, US, and Viet Nam.

Cheaper cross-border call tariffs in offing

Uganda's State Minister for Finance in charge of privatization, Aston Kajara wrote a one page letter to John Nasasira, the cabinet minister for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) titled; 'Proposal to Remove Excise Duty on International Incoming Calls Originating and Terminating within the Northern Corridor Region.' According to the letter, which The Independent has seen, Kajara made reference to the directive to the Summit of the Northern Corridor Integration on July 3, 2014 in Kigali, Rwanda to partner States to implement the One Network Area (ONA) by OCTember 1, 2014. This entails removing excise duty on inbound international incoming calls to Uganda from Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi with effect from Nov.01, 2014. "The legal modalities for implementing this decision will be worked out soon in consultation with the ministry of justice and constitutional affairs," the letter reads in part. ONA is an arrangement between the EAC partner States - Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi - aimed at making mobile calls from and to within the region charged at a lower uniform rate of Kshs 8.7 (UShs 253) per minute. The aim is to make international and roaming tariffs cheaper in a bid to deepen social-economic integration in the region. Some subscribers have been paying almost Shs 2, 000 to make a call to another country in the EAC due to the high roaming charges - but with the ONA arrangement, callers should expect friendlier charges. The ONA comes at a time when partner States are struggling to practically implement the already signed protocols including the Common Market and the Customs Union. They are currently on a ten-year roadmap intended to implement the Monetary Union before thinking of the final stage - Political Federation. Under the ONA arrangement, it was planned that charges for making or receiving calls in other countries in East Africa [including interconnection charges] would be cut by more than 60%. But it would vary from one operator to another. Already, Kenya and Rwanda have been applauded for being first to implement the ONA leaving Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi in their wake. South Sudan is also part of the arrangement but for various legal reasons it did not make it like Kenya and Rwanda did. It is expected that by end of December, this year all partner States should have responded positively to the ONA arrangement. Earlier in 2007, telecom operators in the EAC had a similar initiative called 'home-and-away' which ran until 2010 in which customers were not charged for receiving calls while travelling in EAC countries. However, because of the need to collect more taxes by governments, regulators imposed excise duty on incoming and outgoing calls for people travelling in the EAC. This was temporarily abandoned. Isaac Kalembe, the media relations specialist at Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), on October 17 said Uganda was supposed to launch the ONA on October 8 when the Standard Guage Railway project was launched in Kampala. But while telecom companies in Uganda have no choice but to implement the ONA, it could be another month before actual implementation because they need ample time to negotiate with their counterparts in the region so as to fully implement it. "We are looking at the end of December as our implementation deadline," Anthony Katamba, MTN's general manager for corporate services, told The Independent on Oct. 16.Kenya, Rwanda ahead Their Kenyan and Rwandan counterparts didn't have such excuses. Press reports recently said Airtel Kenya had reduced call rates by 60% and offered free incoming calls for postpaid and prepaid customers roaming in Rwanda. Safaricom - the largest telecom company in East Africa - is currently offering its customers up to 60% discount while roaming in Rwanda. For Airtel Kenya, outgoing calls while roaming in Rwanda are being charged Kshs 10 per minute, down from Kshs 25 per minute. The rates apply to customers making calls from Kenya to Rwanda and customers making calls from Rwanda to Kenya. Robert Rwakabogo, MTN Rwanda marketing manager, was positive on the initiative, saying MTN had implemented it starting with Kenya. Calls to Kenya now cost Frw 60 per minute compared to Frw 122, whereas receiving calls, formerly charged at Frw 51, is now free of charge. He said if implemented well, it would support cross-border trade and free movement of people in the EAC region through the promotion of easy communication means. He said that roaming charges, which have always been a hindrance for many within the East African region, would now drastically go down, which he said would stimulate growth in the telecommunications sector. However, some observers have mixed reactions about the initiative. Some are saying on one hand, businesses and callers are relieved, but on the other, telecoms could lose – which might lead to loss of jobs and perhaps taxes to governments. Yet already, telecoms say they are struggling with high costs and need government action to support them. MTN's Katamba said the current tax by government on incoming and outgoing international calls has led to a 15% drop in calls. If this is waived, the impact should be positive. "That will be good for us and our customers," he said. However, Regina Corry Busingye, the manager-brand and communication/commercial, at the partially Ugandan government owned Uganda Telecom - UTL - said the ONA could lead to an increase in cross border calls, which means an increment in revenues as well. "This is a good move not only for the consumers but for the Uganda Telecom as well," she said. She said that the ONA is a great step in implementing universal access to ICTs in the region and eliminating trade barriers. "ICT is a catalyst for economic development and as such this is a move in the right direction," she said. UTL charges Shs 499 to call Kenya per minute, tax inclusive and Shs 899 for those calling Rwanda per minute, tax inclusive. Busingye however stated that before the government scraps the excise tax, the ONA is not feasible in Uganda. She said all Ugandan operators agreed to launch the ONA on Dec. 1, 2014. On the many opportunities likely to accrue from the ONA implementation on the side of telecom companies, Busingye said increased movements of persons across borders is expected to enhance usage of telecommunications services by foreigners from within the region, which would result into higher volumes hence more revenue. Katamba also said it was imperative to remove the tax but was optimistic that theoretically the market would be bigger but expressed a worry that the arrangement could favor big players such as Safaricom in Kenya, which is likely to out-compete its smaller counterparts. Katamba said Kenyan players have higher chances of benefiting from the arrangement as there are only four players operating in a bigger economy [market] compared to some countries like Uganda where there are six players fighting for a relatively smaller market. But he also added that operators with presence in almost all markets under this arrangement stand a chance of building 'one solid network' at regional level, hence giving them an upper hand to grow their revenues and meet their targets. Available figures indicate that Bharti Airtel, commonly known as Airtel, a multinational telecommunications services company based in New Delhi, India, has the edge on the telecom market in the region. Operating in four of the five EAC countries with a total of 22 million subscribers, the telecom operator can safely be described as a regional network. South African giant MTN has operations in two countries (Uganda and Rwanda) with a total of about 14 million subscribers, while Safaricom, though all its 21 million subscribers are

in Kenya has the second largest subscriber base. With a total of slightly under nine million subscribers, Tigo Telecom operates in two countries – Rwanda and Tanzania. The French telecom company Orange operates in two countries – Uganda and Kenya – with a total of about 2.6 million, but Yu Telecom has more customers (2.8 million) though it operates in Kenya only. Leo Telecom is Burundi's only operational telecom company with 1.8 million customers, while Tanzania is Zantel's only market where it has about two million customers. In Uganda and Rwanda, MTN is the market leader, while Airtel leads in Tanzania followed by Tigo. Kenya appears to have the highest penetration rate (76%) followed by Rwanda's 63.5%, Tanzania's 58.6% and Uganda's 45.6 %, while Burundi lags behind with slightly over 21%. Indeed, with an average penetration rate of just 52%, experts say the EAC telecom market is still virgin and the prospects for growth are enormous. Whether or not the ONA will spur growth in penetration rates across the region is what remains to be seen.

NTT DOCOMO Deploys Oracle Communications Diameter Signaling Router for LTE Roaming

NTT DOCOMO, the leading wireless communications service provider (CSP) in Japan with more than 63 million subscribers has implemented Oracle Communications Diameter Signaling Router to accelerate the launch of new LTE roaming services. According to Oracle, with the implementation of the project which took just 6 months, NTT can now support roaming on LTE bands to ensure subscribers have access to the same advanced capabilities while traveling abroad. Oracle Communications Diameter Signaling Router was implemented as a virtualized solution providing high reliability and advanced functionality with a small physical footprint well suited to support LTE roaming. The solution also provides centralized routing, traffic management, and load-balancing tasks to enable the LTE network to grow incrementally to support increasing service and traffic demands.

