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| **ITU-PTA Asia-Pacific Regulators’ Roundtable**  **Collaborative Regulation for Smart Digital Societies**  **18-19 July 2016**  **Islamabad, Pakistan** |

**OUTCOME**

The 6th Asia-Pacific Regulators Roundtable on the theme of “Collaborative Regulation for Smart Digital Societies” was successfully held from 18th to 19th July 2016 at Islamabad, Pakistan. The Roundtable was jointly organized by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with support from the Department of Communications, Government of Australia. The Roundtable was attended by 48 participants from 17 Countries from Asia- Pacific region.

Dr. Syed Ismail Shah, Chairman, Pakistan Telecommunication-Authority, delivered the welcome remarks, followed by the opening remarks  by Ms. Anusha Rahman Khan, the Minister of State for  Information Technology and Telecommunications, Government of Pakistan. Keynote Address was delivered by Mr. Houlin Zhao, the Secretary General, ITU.  The participants from Asia-Pacific Region fully contributed by sharing information, experiences and practices about the challenges they face and explore opportunities of potential collaborative regulations for Smart Digital Societies. Details of the Roundtable are available at <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Pages/Events/2016/Jul-RR-ITP/home.aspx>

**SESSION 1: Emerging Trends on Collaborative Regulation for Smart Digital Societies**

**Moderator: Dr. Syed Ismail Shah, Chairman, PTA, Pakistan**

The session deliberated on the need for innovative and collaborative regulations by recognizing that ICTs are the foundation for socio-economic development and key enablers for achieving all the SDGs. It was acknowledged that various sector regulators could contribute in reducing the regulatory challenges, by developing a collaborative approach to enabling regulating regime and with greater coherence, predictability and trust in the digital and converged era. Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Samoa made interventions during the session.

Collaborative regulations are encouraged to be developed and introduced in a cross-sectoral converged environment whereby regulators from various sectors could be partners in the process of development taking into account the diverse needs of women, children, and persons with disabilities ensuring digital inclusion for the marginalized communities. The Roundtable recognized the urgent need to develop new business models for digital financial inclusion by establishing interoperable solutions in an unbundled manner following collaborative regulatory approach.

**SESSION 2: Getting the Balance Right: Addressing Challenges and Maximizing Opportunities in a Data-Driven Connected World**

**Moderator: Dr. Syed Ismail Shah, Chairman, PTA**

Deliberations were carried out about the key trends and developments in a data-driven connected world especially the growing impact of Big Data on all sectors of economy. The regulators analyzed the key regulatory issues and challenges arising from Big Data and its impacts on privacy, copyrights and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), transparency and security issues. In addition, the regulators raised concerns on the issues of jurisdiction, international data transfer and lack of control over data. Interventions were made by Afghanistan, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Samoa.

Regulators were of the view that there is a need for creating more awareness regarding the positive impact and utilization of Big Data which necessitates the adequate framework for regulating the technological companies in collaboration and cooperation with the service providers, regulators and concerned international agencies such as ITU and UN.

**SESSION 3: OTT and its multi-faceted impacts**

**Moderator: Mr. R S Sharma, Chairman TRAI, India**

The rapid proliferation of Over-The-Top (OTT) services has raised various issues and challenges related to regulatory imbalances and security concerns that need to be addressed. Due to the transition from fixed to mobile, rapid technological advancements and broadband penetration, the off shore OTT services are accessible. Such Service Providers do not fall under the regulatory domain and jurisdiction of national regulators. The regulators emphasized on the need to address issues of security, privacy and safety of consumers through collaborative regulations, without compromising the principles of fairness and Net Neutrality. The interventions were made by China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Keeping in view the growing impact of OTT services with the increasing demand and expectations of users of these services, there is a need to develop a comprehensive national policies and frameworks to address all the concerns of stakeholders especially security, safety and privacy of consumers. The regulators realized that a fine balance is required as mere regulating the OTT players may not work in a technology neutral environment coupled with and lack of jurisdiction. The regulators were also of the view that creative innovations would be more effective to resolve many issues pertaining to proliferation of new technologies and OTT services. It was suggested that restrictions on flow of data need to be minimized and unbalanced termination charges of international incoming traffic need to be rationalized to avoid arbitrage.

