



**ITU-PTA Asia-Pacific Regulators' Roundtable
Addressing Regulatory Challenges in Digital Societies
21-22 August 2017
New Delhi, India**

OUTCOME

The 7th Asia-Pacific Regulators Roundtable on the theme of “Addressing Regulatory Challenges in Digital Societies” was successfully organized from 21st to 22nd August 2017 at New Delhi, India. The Roundtable was jointly organized by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with support from the Department of Communications and the Arts (DoCA), Government of Australia. The Roundtable was attended by 50 participants from 24 Countries from Asia- Pacific region.

Mr. R S Sharma, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, delivered the welcome remarks, followed by the keynote address delivered by Mr. Brahim Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU. The inaugural address was delivered by Mr. Manoj Sinha, Hon'ble Minister of State for Communications, Government of India. The participants from Asia-Pacific Region amply contributed by sharing information, experiences and practices about the challenges being faced by them and explore opportunities of potential collaborative regulations for creating Digital Societies. Details of the Roundtable are available at <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Pages/Events/2017/August-RR-ITP-2017/RR-Home.aspx>

SESSION 1: Digital Identities: Creating Digital Opportunities

Moderator: Mr. R S Sharma, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), India

The session deliberated on the need for creating digital opportunities and the challenges faced in development and deployment of digital identities for carrying out digital services. It was acknowledged that digital identities in the present scenario play a very crucial role in promoting various citizen welfare services including health, agriculture, banking, postal and passports etc. The regulators analyzed the key regulatory issues and challenges in deployment of digital identities like multiplicity of identities, lack of global standards, legal framework, interoperability, security & privacy of data and building trust and confidence of citizens in using digital identities. Malaysia, Bangladesh, Australia, I.R. of Iran and Samoa made interventions during the session.

It was acknowledged that various sector regulators and ITU could contribute in overcoming the regulatory barriers, by developing and implementing a collaborative regional approach to enable appropriate eco-system for deployment of digital identities. The Roundtable recognized the urgent need for innovative partnership between private and public agencies to carry out research and analysis of different models for deployment of digital id ecosystem, creating awareness and suggesting possible approaches for building a robust system which can address various concerns including data security, privacy and ownership, thereby, enhancing the confidence and trust amongst the citizens for use of ICT services using digital identities. The roundtable acknowledged the initiatives and achievements of the Govt. of India which are excellent repository of knowledge resource that can be shared amongst the countries of Asia-Pacific region.

SESSION 2: Addressing the barriers for development of Digital Infrastructure

Moderator: Mr. Richard Bean, Acting Chairman, Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), Australia

Discussions were held about the components of digital infrastructure, current barriers in developing digital infrastructure and relevant policy / regulatory enablers, tools required to enhance affordable ICTs for SDGs, best practices & developmental models, investment opportunities for private sector with incentive regulatory approach. The roundtable recognized the need to ensure access to a reliable and robust digital infrastructure that needs to be available across all the geographies of a country including rural and remote areas that support high speed broadband access, facilitate provisioning of access to affordable ICT services to citizens with acceptable quality of service. China, India, I. R. of Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal and Vietnam made interventions during the session. While defining digital economy, consideration need to be given to the role of devices with supportive infrastructure while defining the network boundaries.

The regulators emphasized the need to address issues of international/national connectivity, necessary public and private investment required for creating digital infrastructure, devising models to bridge the digital / broadband divide, availability of skilled manpower, creating awareness, and ensuring security & privacy. The regulators were also of the view that a forward looking regulatory framework with enabling policies, private public partnerships for creating digital networks, proliferation of innovative technologies and creating awareness for technical resources to create digital economies would help to resolve challenges pertaining to digital infrastructure.

SESSION 3: International Mobile Roaming (IMR): A Tool for cross-border opportunities for business and consumers

Moderator: Dr. Shahjahan Mahmood, Chairman, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), Bangladesh

Deliberations were carried out to address key regulatory issues and challenges relating to high international roaming charges for voice and data services. The regulators discussed the present international roaming scenario and existing measures to reduce international roaming charges. Alternate potential measures for reducing international roaming charges were also discussed. Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Samoa made interventions during the session.