For a Better Connected World

The forthcoming digital industrial era is bringing people, ideas, and businesses closer together and in ways never imagined before. SAMENA Trends magazine catches up with Mr. Shi Yaohong, Middle East President of Huawei—the world's leading information and communications technology company—on how upcoming transformations within the industry will contribute to building a better connected Middle East.

Host Mr. Shi Yaohong
Regional President
HUAWEI

Today we live in a dynamic era where technological progress is revolutionizing how we work, learn, entertain, and live. People increasingly expect high-quality connections anytime and anywhere to bring their world closer. An important part of this historical process is creating initiatives that build a better connected world.

What will a "better connected world" look like for consumers and businesses in the region? For one, the human race is quickly becoming an urban race. The world's population of city-dweller has increased to more than 50% in modern times. In this city-centric world, we see that approximately 35% of our 7.2 billion global population is below 20 years of age; a generation that is driven by a love of technology as a tool for self-empowerment. Web 2.0 technologies along with ubiquitous broadband will be universally available to these populations in the not-so-distant future. Technologies such as 4G LTE, cloud computing, and more intelligent business applications will be used by these communities to leverage enormous amounts of data both at the home and in the office.

As our physical and digital worlds continue to converge, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become the new engine that propels our world forward, having a profound impact on our daily lives.

Pillars of Future Industry Value

In this time of rapid population and industrial shifts, what priorities will we have to focus on when building this better connected world? We believe that the key opening up this new digital industrial era in the Middle East will require delivering on three value propositions. These are ubiquitous broadband, agile innovation, and creating more inspired experiences.

Ubiquitous Broadband

From laptops to smartphones, tablets, and wearable tech, a wide variety of innovative gadgets are cropping up in all corners of the globe. Devices will become increasingly diversified in the next 3-5 years. This in turn is building a culture in which people want to go online anytime anywhere, but also via any device. Against this backdrop, reliability and security have become essential requirements. ICT networks must also become broader and smarter to ensure smooth multimedia interactions amongst the public.

Agile Innovation

The region's ICT industry is still innovating rapidly. Emerging trends such as the Internet of Things, e-Commerce, and digital media are driving a change in traditional industries. This is seen in nearly every sector from healthcare to transportation, education, government and finance. Enterprises in these industries will need to strengthen their information-analysis capabilities to gain an insight into future business opportunities. New ICT solutions in the areas of unified communications, security, and networking are enabling enterprises to introduce products & services to the marketplace in a much faster and more efficient way. During this process, ICT is transforming from a support system to an actual production system.

Inspired Experiences

To learn, work, and live more conveniently, people expect services to be easy-to-use with zero wait time. New research into the areas of video, audio, touch control, and user-centric designs (UCDs) will in future provide individuals with a consistent multimedia experience across screens. In addition, it will be important for the ICT industry to provide high-quality and easy to maintain handheld devices. These devices will ultimately allow people around the world to communicate and share information more freely while enjoying the inspired experiences of technological progress.

From Vision to Reality

The Middle East has by all accounts maintained its global reputation as being home to one of the most dynamic and vibrant ICT markets worldwide. Forward-thinking government authorities and telecom operators continue to advance strong policies that create greater alignment of ICT standards as well as economies of scale for cutting-edge solutions. Coupled with the transition of the wider region from a resource-based to a service-based economy, now is the time in which ubiquitous broadband, agile innovation and inspired experiences are set to become a reality.

The evolution of mobile broadband has been particularly significant as the foundation for more intelligent and connected cities of the future. In many Middle East countries, more than 75% of people now live in cities. Populations in the Middle East are also growing rapidly, with the number of cities with more than 1 million people increasing substantially over the last decade. Addressing this population's demand for speedy, bandwidth-heavy ICT services, operators have not only begun powering advanced 4G LTE mobile broadband systems, but are now extending that connectivity through second and third-phase deployment programs.

Individual enterprises have also made a monumental shift of their approach to agile innovation. In sectors such as the oil & gas industry, new ICT solutions are enabling local oil companies to transmit data related to oil production in real-time in a highly secured network environment, boosting oilfield production efficiency. In a growing Middle East hospitality sector, the virtualization of IT assets through software-defined data centers are giving hoteliers greater freedom to align their architecture across many different properties and to deploy IT upgrades quickly & easily without investing in physical hardware projects. The region's education landscape is also seeing enormous benefits as pilot e-classroom programs are successfully rolled out; enabling top professors to conduct classes remotely using the latest video conferencing systems.

The benefits of inspired experiences are further being delivered to consumers within the Middle East. Regional consumers are recognized as early-adopters of handheld technology with a clear enthusiasm for the latest devices. The demand for powerful mobile connectivity has moved computing devices from our desktops to our laps, then to our hands, and now technology is even being fashioned to our bodies. Recent research from International Data Corporation (IDC) tracked record high shipments in the global smartphone industry in Q2 2014, with the wearable device market anticipated to reach a total of 19.2 million units in 2014—more than tripling last year's sales.

Taking all of these factors into account, expectations from ICT infrastructure will only rise in the coming years. By pursuing ubiquitous broadband, agile innovation, and the creation of more inspired experiences, businesses across the Middle East can prepare for a more sustainable and ever-changing future.

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Technology Updates

3Tbps fiber speed achieved through BT/Huawei partnership

Telecommunications giant BT has achieved a blazing 3Tbps speed through a partnership with Chinese network vendor, Huawei. The two companies believe this speed is the fastest which has been achieved - outside of controlled lab tests - and uses existing fiber and commercial hardware. The record-breaking transmission was conducted using a 359km fiber link between BT's Adastral Park research campus in Suffolk and the BT Tower in London. To crank the speed up, the two firms used an advanced 'flexgrid' infrastructure which increases the density of channels. Under current circumstances, the gap between transmission channels is 50MHz. When this is compressed to 33.5GHz the cables become 50% more efficient which results in faster speeds. BT also held the previous speed record, of 1.4Tbps, but this was in partnership with Alcatel-Lucent and used gaps of 35GHz over a 410km fiber link instead. "Flexgrid technology is evolving quickly, and this trial has been invaluable in demonstrating the feasibility of this emerging technology in a real, truly testing environment," says Neil J McRae, chief network architect at BT. "Combined with BT's continuing investment in its network infrastructure, this outstanding breakthrough suggests we're well-prepared for a future where new and exciting services are delivered by faster, more data-hungry applications. "The trial result also demonstrates how we'll be able to maximize the efficiency of BT's existing investments, extending the life of our core network infrastructure whilst continuing to meet the needs of a 21st Century digital society." TelecomsTech previously reported on another partnership between BT and Huawei on G-Fast technology which recent tests have achieved 800Mbps over the (relatively) cheap and widespread copper infrastructure which most homes have installed. Consumers are demanding greater speeds as bandwidth-intensive applications such as Cloud services and streaming 4K video become more pervasive across the UK. BT has invested billions of pounds in its network, with additional funding being provided by the government through the Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) initiative

