

Speech by Vice Minister Jiang Yaoping at the opening
ceremony of The Seminar on Telecommunication Universal
Service and Consumers Rights Protection
(August the 24th, 2005 Gui Yang)

Distinguished vice governor of Gui Zhou Zhang Qunshan,
Distinguished Acting Head of ITU Regional Office for Asia and the
Pacific Dr. En-Ju Kim,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

Today, we are here, in the beautiful city of Gui Yang, also known as the city of forest, to participate the seminar on Telecommunication Universal Service and Consumers Rights Protection. The seminar is co-hosted by the Ministry of Information Industry of PRC and the International Telecommunication Union. Here, On behalf of the Ministry of Information Industry, I would like to extent our warm welcome to the ITU experts and all the participants. Also, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the provincial party committee and provincial government of Gui Zhou for your support and careful arrangement.

In recent years, the Ministry of Information Industry and the ITU co-hosted many seminars, where hot spot issues in information industry

were studied and discussed. Deputies from regulatory authorities and telecom operators can therefore meet foreign experts face-to-face and find out how the industry is going on elsewhere. It is widely recognized that these seminars are of great help in getting information, opening up thoughts and improving performance. We should carry on and achieve new progress in the future.

The topic of this seminar is “Telecommunication Universal Service and Consumers Rights Protection”, which is very meaningful. As a part of service industry, telecommunication is mainly about offering info-communication services to the public. Regardless of their country, region and ethnic group, people should enjoy the equal rights of acquiring the service and full guarantee of their rights and interests. In the past few years, the advancement of the global info-communication industry, rapid penetration of communication services; and continuous emergence of new technologies and services have brought more benefits to an increasing number of consumers. However, at the same time, we notice in sober mind that in most countries in the world, people in remote areas and disadvantageous positions don't have access to basic telecom services, and their legitimate rights and interests are infringed in different forms and to various extents. To promote universal service and guarantee consumers' legitimate rights and interests is a hot social issue that attract attentions from both in and out the telecom industry.

The Chinese government has always been attaching great importance to the issues of universal service and consumers' rights protection. Certain results have been achieved thanks to effective measures and unremitting efforts. Till the end of June this year, the number of telephone subscribers in China reached 701 million: 337 million fixed-line subscribers and 363 million mobile phone subscribers. Internet also develops very fast, and netizen in China numbers 103 million. Fixed phone, mobile phone and other ways of communication are now quite popular in China and the Internet is widely applied. The rapid and sustained development of communication industry is of vital importance to economic and social development, and improvement of people's lives.

Despite progresses, there are also dilemmas and difficulties, such as: unsatisfactory general performance, underdeveloped infrastructure in rural and remote areas and services quality that need to be improved. We believe that only by speeding up development and improving regulation can we solve the problems essentially. So for these years, keeping human-oriented principles in mind, we have adopted many measures to push forward a rapid, balanced and sound development of the industry and have met people's needs at different levels.

-- To enforce industry plan and policy guidance, and promote the development in a proactive and pragmatic way. Basing us on both

domestic and international situations, we implemented suitable strategies, strengthened infrastructure and further improved the industry's comprehensive strength. The "Eleventh Five-Year" general and dedicated plans for the information industry are now on the way. Together with the plans, relevant policies are also made to improve industry development environment and conditions. The Ministry of Information provided guidance for the entire industry to foster the concept that information service is a big industry, gave full play to the info-communication industry in promoting socio-economic development and offered powerful support for economic restructuring and the upgrading of traditional industries. Therefore, a better, comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable economic and social development can be possible.

-- To stick to the orientation toward market, explore new technology and apply new services in an all round way. Currently, the global info-communications are making unceasing changes and integrations. New technology and services are mushrooming, which has revolutionary impact on the currently existing telecommunication operation model. Therefore, we actively guide the info-communication industry to adapt to the development and changes of the technology and services, break the former division of service to explore new development space. We foster the market by developing new technology and services, and accelerate the development by stretching out and expanding the industrial chains. Meanwhile, the relation between the technology and the market are properly handled to speed up the application of new technology and

services so as to benefit people with convenience brought by the technical progress.

-- To accelerate the development of rural communications, and further improve the universal service. While actively pushing forward the setup of the telecommunication universal service fund, according to the specific national conditions of China, the project of "Telephone Service Available to Every Village" is carried out; each basic telecommunication operator is appointed to install telephones for certain administrative villages without telephone access, in the way of "Contracted Regions System". After the launching of the project, 16 thousand administrative villages have had telephone access; the ratio of the rural subscribers in the total fixed telephone subscribers has risen from 89.2% to 91.8%. For the next step, we will enhance our work, keep on promoting the project of "Telephone Service Available to Every Village", and try to enable telephones access by more than 95% of the administrative villages in China. Though this task is arduous, we are still full of confidence, and have taken a series of measures to conquer the difficulties and fulfill our work.

-- To strengthen the supervision on service quality, and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the consumers. The year 2004 is the "Telecommunication Service Year" set by the Ministry of Information Industry; we've carefully practiced the "human-oriented concept", combined the government supervision and administration together with the self-discipline of the enterprises and social supervision, and fully played out the role of the users' committee, telecommunication users complain center and self-discipline organization for the industry; we've carried out a series of activities with good social feedbacks. Since this year, we've promulgated the "Criterion on Telecommunication Service",

actively guided the operators to enhance the communications with the telecommunication users, consumer committees and the media, regulated the market operation behaviors, pushed forward the resolution for some hot issues with strong social reaction in the service, promoted the standardization and system building of the telecommunication service, and received obvious results.

-- To improve market supervision, and create favorable development environment. In recent years, we've comprehensively used legal, economic, technical and administrative means, established and improved a complete set of regulations, and put straight the delinquent behaviors like interconnection problems, vicious price competition, etc; the market order has been gradually improved, and the market competition environment with justice, fairness, efficiency and order has taken shape. In the future, we will insist on treating both the symptoms and cause, make great effort in the research and solution for the in-depth contradictions and problems, and try to explore and establish scientific and effective market competition model. Especially, the legislation work should be further enhanced to form a situation that the government supervises, the enterprises operate, and the consumers safeguard their rights and interests according to the law.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleges, great achievements have been made in China's information and communication industry, however, various problems, difficulties, and contradictions still exist in the development, due to the economic and social development discrepancy between the east and the mid-west, the urban and the rural, the advanced coastal areas and the remote and border areas, and the lack of compliance of the market supervision capacity of the government, and the operation and management level of operators with the new situation after the

market opening-up; the tasks of coordinated development and improvement of the service quality are still arduous. In this seminar, experts from the International Telecommunication Union and countries like Chile, the U.S., Germany, Australia, etc, will conduct discussions, and exchange experiences and practices with us, on important issues like the regulatory policy of universal service, technical resolution, operation maintenance, telecommunication services and protection of the rights and interests of the consumers. I'm convinced that this will play a positive role in drawing from the foreign experiences, and will push forward the domestic universal service and protection of the rights and interests of the consumers. I hope that we can make joint effort and truly participate in this seminar to make it more lively, practical, and effective.

At last, I would like to wish this seminar a complete success, and the foreign experts and delegates a pleasant stay in the scenic city of Guiyang!

Thank you!