Roundtable recognized the need to analyze prevailing successful models and regulatory practices for addressing the issue of high roaming charges including ex-ante & ex-post regulations, commercial agreements between operators, bilateral/multilateral negotiations between different countries, and sub-regional and regional cooperation was acknowledged. The Round Table emphasized the need to carry out a proper study to devise measures to reduce the international roaming charges in a phased manner, creating consumer awareness and more use of OTT services making use of ITU Portal '[Let's Roam the World](#)'. There was general understanding that although tariffs are under forbearance and the roaming charges depend more on market forces, proactive regulatory initiatives by regulatory agencies would play crucial role in addressing the issue.

SESSION 4: Challenge of Managing Digital Content

Moderator: Mr. Ilyas Ahmed, Chief Executive, Communications Authority of Maldives, Maldives

The roundtable held deliberations to address key regulatory issues and challenges posed by disruption that the app economy and digital content has caused in the traditional content delivery models. The regulators also discussed the opportunities created by the social media and app economy for consumers and investors. The interventions during the session were made by Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives and Vanuatu.

It was recognized that the control of online content has shifted more towards the consumers as they produce sizable content and upload it on social media. Discussions were held on the challenges posed by commercial and user generated online content, which include licensing of online content providers, taxation, copyright infringement, ownership of content created by consumers, defining domestic vis-a-vis global content, privacy, security, ensuring social harmony and child online protection. The Round Table emphasized the need to share experiences and explore possible approaches to address the challenges posed by online content in the digital environment making use of options suggested in the ITU Paper on ‘The Challenge of Managing Digital Content’ that was introduced during the session and which may help in creating a win-win situation for investors and consumers.

Round table raised concerns regarding the social media providers for lack of response, accountability and responsibility to address expeditiously sensitive and objectionable content related issues raised by sovereign countries. Regional Cooperation mechanisms need to be considered for effective negotiations ensuring accountability and timely response to concerns raised by countries.

SESSION 5: Ensuring trust and confidence in digital content delivery

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

With the rapid development of new technologies and enabling drivers including IOT, Cloud Computing, OTT, AI etc., there is an increasing demand of online digital content and services. The regulators realized that the growing impact of online digital age services and expectations of users from these services pose challenges to ensure privacy, trust, personal security, network security, IPR issues and Child Online Protection. The interventions were made by Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Vanuatu.

The Round Table emphasized the need to develop comprehensive legal & regulatory framework and National Cybersecurity Strategies to address all the concerns of stakeholders especially security, trust, safety and privacy of consumers. It was acknowledged that there is a need to create consumer awareness on how to deal with offensive contents available on social media, cyber frauds and cybersecurity issues. Roundtable regulators were of the view that there is greater need of creating awareness specially amongst the parents to educate their children regarding safe online behavior.

SESSION 6: Digital Financial Inclusion – How to include the unbanked and unconnected in today's smart society

Moderator: Mr. R S Sharma, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), India

Latest technology trends and innovations are impacting the digital financial services (DFS) sector and providers ability to reach the poor in a sustainable and scalable manner. Role of digital technologies including mobile is very crucial in the development of digital financial systems. Deliberations were carried out about the opportunities and challenges of using digital technologies to stimulate the financial services and financial inclusion. Australia, China, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal and Vanuatu made interventions during the session.

Regulators acknowledged the need to reduce cost of financial transactions by using digital technologies; support the growth of an open ecosystem for DFS that promotes innovation and ensures robust competition; promote initiatives and incentives that encourage merchants and other payment acceptors (e.g. utilities, farmers, government entities) to accept electronic payments; and standardize digital identity registration, and ensure interoperability between DFS operators and service providers relying on digital identity. They also emphasized the need to share best practices in areas of consumer protection, privacy, access to infrastructure and security and risk management. The Roundtable recognized that the need to develop robust business models for digital financial inclusion by establishing interoperable solutions in an unbundled manner, following collaborative approach between the regulators of telecom sector and financial sector.

SESSION 7: Way Forward

Moderator: Datuk Seri Dr. Halim Shafie, Chairman, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), Malaysia

The key ideas and outcomes that have emerged through knowledge/experience sharing in previous sessions, summarized as follows:

- (i) Complaints Redressal system is the one area where a lot of work needs to be done;
- (ii) Data Security, privacy and ownership issues;
- (iii) Digital ID and Digital Financial Inclusion; cost effective models to make ICT available to rural masses also; and
- (iv) Challenge of managing digital content on the social media, child online protection and censorship issues.
- (v) Identify an appropriate mechanism and approaches to deal with the content providers/OTT providers especially to redress harmful/abusive contents.

-----X-----