Samsung achieves WiFi data travel feats for 60GHZ band

South African mobile operator Vodacom Samsung Electronics has announced advances in WiFi technology. Samsung said it found a way to make Wi-Fi data travel faster than it does currently. Specifically, Samsung said the new technology enables data transmission speeds of up to 4.6Gbps, or 575MB per second, a fivefold increase from 866Mbps, or 108MB per second, which the company said was the maximum speed possible with existing consumer electronics devices. Eventually, consumers will see the results of these efforts within various connected devices. BBC News said the faster WiFi could make it fast

to stream movies from phones to TVs and other displays. A 1GB movie will take less than three seconds to transfer between devices, said Samsung. Samsung Electronics refers to the development as its "60GHz WiFi technology." The company's engineers worked on WiFi that operated in the 60GHz band, whereas current Wi-Fi systems use 2.4 and 5GHz bands, said the BBC. This is news in itself, as Samsung has successfully overcome some barriers to the commercialization of the 60GHz millimeter-wave band WiFi technology, said Kim Chang Yong, Head of DMC R&D Center of Samsung Electronics. In the press release, the company said, "Unlike the existing 2.4GHz and 5GHz WiFi technologies, Samsung's 802.11ad standard 60GHz WiFi technology maintains maximum speed by eliminating co-channel interference, regardless of the number of devices using the same network."
"Samsung has invented a No-Interference, 60GHz WiFi," said the Windows IT Pro headline. Rod Trent of Windows IT Pro wrote that "the 802.11ad technology also maintains maximum speed by eliminating co-channel interference. If you've worked with WiFi for very long, you know that speeds can vary because the signal is constantly negotiating with other technologies in the near area that are utilizing the same channels." According to the BBC News report, engineers were able to address some technical problems that had restricted the transfer of data at well below its theoretical limit. "Until now, there have been significant challenges in commercially adopting 60GHz WiFi technology," said Samsung. The company enhanced the overall signal quality by developing micro beam-forming control technology, which optimizes the communications module in less than 1/3,000 seconds, in case of any changes in the communications environment. Devices built to use the 60GHz WiFi standard are not expected immediately but Samsung is looking to the future. Samsung said that "the 60GHz is an unlicensed band spectrum across the world, and commercialization is expected as early as next year." The company intends to apply the new technology to products which include audiovisual, medical devices and telecommunications equipment. Samsung said, "The technology will also be integral to developments relevant to the Samsung Smart Home and other initiatives related to the Internet of Things." Gigaom commented on the announcement. "Samsung's technology appears to be interoperable with other WiGig products. Based on the IEEE's 802.11ad standard, WiGig is being groomed by the WiFi Alliance as an extremely fast but short range complement to traditional WiFi."

Genesis advises operators to "turn copper into mobile gold"

Japanese telecoms giant NTT The rise of fiber cables was thought to have made copper obsolete when it comes to telecommunications infrastructure, despite being more widespread and costing less. That industry assumption is now changing as impressive new technologies take copper off life support and brings it back harder, faster, stronger. At the Broadband World Forum in Amsterdam, Genesis' President and CTO Stephen Cooke told attendees that bonded copper solutions can provide the capacity to support high-amounts of data traffic in suburban areas where the infrastructure exists and therefore requires little investment. "In a technological landscape that is constantly growing, changing and developing, it's good to take a step back and evaluate existing infrastructures," Cooke said. He continues: "It is important not to ignore the properties and capabilities of what is already in place. Rolling out the next big technology does not mean investing vast amounts in fiber just because the market demands seem to say so. There are some very exciting technologies that really stretch copper's capabilities." Despite not calling it out directly, one of the new technologies Cooke is referring to is sure to be G.FAST which we've discussed here on TelecomsTech in the past. There is a high-degree of excitement around the innovation; with early tests showing a lot of potential... In "real world" tests, BT reported downstream speeds of around 800Mbps alongside upstream speeds of more than 200Mbps. Bell Labs is working on a spin-off technology called XG.FAST which achieved an incredible 10Gbps (albeit in a controlled lab test under ideal conditions. According to Genesis, one of the key problems with small cells is the amount of fiber that is needed to support the cells which increases the cost. Considering each small cell deployed needs to make a profit, they are often seen as too expensive to deploy. "Revolutionizing existing copper by using a bonding solution is one of the least expensive backhaul options available. It provides a great opportunity for fixed incumbents to become mobile players by using the existing copper network to provide backhaul bandwidth and power to small cells." Copper is the solution to infrastructure issues, now if operators will listen.

Li-ion Batteries Contain Toxic Halogens, but Environmentally Friendly Alternatives Exist

Physics researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University have discovered that most of the electrolytes used in lithium ion batteries commonly found in consumer electronic devices are superhalogens, and that the vast majority of these electrolytes contain toxic halogens. At the same time, the researchers also found that the electrolytes in lithium-ion batteries (also known as Li-ion batteries) could be replaced with halogen-free electrolytes that are both nontoxic and environmentally friendly. "The significance [of our findings] is that one can have a safer battery without compromising its performance," said lead author Puru Jena, Ph.D., distinguished professor in the Department of Physics of the College of Humanities and Sciences. "The implication of our research is that similar strategies can also be used to design cathode materials in Li-ion batteries." The article, "Superhalogens as Building Blocks of Halogen-free Electrolytes in Li-ion Batteries," by Jena, postdoctoral researcher Santanab Giri, Ph.D., and then-graduate student Swayamprabha Behera, Ph.D., will appear in a forthcoming issue of the chemistry journal Angewandte Chemie International Edition, which has posted the study online. Jena said he hopes that the article's findings will lead to production of safer, less toxic batteries. "We hope that our theoretical prediction will stimulate experimentalists to synthesize halogen-free salts which will then lead manufacturers to use such salts in commercial applications," he said. The researchers also found that the procedure outlined for Li-ion batteries is equally valid for other metal-ion batteries, such as sodium-ion or magnesium-ion batteries. Jena became interested in the topic several months ago when he saw a flyer on Li-ion batteries that mentioned the need for halogen-free electrolytes. "I had not done any work on Li-ion batteries at the time, but I was curious to see what the current electrolytes are," he said. "I found that the negative ions that make up the electrolytes are large and complex in nature and they contain one less electron than what is needed for electronic shell closure." Jena had already been working for more than five years on superhalogens, a class of molecules that mimic the chemistry of halogens but have electron affinities that are much larger than that of the halogen atoms.

"I knew of many superhalogen molecules that do not contain a single halogen atom," he said. "My immediate thought was first to see if the anionic components of the current electrolytes are indeed superhalogens. And, if so, do the halogen-free superhalogens that we knew serve the purpose as halogen-free electrolytes? Our research proved that to be the case."

The Great Telecom Escape

Commoditization is sweeping across the global mobile telecommunications industry with implications for corporate and investment performance. In many countries, customers view mobile product and service offerings from different operators as interchangeable—no more distinctive than other commodities such as beans or gas. And the mobile industry is making matters worse. When competitors cannot differentiate themselves with products or services, they often just differentiate with price, draining billions of dollars of value from the industry.

To measure and better understand how commoditization is impacting the mobile industry, we developed a national commoditization score based on two independent variables—the difference between the market shares of the largest and smallest lowest players in a market and the difference in the highest and lowest average revenue per user (ARPU) in the market. We then mapped the degree of commoditization among 122 countries. In 2012 most countries (52 percent) are either commodited or on-the-edge of commoditization. The remainder maintain some level of differentiation, but we believe many of these are likely to move down toward commoditization in short order.

