



ITU-TRAI TRAINING ON CONSUMER PROTECTION



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WELCOME SPEECH

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Mr. Ram Sewak Sharma, Chairman, TRAI,

Dr. Ismail Shah, Chairman PTA,

Mr. Takorn Tantasith, Secretary General, NBTC, Thailand,

Mr. Klaus Pendl, European Union,

Ms. Jennifer McNeill, General Manager, ACMA, Australia,

Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of ITU, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Ram Sewak Sharma, Chairman, TRAI, for his personal presence, and support for this training. India is ITU Council Member and has been great contributor to the standardisation as well as development work of the Union. India had been our host for WTDC 2010 in Hyderabad, ITU Study Group 5 Environment and climate change: Kochi (2014) and in particular TRAI has hosted Regulators' Roundtable and ITP 2012, ITU TRAI Training on "Leveraging ICTs for Smart Sustainable Cities 2015 just to name a few!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me turn to the topic of the event. We have been living in the Internet age. And now, progressing rapidly towards a society where Internet or ICT connectivity is becoming pervasive; not only in humans, but also "things" with convergence of regulatory frameworks, institutions, technologies and platforms.

- Globally 3.2 billion people using the Internet by end 2015, of which 2 billion are from developing countries
- Mobile broadband is the most dynamic market segment; globally, mobile broadband penetration reaches 47% in 2015, a value that increased 12 times since 2007
- The proportion of households with Internet access at home increased from 18% in 2005 to 46% in 2015
- 3G population coverage is expected to reach 69% by population by 2015
- In 2014, in 111 countries the price of a basic (fixed or mobile) broadband plan corresponds to less than 5% of average GNI per capita, thus meeting the Broadband Commission target
- However, in developing world and in rural areas, there is still a lot to be done to bridge the Internet access gap. 4 billion people from developing countries remain offline; representing 2/3 of the population residing in developing countries while 3G coverage by population in rural areas is estimated to be less than 30%
- The Internet of Things (IoT) is rapidly becoming a reality, and machine-to-machine (M2M) communications are expected to grow significantly in the near future

With all these developments and recently adopted SDGs, access to the ICTs /broadband is increasingly being considered as an “essential service and the need for citizens to be connected and “always on” impacts the way in which business is transacted and the way in which consumers react. Being connected has become synonymous with access to markets, to information, to social networks and to education. Rapid technological change and its impact on consumer behavior is taking place within an increasingly liberalized market place in which the global drive to compete brings new challenges to both existing and nascent regulatory authorities.

In order to ensure that consumers benefit fully from the services the Internet / broadband has to offer, regulators need to ensure that networks are efficient and reliable, widely accessible (including in remote rural areas) and affordable. In order to encourage private investment in the infrastructure needed to meet those objectives, regulators need to create an environment in which communications investment is commercially viable, whilst at the same time promoting competition to increase choice and drive down prices. The challenge for regulation is to promote

favorable market conditions in which competition can flourish and foster innovation, whilst at the same time ensuring that consumers' interests are protected.

Consumers have certain expectations of the quality of their communication service, primarily based on their past experience of the well established voice quality. However the increasing amount of choice of products available to them through broadband services may well alter their perceptions of and satisfaction with the overall QoS provided. In order to take full advantage of the choices on offer, consumers need to be equipped with the necessary skills and information to make fully informed purchasing decisions. They need access to comparable, reliable and independent information about price, quality and service features to empower them to switch with confidence.

The level of regulatory intervention required will depend in part on the structure of the market concerned and the commercial incentives for service providers. Where there is effective competition and commercial incentives for service providers the focus is likely to remain on consumer empowerment, enforced where necessary through transparency requirements. Where competition or commercial incentives are weak, Regulators may need to take a more interventionist approach, for example through setting and monitoring minimum QoS standards that are appropriate to the rapidly changing data driven environment.

This training designed in nine extensive sessions over 2 and half days, is an excellent example of initiative from TRAI, ITU, industry consumer organisations as well as other stakeholders to discuss, debate and share the experiences and I am very pleased to see participation from about 15 countries including ACMA, Australia, MCMC, Malaysia, MIIT, China, European Commission, NBTC Thailand and several other regulators including from Pacific Island countries and the host TRAI and industry experts from India. I would like to acknowledge my gratitude for special contribution from Dr. Ismail Shah, Chairman PTA, Pakistan, towards success of this event. I thank all the speakers, contributors and you all for your contribution and the participants. Finally I once again express my deep gratitude, the support provided by the host TRAI for this event and I wish you all a very productive and successful outcome.

Thank you for your attention.