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Contribution by Cameroon

A Introduction

In Cameroon's telecommunication environment, network access and telecommunication infrastructure development are key factors for equipment sharing and promoting nationwide telecommunication network and service coverage.

The telecommunication infrastructure deployment strategy hinges on providing satisfactory operating conditions for networks set up by the telecommunication operators, the television operator (CRTV), the railway operator (CAMRAIL) and the electricity operator (AES SONEL).

With regard to the operation of infrastructures, the following features have been observed:

- 1) The incumbent operator (CAMTEL) has installed infrastructures on the international segment which are under-used, in particular on account of the fact that holders of mobile telephone licences have been authorized to operate international gateways to route their subscribers' traffic, even though CAMTEL possesses a reliable network that could effectively meet their needs.
- 2) Cameroon has a landing point on the SAT 3/WASC/SAFE submarine cable. This cable is managed on more or less a monopoly basis by the incumbent operator.
- 3) CAMTEL enjoys exclusive rights for the establishment of trunk transmission links. However, the national transmission resources available to it are limited in terms of both quality and capacity. This has prompted mobile telephone operators and some private network operators to set up their own infrastructures, with capacities far exceeding their own requirements.
- 4) Telecommunication sector operators and private telecommunication network operators possess passive infrastructures (towers, land, buildings, power supply, conduits, etc.) which are not fully shared.
- 5) A cable has been installed along the route of the recently constructed Cameroon-Chad pipeline, comprising 18 optical fibres, 12 of which allocated to Cameroon have been handed over to CAMTEL.

The sector thus has an increasingly large number of transmission networks that cannot be leased or made available to third parties to meet demand.

In areas with strong economic potential, mobile telephone operators are requesting exceptional authorizations to set up their own infrastructures in localities not served by the incumbent operator. We see an imbalance in the geographical distribution of infrastructure, inequality in access to telecommunication services throughout the country, a national digital divide, a failure to exploit the benefits of economies of scale, and high tariffs.

Deployment of such infrastructures entails heavy investment which it would make no economic sense to duplicate, in a sector where the desire is to control and minimize costs in order to charge affordable tariffs.

In this context, the Agency considers such telecommunication infrastructures as "**essential facilities**".

Management of telecommunication networks is generally guided by a two-fold principle, namely:

- Purchase of infrastructure through contracting in a market open to several companies, which is more effective than a monopoly in providing flexibility to gear services to customer demand. The market is subject to specific rules in order to ensure security of infrastructure and compatibility of services provided.

- Management of infrastructure as a "natural monopoly", facilitating economies of scale. The monopoly is however geared towards greater efficiency and harmonized development, justifying the implementation of mechanisms geared to quasi-competition.

B Infrastructures - essential resources in Cameroon

In order to find answers to meet these concerns, the regulator launched consultations with operators from the telecommunication sector and operators of private networks (railways, broadcasting, electricity ...). These consultations resulted in the signing of a "Framework Agreement on the operation of telecommunication infrastructures" with a view to improved sharing, which minimizes investment costs and makes provision for pooling of resources for new deployments so as to set affordable tariffs for the consumer.

1 International segment

The operators undertake to use the incumbent operator's equipment where required. SAT 3 constitutes an opportunity for all the operators.

2 Trunk transmission infrastructures

Since CAMTEL has a monopoly on trunk links, network operators will inform CAMTEL of residual capacities available on their networks, which CAMTEL will market.

3 Passive infrastructures

The network operators undertake to foster sharing of all passive infrastructures with a view to improving telecommunication service coverage.

C Infrastructures - essential resources in the subregion

The over 1 000 km of optical fibre running the length of the Cameroon-Chad pipeline links the towns of Kribi in Cameroon and Komé in Chad. As well as being an essential facility for network deployment in Cameroon, it constitutes an opportunity for the development of a transmission network throughout the subregion centring on Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic, and indeed an opportunity for the whole region as connection to Nigeria and Sudan is under study.

Cameroon participates actively in the implementation of the CAB (Central African Backbone) project.