David Tusa
Partner
Strategy&

Milind Singh
Principal
Strategy&

Ming-Chyuan Chan
Associate
Strategy&

As part of our research we also developed a commoditization index to examine commoditization trends by region. We found that the level of commoditization in North America and Europe to be similarly high, and similarly stable. However, other regions stood out for their very divergent commoditization trends. Africa's commoditization index saw 18% compound annual growth from 2009-2012, bringing it in line with the level of commoditization in the Asia-Pacific region. Interestingly, however, the Middle East saw its commoditization index fall in 2012 after 7% growth from 2009-2011, as operators retreated from pricing convergence and instead stressed innovation based on products.

This tells us is that commoditization is not irresistible. While commoditization has a strong gravitational pull, operators can loosen its grip. With this in mind, we have identified three strategies that telecom companies around the world have used with some success to drive sustained differentiation. We call these commoditization escape plans.

The first plan, "escape and challenge," involves investing in new technologies and customer engagement tools, such as in 4G LTE and gamification. This investment helps build an agile operating model that can create different products and services for different customer segments, thus establishing new revenue streams. Operators such as T-Mobile in Germany, SingTel in Singapore, and Vodacom in South Africa have used this plan successfully to increase ARPU.

"Escape and challenge" requires that operators cooperate internally across multiple stakeholders to keep the focus on products and services, pursue advanced customer segmentation, and nurture alliances with strategic partners. It also requires coordination with regulators to quickly identify rival operators who flout rules that unfairly tilt the playing field.

The second approach is to "accept and adapt"—to face the reality of commoditization and make the best of a bad situation. Operators using "accept and adapt" focus on increasing market share instead of ARPU, providing the same services as the rest of the market but for far less. The key to making this strategy work is to provide market-par service at the lowest possible price point without triggering a price war.

To maintain the lowest cost operating model, companies need to make use of self-service technologies, aggressive business process outsourcing, network asset securitization and contracted network maintenance. On the regulatory front, the operators should engage with regulators on issues such as active and passive radio access network sharing, rights

of way simplification and simplified ownership transfer procedures for base stations sites.

The third plan, "consolidate to scale up," involves growing through partnerships or acquisitions to gain scale and efficiencies, reduce marketplace fragmentation, and increase ARPU. For example, operators can expand network and availability by combining coverage footprints, and reduce average marketing costs per subscriber by harmonizing brands.

To make this plan work, operators must manage cultural and organizational integrations adroitly, and pursue headcount efficiencies with some finesse. Communicating with regulators is also important to head off any anti-competitive controversy when making an acquisition or agreeing to a partnership.

Commoditization is a serious threat to most mobile operators around the world. However, there are ways to cope, either by escaping commoditization or making the most of it. Each plan requires business leaders to think about their markets anew, to be nimble, and to consider how they can position their companies to succeed over the long haul. Those who do not respond in some coordinated fashion to the commoditization threat will most likely experience a steady decline.

Is mobile network infrastructure sharing about to take off in SAMENA?

Worldwide, network infrastructure sharing agreements have grown 200% in the last five years (Figure 1) and yet, with the exception of passive sharing in some of the South Asian markets, this global trend has hardly touched the SAMENA region. Coleago believes this situation will change rapidly over the next five years. Given that there is a first-mover advantage, or at least a last-mover disadvantage, operators better prepare their strategies and start work soon. Regulators would also be well-advised to develop their policies in advance in consultation with the operators and competition authorities.

Chris Buist
Director
Coleago Consulting Ltd

Global trends and drivers

Mobile network infrastructure sharing is not new. It has been around for decades in one form or another, starting with national roaming and bilateral site sharing – usually encouraged or mandated by regulators to help new entrants.

Three clear trends are emerging:

- Network sharing joint ventures (JVs) between mobile network operators (MNOs); whereas site sharing started off in many markets as a mutual exchange involving a small percentage of sites, a JV can go much further to maximise the number of shared sites and cost savings, typically 25-40%; furthermore the scope of sharing has been extending from "passive" to "active" and, in some cases, to spectrum sharing (Figure 2).
- "TowerCo" deals where an operator sells its towers to a third party and leases them back or forms a joint venture; the majority of these transactions have been in Africa (almost 40% of all towers by end-2014) but similar deals are now taking place on all continents; consequently TowerCos are attracting considerable Private Equity investment given their long-term secure cash flows and growth prospects.
- In-market consolidation; undoubtedly discussions about sharing are leading some shareholders to be more radical and consider consolidation; Coleago believes that most markets will end up within the next five years with only three mobile operators and two (shared) radio access networks (RANs).

Software-Defined Networking (SDN) and Network Functions Virtualisation (NFV) are emerging technology developments that might enable and encourage deeper sharing in future depending on how

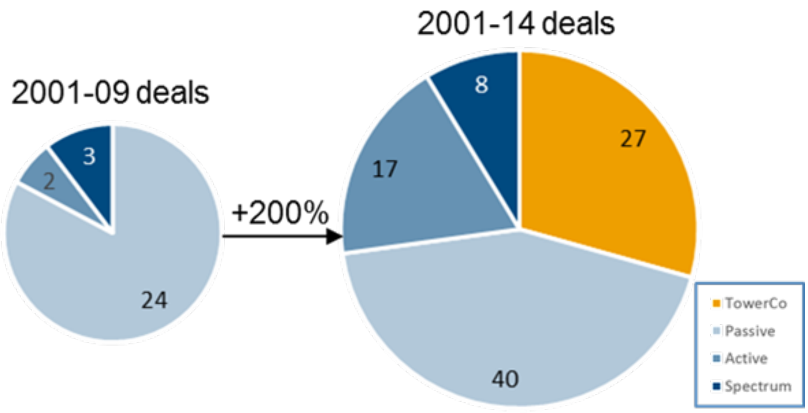


Figure 1 – Number of Network Sharing Deal Announcements

standards and OEM products/services evolve.

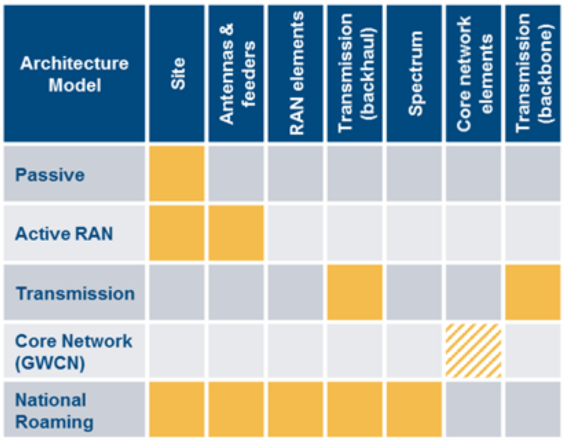


Figure 2 – Network Sharing Scope Options

MORAN: Multi-Operator Radio Access Network
MOCN: Multi-Operator Core Network
GWCN: Gateway Core Network

What is driving the huge increase in sharing and tower sales? EBITDA pressure is the predominant driver, be it as a result of revenue competition (new entrants, MVNOs or OTT players), regulators reducing termination rates or international roaming fees (Europe), or the rapid increase in mobile data traffic. The latter is possibly the most significant with data traffic forecast to double every two years.

In many emerging markets, sharing is also being driven by limited spectrum availability or government ambition to improve rural broadband services.

The regulatory perspective

Regulatory attitudes and policies regarding sharing differ from market to market. A few telecommunications regulators have published guidelines for network sharing but they are in the minority. Most regulators state that sharing will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the sharing scope, the competition (anti-monopoly or anti-trust) authority may also need to approve a proposed deal.

