FIRST INFORMAL MEETING OF REGIONAL REGULATORY ASSOCIATIONS
(Geneva, 7 December 2003)

Representatives from all regional and sub-regional regulators' associations met for the first time in Geneva on 7 December 2003. The informal meeting was convened and moderated by Hamadoun I. Touré, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT). Development agencies and other international and regional organizations that have been actively supporting regulatory associations also attended. This meeting launched a global dialogue among regional and sub-regional regulators' associations at a world level. It provided them with the opportunity to meet, learn from each other and facilitate cooperation. Mr. Touré committed to support this informal global dialogue virtually with the establishment of dedicated discussion forum on G-REX, coordinate their work through sharing of information such as guidelines/best practices and models via TREG website and to support the second annual informal meeting next year in conjunction with the GSR.

Summary of discussions:

Representatives from each of the regional regulators' associations participating briefly introduced their Association's structure, objectives and current activities, as well as future and planned activities.

- Telecommunications Regulators' Association of Southern Africa (TRASA)
- Latin American Telecommunications Regulators Forum (REGULATEL)
- The South Asian Telecommunications Regulators' Council (SATRC)
- African Telecommunication Regulators Network (ATRN)
- Independent Regulators Group (IRG) and the European Regulators Group (ERG)
- West Africa Telecommunications Regulators' Association (WATRA)
- Association of Regulators for Information and Communication Services of Eastern and Southern Africa (ARICEA)
- Organization of Caribbean Utility Regulators (OOCUR)
- Arab Telecommunication Regulators Network (ARN)
- Réseau francophone de la régulation des télécommunications (FRATEL)
- Asean Telecommunication Regulators' Council (ATRC)

It was clear that most of them share similar objectives: harmonization of telecommunication policies; co-ordination, exchange ideas, views and experiences on all aspects of telecom regulation; promotion of efficient, adequate and cost effective telecom networks; harmonisation and maximisation of the utilization of scarce resources – Electromagnetic spectrum, numbering etc.; identification and sharing of the best practices; promotion of Human Resources Development and contribution for the integration of their regions.

Several of the associations indicated that they have developed, or are in process of developing, model guidelines on key issues such us interconnection, licensing, tariffs, universal access, regional frequency band plans etc. They also place high priority on training. In collaboration with respective partners they organise training courses and workshops on various subjects of interest for their associates.

Some regional organizations also took the floor and introduced themselves such as CITEL and African Connection. The latter informed the audience that the African Connection Project has come to end. The Secretariat located in South Africa closed and its activities were transferred to the African Telecommunication Union (ATU) and other bodies in the region. The European Commission (EC) informed the associations that funds may be obtained within the framework of their associates Government programs with the European Union (EU) and also through their respective Ministries of Finance and/or Planning. The EC representative further mentioned the recent ITU/BDT project financed by the EU to assist regulators in Africa.

The World Bank indicated that as part of their contribution, a Handbook on Telecommunications has been elaborated and a CD-ROM is available for those interested (the Handbook is also available at: http://www.infodev.org/projects/314regulationhandbook/ and

http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/treg/related-links/links-docs/Genregulation.html). It was also highlighted by these regional organizations that international funding should be complemented by local resources.

The need for a more structured mechanism of cooperation among regulators around the world and the need for the Associations to influence their member countries to implement at national level their respective guidelines and policy models was discussed. The need for further synergies between regional associations to promote reduction of regulatory barriers to allow cross-border connectivity was recognized. The Jordanian regulator informed the audience of the holding of the first Arab Regulators network (ARN) meeting in March 2004 and invited those interested to join and meet informally to establish a global Regional Regulators steering committee. BDT Director reiterated the need for this steering committee to be kept informal.

It was also suggested that Telecommunication Regulators Associations could collaborate with other Utilities Regulators, often newly created, to share experiences and let them benefit from the Telecommunications Regulators' experiences. The meeting also acknowledged the need to have a more structured data collection mechanism and management to avoid discrepancies in the data used by various studies done by different organizations. As this meeting was informal, the BDT Director suggested that the expectations identified during the discussion be brought to the Global Symposium for Regulators for a more formal approval.

Link to Informal Meeting documents:
http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/treg/Events/Seminars/2003/GSR/Informal_meeting/documents_informal.html

TREG web page dedicated to Regional Regulators' Associations:
http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/treg/related-links/links-docs/regional-reg-associat.html

TREG Web page dedicated to model guidelines and legislation:
http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/treg/related-links/links-docs/modelleg.html