**SESSION 4: Managing the Challenges of the New Industry Realities**

**Moderator: Dr Mohammad Najeeb Azizi, Chairman Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority (ATRA), Afghanistan**

Development and innovation in the ICT industry need to be adopted and sustained through regulating the sector in line with the international best practices, technological development and convergence in the ICT sector. The regulators suggested that challenges of the new industry realities demand supportive national policies and strategies to encourage investment in infrastructure and deployment of new technologies. In doing so, there is a need of reviewing the existing frameworks of licensing, numbering, spectrum management and competition, in line with the international best practices on priority. The proliferation of IoT/M2M was also discussed and it was felt that the regulatory framework should look as all the aspects of its deployment Interventions were made by India, Nepal, Pakistan and Samoa.

Keeping in view the challenges of the new sectorial realities, the capacity building of regulators on ongoing basis was highly recommended by the Roundtable. It was expressed that the regulators are encouraged to be engaged in international cooperation to learn from each other and participate in consultation and standards making process as already initiated by ITU. Additionally, Spectrum Pricing mechanism and approaches adopted by various regulators for auctions including the valuation of spectrum methods and lessons learnt from the previous auctions, also need to be shared with all regulators for their guidance and benefits in their respective jurisdictions.

**SESSION 5: Regulatory Impact of Emerging Technologies and Services**

**Moderator: Ms. Unutoa Auelua Fonoti, Regulator Office, Samoa**

The regulators deliberated on the need for adopting collaborative regulatory frameworks for emerging technologies by realizing that the innovations inherently bring cross-border fusion of the technologies coupled with a large scale uncertainty in the market. The regulators need to ensure consumer protection through collaborative regulations on priority in their respective jurisdictions in line with the international best practices. The regulators are encouraged to identify and allocate radio frequency spectrum for IMT 2020 and plan for the commercial licensing of these bands. Adoption of new technologies for better services without hindering the investment opportunities should be considered. Regulators from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka informed that they are in the process of spectrum re-farming to vacate the bands for upcoming technologies. Other regulators were also encouraged to reform spectrum in line with international best practices.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Vietnam and Solomon Islands made interventions during the session.

**SESSION 6: Regulatory incentives to contribute to sector and overall National Development**

**Moderator: Mr. Chencho Dorji, Director General, Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority, Bhutan**

Regulatory incentives in ICT sector are essential for all stakeholders to achieve the socio-economic and overall national development goals. An effective Public Private Partnership as well as cooperation between public and private sector stakeholders is equally important for investment and confidence in highly capital intensive ICT sector. The incentive based regulations have become an important tool in ICT sector resulting in more investment, efficiency, enhanced service quality and affordable cost for services to consumers. The regulators agreed that whenever possible, appropriate regulatory incentives to be introduced to attract investment in the ICT sector.

Roundtable emphasized the need to provide incentives in the national policies by sharing their experiences like Infrastructure Provider regulation scheme introduced by Indian government in rural areas to encourage the investment in the sector. A lower reserve price for the spectrum auction is encouraged and the spectrum usage charges reduced in order to attract more investment and further growth in the sector. Similarly, in the broadcasting sector, the license fees have been recommended to be lowered. In Bhutan, free access to the national fiber is given as an incentive to the two telecom service providers. Interventions were made by Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Pakistan and Samoa.

Regulators also agreed that the increased level of interoperability tend to enhance innovation, competition, user choice and autonomy. This should be considered by all stakeholders by resolving the complexities involved in the interoperability and increasing the level of reliability and cooperation amongst the service providers to invest in upgradation of their systems and services to meet the challenges of emerging technologies.

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