Typically, regulatory authorities apply the following principles when evaluating proposals:

- Competition: should not be adversely affected by the network sharing
- Control: operators should retain independent control of software and parameters in the shared network
- Information: operators should not exchange competition-related data beyond that needed to design, build and operate the shared network
- Costs: of the shared network should be fair and economic.

Regulators differ considerably regarding their position on spectrum pooling and geographical limits. We expect that the attitude to spectrum pooling will relax over time as the demand from operators to release more spectrum increases.

Most regulators currently object to sharing core network elements as this is where much of the competitive differentiation resides.

CMS, one of the market-leading law firms in the communications sector, has recently published its first annual study on network sharing in Europe and, in particular, its views on the regulatory aspects. The report is available through its website: www.cmslegal.com.

Our forecast for SAMENA

Many markets in the SAMENA region have lagged Europe in terms of coverage/technology roll-out and market penetration. However the launch of LTE has been the "burning platform" for numerous network sharing deals and we expect that the same will hold true, particularly for the South Asian and North African countries.

LTE creates two major cost pressures for an operator. Initially it usually requires a major capital investment in licence/spectrum fees, network elements and transmission with a commensurate increase in operating costs. Later, as take-up increases, LTE users consume two to three times the amount of data compared to 3G users, incurring further capital and operating expenditure but with limited revenue upside.

As operators in the region start to experience the same EBITDA and free cash flow squeeze as elsewhere, network infrastructure sharing will start to take off. The only exceptions might be duopoly markets such as Lebanon, Oman and UAE.

In all likelihood the region will eventually end up with a similar mix of sharing types as elsewhere. We expect to see:

- Existing bilateral site sharing metamorphose into passive or active sharing JVs between operators
- Tower sales before, during or after the creation of passive/active sharing JVs
- Mergers in markets where there are four or more mobile operators today, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh
- Backbone transmission JVs between non-incumbent operators, also enabling some mobile operators to enter the FTTx market.

However spectrum pooling is unlikely to gain ground for some years except in a few isolated cases.

Next steps

If the reader accepts that operators will come under the same cost pressures as elsewhere, then there is no time to lose because there is clear evidence of a first-mover advantage, or at least a last-mover disadvantage. For passive or active sharing JVs, it is better to choose your preferred partner than be handed a partner by default or, in the case of a three-player market, left with no partner. In the case of tower sales, information from completed deals shows that the first to market will command a higher price than the followers.

Operators better prepare their strategies and start work soon. Coleago's approach (Figure 3) is applicable regardless of the sharing option selected. It is designed to work as well for a tower sale as it does for an

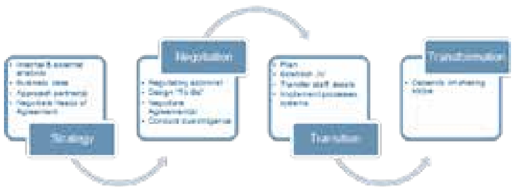


Figure 3 – Approach to Network Sharing

active RAN share with another MNO. For further details, visit our website: www.coleago.com.

Typically, it takes between 9 and 15 months from project initiation to the end of the transition depending on the sharing option, regulatory approval(s), the need to transfer assets and the willingness/ambition of the partners. Site rationalisation usually takes a further two to three years to deliver all the savings.

Regulators would also be well-advised to develop their policies in advance, in consultation with the operators and competition authorities, as it speeds up the process when the inevitable requests are received and reduces risk for the potential dealmakers.

Digital Services: Partnering is Key to Success

Amelia Power
Head of Sales and Marketing
SLA Mobile

Today's mobile operators are faced by threats from not only their competitor Telco but from global and start up internet companies. The competitive landscape is becoming increasingly populated by internet companies who have the ability to diminish the operator's Voice and SMS margins through alternate service offerings. Mobile consumers around the world have swiftly embraced Over-The-Top (OTT) applications, which have now evolved into a major threat to operators causing them to suffer from both revenue and brand erosion, with the impact spreading throughout the telecom value chain.

Strategy Analytics has predicted that mobile operators could lose over $3 billion in mobile messaging revenues alone in the next five years . This illustrates the urgency with which operators need to revolutionise their service, delivery structure and approach to regulations. However they are facing a tough challenge, as OTT players are adaptable and willing to experiment, whilst arguably making better use of consumer data to improve services.

As these traditional revenue streams decline, mobile operators must find new sources of revenue in order to remain competitive within the industry. Mobile operators have access to an oilfield of technology and personal data that can be exploited with the consumer's permission and monetised through the implementation of Digital Services. Introducing Digital Services in addition to their core offerings will give operators the competitive advantage that will allow them to create new innovative revenue streams.

Forward-looking mobile operators have been reconsidering their business models for several years. Within that business model they have realised that attempts to quash the threat of OTTs will not be achieved by blocking their apps or by stimulating usage of traditional services. For most, the answer lies in partnership, including the offering of mash-up / combined services. In a recent Telecoms.com survey , 93% of operators surveyed said they believed that there is value for them in partnering with OTTs in the digital ecosystem.

The majority of traditional businesses are trying to figure out how to use technology to reach more customers and to distribute goods and services at lower costs. In this new digital ecosystem, the successful mobile operator will be the ones who are culturally and technologically agile whilst being fast moving, highly efficient and customer-centric. These operators will now how to partner in order to deliver the services that their customers want.

Embracing the digital ecosystem can be a difficult task as it is essential for mobile operators to partner with industry verticals and OTT players who traditionally would have been seen as competitors, eroding the operator's Voice and SMS revenue streams. Partnering between mobile operators and Internet companies will have its challenges due to the presence of significant cultural differences. Telco's have in place rigorous processes, procedures and regulations that internet companies find difficult to work with. These working methods have the ability to slow down the pace of the project causing frustration between both parties.

One way of overcoming this issue is to bridge the cultural gap between mobile operators and Internet companies by introducing a third party digital services provider who manages the entire process from beginning to end. The mobile operator's risk is reduced through the utilisation of a third party vendor who can not only provide a managed service solution but can bring existing industry vertical relationships and business models. The operator will benefit from the providers proven technology solution and their team of experienced employees who will be experts in the field of integration and will systematically and coherently deliver and deploy a risk free service. This team will provide 24x7 Managed Service support which means the operator will not have to worry about employment resources to manage the service. The operator will also benefit from innovative commercial engagement models that will reduce capex and facilitate revenue share.

Through a managed service approach mobile operators can safely open their data and leverage the API Economy building a robust ecosystem of new digital services that will create new revenues. Operators have the ability to open APIs for billing, profile, location etc which can offer partners the ability to introduce new services such as Payment, Identity Management and Personalisation. For example partners can leverage the payment APIs and provide Direct Operator Billing also known as Carrier Billing which allows users to purchase digital and virtual content via their mobile phone by adding the transaction to their post paid bill or using their pre-paid credit. Another example is the utilisation of Identity APIs, the operator has a trusted relationship with its customers and an Identity solution like Mobile Connect can act as an authentication service to allow customers to sign in to third party websites without having to register and create several log ins. This type of service has the ability to lock in customers, reducing churn and increasing customer satisfaction.

