|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  | **Document WTPF-21/4-E** |
| **29 November2021** |
| **Original: English** |
| Contribution by the Republic of Mauritius | |
| ON THE SIXTH DRAFT of the ITU SECRETARY-GENERAL’S REPORT | |

**SECTION 2.8: Some themes for consideration:**

1. **Section 2.8.1: Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

Pertaining to the usage of AI solutions and technologies, it is proposed that an entire chapter should be dedicated to its prospects and challenges in order to mobilise such technologies for sustainable development.

1. **Section 2.8.2: Internet of Things (IoT)**

Mauritius is embarking into the IoT bandwagon with service providers offering access to their IoT facilities as well as smart cities setting-up their own IoT networks. IoT comes with a number of challenges which require a number of policy reforms. It is proposed that the following be considered:

1. IoT is called upon to integrate critical systems and as such, cybersecurity has to be an integral part of the IoT landscape. Apart from ensuring that the IoT hardware complies with specific norms, it is imperative that cybersecurity norms be established for IoT and compliance be monitored;
2. infrastructure sharing is an effective way to lower the cost of deploying networks and to achieve widespread and affordable access to telecommunication services. With Internet of Things (IoT), sharing of Infrastructure has now become a necessity. As such, fair access should be provided to critical infrastructure elements such as telecom towers to the new players; and
3. a proper framework which encourages Virtual Network Operators (VNOs) is essential to the implementation of IoT and M2M communications.

Deliberations on IoT are proposed to be conducted with emphasis on mobilising the technology for the long term inclusive of development, deployment, affordability, public confidence, security and trust.

1. **Section 2.8.3: 5G**

The regulator in Mauritius has had to overcome a number of challenges for awarding spectrum for 5G.

In the past, for 2G, 3G and 4G, spectrum was assigned in relatively small blocks of 5 MHz or 10 MHz as and when operators decided to apply 5G, where the demand is for large blocks of spectrum (e.g. 100 MHz) required an altogether different approach.

Whereas, in most jurisdictions, spectrum auctioning on licence fees has been used to award spectrum, this mode of award was ruled out, following consultation with the industry.

The regulator had to come up with an alternative allocation process that would: -

1. Create a level playing field for all mobile operators by allowing all operators the chance of obtaining spectrum for 5G deployment;
2. Promote efficient spectrum use;
3. Promote investment and innovation;
4. Promote competition;
5. Be transparent and be seen to be transparent

The regulator chose to award spectrum for 5G using a competitive process whereby operators were allowed to specify their choice of frequency block as well as the level of coverage commitment they accept to take with respect to same. In case of conflicting choices, the regulator awarded the block to the operator prepared to accept the most stringent commitments.

Using the above principle, the regulator has been able to award 100 MHz of spectrum for 5G in the 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz bands to each of the three mobile operators.

1. **Section 2.8.4: Big Data**

Indeed, Big Data has the potential to provide significant value to the global economy and customers worldwide, while also contributing to the increase in productivity and competition in commercial field as well as in public sectors across the world.

However, it is proposed that the terminology “Big Data” to be included as a stand - alone section in the Report should be reviewed through in - depth discussions.

1. **Section 2.8.5: Over – The - Top (OTT)**

The emergence of OTTs is reshaping the entire communications’ ecosystem and strengthening ubiquitous connectivity which provides social and economic advantages to consumers globally as well as the global economy.

However, OTT services poses a number of challenges to policy makers and regulators around the world particularly to small island economies such as Mauritius being given the small market size they represent for the tech giants. The challenges include the following:

1. **Competition:** Telecom Operators find it expensive and complex to compete with OTT players, given their superficial operating structures and transnational coverage. The OTT players often have global scale and reach dwarfing that of the telecommunications companies;
2. **Revenue Impact:** The increased use of OTT messaging applications combined with the growing use of consumer video calling services have a big impact on telecommunications operators’ revenues. In the current setup, almost all the OTT services are provided for free to the consumers. Instead, revenue is generated from advertisements, content placements, etc. Since the OTT players do not directly charge the consumers, the Telecom players cannot ask for sharing of consumer revenues; and
3. **Infrastructure / Network:** Operators and network owners invest in their network infrastructure to deliver services to end user. This means investing considerably in appropriate and evolving technology. OTT services on the other hand, do not invest in these networks built by operators to enable end-user access to services.

**Potential Impact of Unregulated OTT Services:**

1. **Security Issues:** A number of OTT solutions do not support encryption which means attackers have easy access. Also, being unencrypted, confidential information can be easily accessed;
2. **Privacy Issues:** Some OTT services collect users’ private information for commercial gains without making the customer fully aware of the exact details. There is also lack of thorough check on risk assessment and vulnerability levels of applications developed for the OTT market. It is to be noted that these OTT services have difficulties to fact check articles / comments posted by their users due to the language used.
3. **National Economy:** OTT providers are mostly subject to taxes in the country of incorporation. However, they are providing cross border services all the time. A clear tax regime to make them subject to taxation in the country they are providing services, can benefit the national economy.

In this view, Mauritius would wish to call upon assistance from the ITU Membership to study and recommend the most suitable models for regulating OTT services across borders.

1. **Section 2.8.6: Mobilising New Solutions for Connectivity**

The Covid – 19 Pandemic has highlighted the necessity of connectivity and has proved that connecting everyone is more crucial than ever. Leveraging ICTs is a critical component of socioeconomic recovery and it is proposed that the report also holds a section on this as it is critical in speeding progress toward the SDGs.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_