[1] Strategy Analytics 'A Vertical View of Messaging Apps', October 2013.
[2] Telecoms.com, 'Intelligence Industry Survey 2014',

SATELLITE UPDATES

Satellite Updates

NSR releases satellite operator financial analysis report

Northern Sky Research (NSR) has released its "Satellite Operator Financial Analysis (SOFA), 4th Edition," report in which the research group finds an increased focus on operational efficiencies is driving both acquisitions and new High Throughput Satellite (HTS) payloads being launched. The report gives a detailed analysis of Avanti Communications in particular, focusing on the company's HTS strategy. NSR suggests Avanti could being the fifth largest satellite operator in the world if it achieves revenues of $700 million, which the company has stated is possible thanks to HTS, despite having a small number of satellites in orbit.

Globalstar Building new Gateway in Botswana for Simplex Services

Mobile Satellite Services (MSS) provider Globalstar is seeking to build up its presence in Southern Africa by building a new gateway station in Gaborone, Botswana. Broadband Botswana Internet (BBi) has partnered on the new facility, which is already under construction and is expected to be complete by the end of the year. From Botswana, Globalstar will be able to extend its reach to South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Madagascar, Swaziland, Lesotho, Malawi, Angola, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Burundi and Zambia. The company intends to bring its entire Simplex offering, including the Spot tracking and monitoring solutions. Together with BBi, Globalstar plans to focus first on the markets of personal assets, commercial trucking, animal tracking, mining, and oil and gas applications. The new gateway will bring Globalstar's Simplex and Spot services up to near-global coverage.

E-Networks first in LatAm to use O3b's 'fiber in the sky'

Guyanese internet service provider (ISP) E-Networks has signed an agreement with O3b to use the company's 'fiber in the sky' satellite broadband network, making it the first Latin American telecoms operator to be introduced onto the O3b system since it initiated commercial operations earlier in this year. The satellite service provider, which is headquartered in Jersey, Channel Islands, uses satellites which orbit closer to earth than geostationary satellites, theoretically reducing latency, augmenting data rates and improving voice and video quality. According to O3b, its satellites can support up to 1.6Gbps in a single beam. Vishok M. Persaud, managing director at E-Networks said: 'We now have the unique ability to offer international services to our corporate customers either on fiber or O3b or a combination of both while maintaining low latency. This gives us the most resilient network in Guyana. Access to the O3b network gives us the ability to open up new services countrywide where it would otherwise be difficult to have access to fiber. This deployment will be used to further enhance our fiber-optic and 4G data networks.' The ISP already offers 4G mobile WiMAX services with data speeds ranging from 1Mbps-5Mbps, and in 2013 launched its fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) network.

OpenView HD increases its reach with Intelsat tie-up

South African free-to-air satellite TV platform OpenView HD will soon be available on the same satellite dish used to receive channels from rival operators DStv, Vivid and Freevision. Platco Digital, the nascent platform's owner, is now leasing capacity on the Intelsat IS20 satellite located at 68.5° East through an agreement with South Africa's national transmission supplier Sentech. This means that any subscribers to the rival TV services wishing to also view OpenView HD channels, need only to buy and install a ZAR849 (US$75.9) set-top box. OpenView HD, which launched in October 2013 with 15 channels, began its direct-to-home satellite service via SES5. A one-off purchase of a set-top box and satellite dish was required, but after that the service could be received without any subscription charge. It now offers 18 channels, covering a range of genres, and including SABC1, SABC2, SABC3 and e.tv. Maxwell Nonge, Platco Digital's managing director, said: "We are delighted to be able to increase viewer access to the OpenView HD platform and extend options for TV viewers across South Africa. The IS20 offering will make it easier for the consumer pocket, as those with existing satellite dishes will not need to purchase new ones".

Argentina successfully launches its first telecom satellite

Argentina has successfully launched its first domestically designed and developed geostationary communications satellite Thursday, USA Today reported. "ARSAT-1 is on its way to space. What a thrill," Argentina's President Cristina Kirchner wrote on her Twitter account. The satellite will occupy the 81 West orbital slot, 36,000 km away from earth. ARSAT-1 is the first satellite of its type constructed and orbited by a Latin American country. It is the product of seven years of work of 500 scientists. The cost of the satellite was about $250 million, and it will be operational for the next 15 years. The ARSAT-1 satellite is developed to provide digital television and cellphone services to Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. It will also improve telephone and Internet connections in remote regions. Fernandez said that through ARSAT-1, Argentina joins an "elite club", able to build rockets capable of space flight, whose members include the United States, Russia, China, Japan, Israel and the European Union countries. ARSAT-1 is the first stage of a program by Argentina's government to orbit a fleet of satellites able to transmit and relay signals to all of Latin America. A second satellite is planned to be launched in 2015.

Proton Successfully Launches Russian Telecom Satellite

Russia's heavy-lift Proton rocket on October 22 successfully launched the Express-AM6 telecommunications satellite in the vehicle's second successful flight since its grounding following a May failure. Russia's Roscosmos space agency and the Express-AM6 owner, Russian Satellite Communications Co. (RSCC) of Moscow, confirmed that the satellite was healthy and in the intended orbit. It was RSCC's Express-AM4R satellite that was destroyed in the May failure, following the August 2011 loss, due to another Proton failure, of the Express-AM4 satellite. Given RSCC's recent record of satellite losses, RSCC Chief Executive Yuri Prokhorov said the Express-AM6 launch was perhaps "the most-anticipated event of the year in the satellite industry." Express-AM6 will be operated at 53 degrees east longitude to serve western Russia, the Urals, western Siberia and parts of the Middle East, Europe and Africa. It was built by ISS Reshetnev of Russia, with the 72-transponder C-, Ku-, Ka- and L-band transponder payload, featuring 11 antennas, provided by MDA Corp. of Canada. The satellite's total throughput capacity, RSCC said, is 2.7 gigahertz. Given the failures it has had to contend with, RSCC's expansion plan has become as much of a catch-up program as one of extending its reach. The government-owned company expects to launch the Express-AM7 and -AM8 satellites in early 2015, also on Proton vehicles. Proton's relatively slow — compared to previous failures — return to full service following the May failure has produced a backlog of Russian government and commercial customers, the latter managed through International Launch Services of Reston, Virginia. The next ILS launch, tentatively scheduled for late November, is scheduled to be the Astra 2G telecommunications satellite owned by fleet operator SES of Luxemburg.

Globecomm Finishes VSAT Network in Iraq

Globecomm, in partnership with a top Iraqi telecommunications provider, has completed a 158-Mb VSAT network that will support oil and gas exploration. A European-based client will use the network to connect its main exploration site, which has more than 5,000 residents, along with other locations. The connectivity solution also includes 100-MB terrestrial microwave links. The managed service was installed by an Iraqi telecommunications supplier, and includes a Cisco call manager telephone system that terminates calls at Globecomm Europe's Netherlands teleport. The completed dual-path network provides redundancy for voice, data and broadband connectivity. The Iraqi telecommunications supplier was contracted to provide all local technical support to the oil exploration company.

Iridium Inks M2M Agreement with Trimble

Iridium has signed an agreement to provide Machine-to-Machine (M2M) services to Trimble for its transportation and logistics business. The partnership helps Trimble expand coverage of assets beyond North America to include Europe and other parts of the world. Iridium's M2M business has swelled to comprise more than one-fifth the company's commercial service revenue, growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 36 percent since 2008. Two other Trimble companies, PeopleNet and Geotrac, have been long-time customers of Iridium.

ISRO Launches IRNSS C Navigation Satellite

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) launched the third satellite in the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) aboard a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PLSV). The 1425kg IRNSS C satellite launch marks the sixth time the PSLV has flown in the XL configuration, and the 27th successful consecutive mission. The space agency has taken control of the satellite from its master control facility in Hassan, Karnataka, and will soon conduct four orbit maneuvers to move the satellite from an elliptical orbit to Geostationary Earth Orbit (GEO).

Arianespace Purchases 10 Vega Launchers from ELV

Arianespace has signed a contract with Italian manufacturer European Launch Vehicle (ELV) for 10 Vega rockets. The order will supply enough of the light-lift launcher to fulfill Arianespace's small- to medium-sized satellite missions for more than three years. The first of the new orders is set to enter service in 2015. The four-stage rocket has a target payload lift capability of 1,500 kg to a 700-km circular orbit. Arianespace has conducted three successful Vega launches to date and has nine missions signed.

Russian Meridian Satellite Makes For Space

A Russian Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket with a Fregat upper stage and a Meridian communications satellite has been successfully launched from the Plesetsk space port. "The airspace defense forces' operational unit successfully launched the Soyuz-2.1a medium-class carrier rocket with a Meridian communications satellite from the Plesetsk cosmodrome," said Colonel Alexei Zolotukhin, a spokesman for the Russian airspace defense forces, adding that the rocket had been blasted off in a regular regime. He also stated that the Fregat upper stage with a Meridian dual-use communications satellite had successfully separated from the third stage of the Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket. The Fregat upper stage will continue its mission to put the satellite onto its designated orbit. The Meridian dual-use satellite is tasked to ensure communication with sea vessels and ice patrol aircraft along the Northern Sea Route. Flight tests of the Soyuz-2 spacecraft were kicked off at Plesetsk in November of 2004. Over the ten years since then, as many as 18 Soyuz-2 carrier rockets of various modifications - 1a, 1b, and 1v - have been launched. Rockets of the Soyuz-2 series replaced Soyuz-U launch vehicles used at Plesetsk from 1973 to 2012. Over this period, a total of 434 Soyuz-U boosters were launched to put into orbit about 430 spacecraft. The Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket was developed by the Progress Rocket and Space Centre and is equipped with upgraded digital control and radio-telemetric systems and unrated engines of the first and second stages.

Intelsat Reports Third Quarter Earnings

Intelsat reported its total revenue for the three months ended September 30, 2014 at $608.6 million. The company's Earnings Before net Interest, Taxes and Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) was $477.8 million, or 79 percent of revenue, and adjusted EBITDA was $485.3 million, or 80 percent of revenue. Intelsat saw decreases in revenue across network services, media and government sectors. Compared to the third quarter 2013, network services declined 4 percent, media 3 percent and government 20 percent. Of the company's 2,150 station-kept transponders, the fill rate was 75 percent as of September 30, 2014, compared to 76 percent at the end of the second quarter 2014. Intelsat attributed this decrease to less use by government and African customers.

CMO Summit 2014

11th October, 2014
The Palace Downtown, Dubai

Data Dynamics: Innovative monetization opportunities

Held at The Palace Downtown Dubai on 11 October, 2014, the CMO Summit brought together telecom industry's senior marketing executives exclusively from SAMENA Council's chartered members – including leading telecommunications groups such as Etisalat, STC, Batelco, Zain, Orange, Turk Telecom, Ooredoo and VIVA – to share insights on new innovations and opportunities in an increasingly digital world.

Andrew Hanna Chairman
CMO Working Group
CCO Viva Bahrain

Andrew Hanna, CCO of VIVA Bahrain and Chairman of the CMO Working Group (CMOC) in his welcome address talked about the telecom industry and how it has made profound and lasting contribution to societies and economies. He endorsed the SAMENA's annual CMO Summit and said that it's the only regional platform for senior telecom marketers to share ideas, experiences and best practices. He further added that this platform offers telecom stakeholders a medium to discuss and debate some of the most vital issues affecting our industry. He talked about latest trends in telecom industry including Big Data and elaborated that how these trends are changing the telecom environment. He further added that operators need to stay ahead of the innovation curve by capitalizing on breakthrough trends and technologies and disruptive market forces.

While focusing on the telecom industry's significant contributions to the economic prosperity, social development and global GDP, Ahmed Mekky, CEO of Gulf Bridge International (GBI) said that it's an industry that responds to ongoing demand for increased connectivity; he further added that the industry is now at a crossroads with trends such as Big Data altering traditional business models. In this changing environment, the CMO Summit provides an important platform for telcos to evolve protocols that will align our efforts and allow us to deliver on our promises. On the formation of the Subsea Working Group, he added that, Subsea Working Group will introduce innovations and standardizations and encourage environment–friendly practices while new

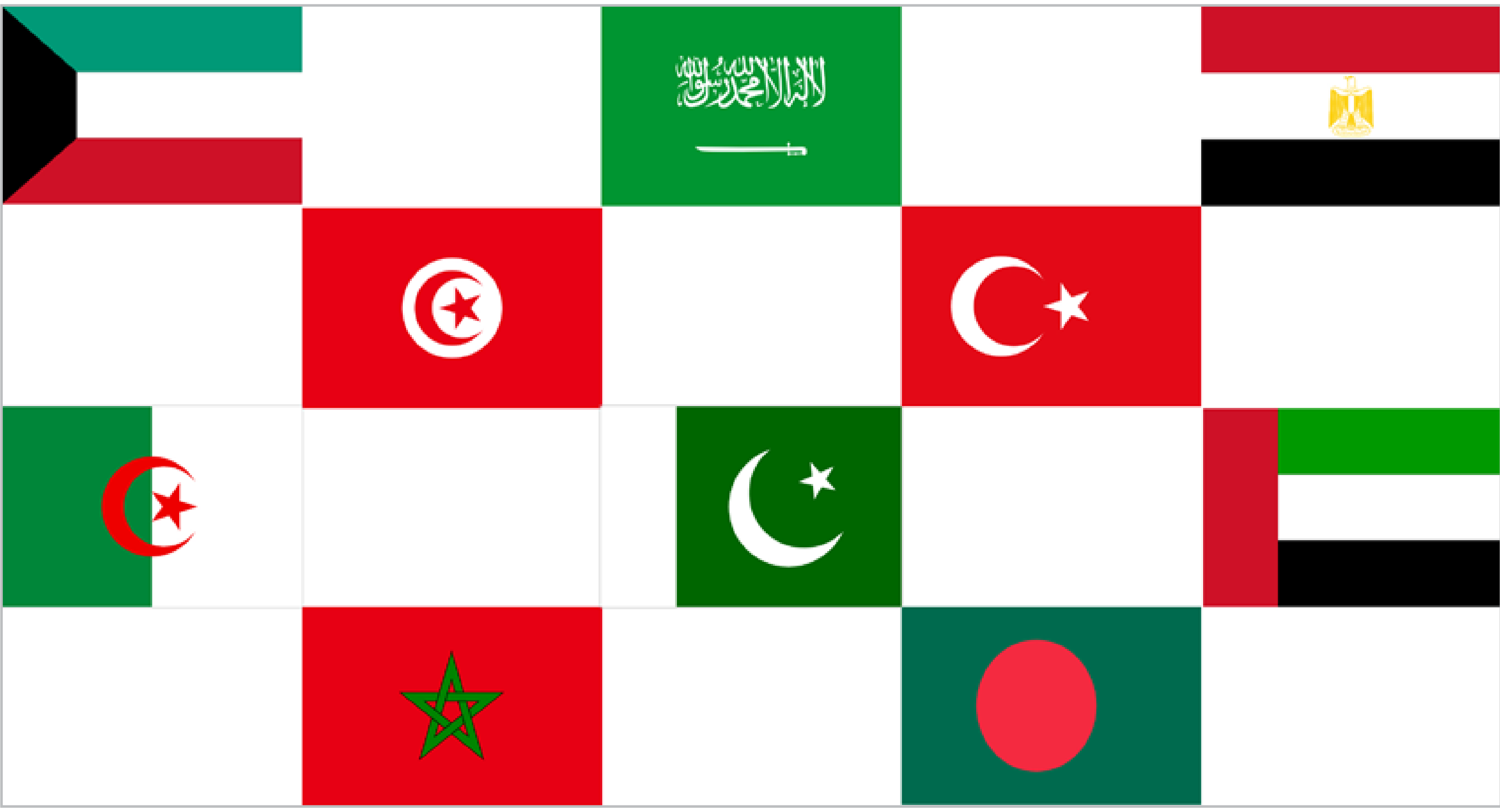
Executive Committee members will be responsible for taking the Group's agenda forward. Highlighting the explosion in data traffic, Mac Taylor, Chief Business Consultant, Huawei said that it is yet to be translated into a corresponding growth in revenues for the telecom industry. He further added that, telco messaging is becoming niche and there will be rapid revenue decline as SMS moves to data. The telecom industry is staring at a US$100 billion revenue gap by 2018 because of competition in messaging and voice services from IP-based providers, to plug this gap, telcos need to capitalize on the growth potential of the digital economy and diversify their service offering across voice, messaging, IoT, M2M, telematics and other platforms. He expressed his views on the digital economy; he said that this is one of the 5 areas for new revenue growth for the telecom industry, with digital services growing five times faster than traditional telecom

services. While digital economy opportunities are large, there is no 'killer' market which CSPs can focus exclusively on.

Nader Henein, Director of Security for Middle East and Africa, BlackBerry focused on the wearable technologies, he said that wearable technology will be a key tech trend going forward, wearable tech innovations are particularly useful in the field of healthcare – they can improve health and save lives. He stressed on the privacy issues, he said that it is critical matter facing the industry and telecom companies must tread carefully on the issue of selling customer data. He highlighted the importance of strong and effective regulatory systems, he said these are crucial to providing more transparency and ensuring data privacy and it's essentially up to the organizations to determine the level of privacy they wish to have in place. Making changes to an existing business model, especially when things are going well, is never easy but the cost of not being proactive can be very high. He talked about the need of telecom companies analysing and identifying their unused data and figure out ways in which they can optimize data usage and data monetization to broaden their revenue streams.

Lars Riegel, Principal, Arthur D. Little Austria who gave presentation on 'Advanced Analytics-Based Value Management' said that most telecom operators use value-based approaches which do not provide enough insights on the overall market value shifts, Value Management requires addressable segments, based on actionable parameters and a forward-looking quantitative market understanding. He emphasized that in a shrinking market, it is important that telcos allocate their resources to where the future is; they must analyze where the value in the market currently is, and where it will be in future. Focusing on future value generators will allow telcos to free the money they need to win the value battle. For this, they must redesign their value capture strategies and seek out analytical market models based on customer behavior and usage. He further added that the market value model must provide answers to key strategic questions of convergence and how to change from voice to data offerings.

Thanking speakers, attendees and sponsors for their support for the Summit, Bocar BA, Chief Executive Officer, SAMENA Council, in his closing remarks expressed his thoughts and said that the best way to enable business, expedite growth, ensure a high level of data protection and privacy is to have a strong regulatory framework in place, collaboration is essential to negotiate challenges and to capitalize on the opportunities offered by emerging trends such as Big Data. He further added, SAMENA is working closely with policymakers to help create an environment that would allow operators to monetize their digital assets and expand their revenue base.



New Global Leadership and Growth Dynamics in the ICT Industry

PLENIPOTENTIARY 2014
BUSAN KOREA

The new leadership of International Telecommunication Union has been formed. ITU, for the next four years, will be led by a new Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Director of Radiocommunication Bureau, Director of Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, and Director of Telecommunication Development Bureau. ITU's Radio Regulation Board and the ITU Council, with the approval of the Member States, have also undergone membership changes. The act of participation by a large number of ITU Member States and the election of a significant number of SAMENA countries in the recent ITU elections, which took place in ITU's Plenipotentiary Conference, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, also evidences a global imperative to contribute new visions to the digital development process.

Amidst this global leadership transformation, and that too in the fastest sector known in human civilization, the expectations of the world economies, of ITU's Member States, have risen, and particularly so with regard to access to information, guidance, and being able to fulfill digital development goals. This may also be so in light of significant contributions rendered by the outgoing ITU leadership. In the views of SAMENA Council, the participation of various countries from the South Asia - Middle East - North Africa region (or SAMENA region) and the election of as many as ten SAMENA countries to ITU Council, the ITU governing body, is a regional milestone and evidences the regional focus on ICT development and the will with which the SAMENA region anticipates making significant contributions to the global ICT debate and to the evolution of leadership roles required in the foreseeable digital future of the world.

Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan are the nations that have secured ten of the forty-eight seats of the ITU Council, giving the SAMENA region a twenty-one percent share in voting power in the ITU governing body. SAMENA Council congratulates each one of the SAMENA countries on securing such prestigious leadership opportunities, and expresses its availability and full co-operation to work with and contribute to the ICT development goals of each country. Such cooperation may help augment efforts to ensure ITU's core values are understood as being people-centered and service-oriented; enabling inclusiveness, universality and neutrality, synergies through collaboration, innovativeness, efficiency, continuous improvement, and transparency. SAMENA Council also feels that the ITU's strategic goals, which require efforts from all Member States and are centered on achieving growth, inclusiveness, sustainability, and innovation and partnership, would also meet success if SAMENA Council is granted greater confidence from the regional nations to allow it to pursue strategic goals and market opportunities in the interests of regional governments, most of which have already accelerated their national digital development efforts.

The ICT industry itself and the industries, or economic sectors, that it enables directly through technological innovation and new digital services and applications, are playing an increasingly important role in nations' economic growth -- much more so in economies that are already developed or are on a fast-track development path. Many countries have allocated special funds to accelerate ICT development, as is evidenced in Europe, where the regional digital agenda has actively sought high ICT development funding for the period 2007 through to 2020.

Given the need to accelerate true ICT innovation -- especially in view of high communications technology coverage around the SAMENA region as well as the globe, and granted many countries in Asia and Africa are striving to harness the power and interoperable characteristics of ICTs to realize socio-economic growth -- the ICT leadership imperative remains centered on the need to welcome varying views, address new digital needs of both developing and developed countries, and to guarantee that collective efforts will be allowed to reign in order to ensure mutual benefit. ITU has already been active on many of these important fronts, and much more may still be done to advantageously exploit hand-held devices, fixed and mobile broadband, digital services, and users' online social presence and interactions to bring about transformational changes in how citizen-centric government programs are effectively executed and how the adoption of digital services and applications is accelerated. ITU, with direct and active involvement of the Member States that have secured privileged positions within the ITU leadership and management, while accelerating its drive on broadband, should involve major regional and industry stakeholders, to help tap into trillion-dollar digital growth opportunities that readily exist in the SAMENA region, and beyond.

SAMENA Telecommunications Council

[1] As described in ITU's FINAL ACTS OF THE PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE (Busan, 2014), Decisions and resolutions

SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL
BUILDING DIGITAL ECONOMIES

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

Follow Us: