



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Industry Advisory Group on Development Issues and the Private Sector Chief Regulatory Officers' (IAGDI-CRO) Meeting

Kampala, Uganda, 2 July 2024

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Industry and private sector leaders met during the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-24) on 2 July 2024, in Kampala, Uganda, to share and discuss experiences, best practices, and concrete proposals to address the digital ecosystems' complex regulatory and business landscape. The meeting focused on fostering digital transformation and creating an enabling ecosystem for inclusive and sustainable connectivity in the digital economy.

Industry leaders and regulators adopted an Outcome Statement during the IAGDI-CRO meeting presented in the Closing Ceremony of GSR-24, sharing perspectives on the perspectives on development and regulatory insights.



In his opening remarks, **Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**, emphasized the private sector's crucial role in driving efforts to connect the 2.6 billion unconnected people globally. He stressed the importance of public-private collaboration to identify strategic investment opportunities for inclusive and sustainable digital transformation. His remarks highlighted the need for strong partnerships and innovative approaches to bridge the digital divide, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting economic growth through accelerated digital initiatives.



Mr. Bocar Ba, CEO of SAMENA Telecommunications Council and Chairman of the IAGDI-CRO, provided an overview of IAGDI-CRO during his address. He highlighted the forum's role in amplifying the private sector's voice to governments and regulators, ensuring their needs are reflected in the ITU-D's agenda. He stressed the forum's importance in shaping global policies for equitable digital development and thanked Dr. Zavazava for emphasizing the private sector's contributions.



Ms. Lele Modise, Group Chief Legal and Regulatory Officer of MTN Group and Vice Chair of the IAGDI-CRO, expressed gratitude to Chairman Bocar Ba and acknowledged Dr. Zavazava's opening remarks. Ms. Modise also underscored the consensus on the imperative to close the digital divide and achieve the SDGs by 2030. Ms. Modise focused on the need for collaborative efforts between the private sector and policymakers to drive outcomes-based discussions aimed at tangible change.

Industry leaders and regulators addressed crucial global regulatory challenges and opportunities in the digital landscape. Discussions underscored the transformative impact of the digital revolution on international communication, work dynamics, and daily living standards. Participants highlighted significant advantages of technological advancements, including enhanced productivity, improved access to critical information and services, and expanded socioeconomic opportunities. Emphasis was placed on the diverse technologies available to boost connectivity and bridge digital divides globally. Achieving comprehensive connectivity for all necessitates strategic incentives, substantial investments, robust regulatory frameworks, and concerted capacity-building efforts. Central

to these efforts is fostering a resilient national innovation ecosystem to ensure universal, affordable, secure, and accessible digital connectivity for sustainable development across regions and sectors.

1st Group of Firestarters



Ms. Isabelle Mauro
Director General
GSOA



Mr. Amir Algibreen
Group Chief Regulatory and Compliance
STC



Ms. Ruth Sebatindira
Founding Partner
Ligomarc



Mr. Fraser Graham
Group Director, Public Policy
Ooredoo Group

Ms Isabelle Mauro, Director-General of GSOA, emphasized the shared objective of connecting the remaining one-third of the global population offline through innovation, enabling policies, and collaborative efforts. She highlighted the vital role of satellite technologies in expanding coverage, enhancing reliability, and ensuring the resilience of digital networks. Mauro stressed the need for adaptable regulatory frameworks and certainty in spectrum allocation and licensing. She called for closer collaboration between industry stakeholders and regulators, leveraging industry expertise to inform regulatory practices and ensure economically viable business models. Ms Mauro urged regulators to facilitate inclusive and sustainable digitalization through well-crafted regulatory policies.

Mr Amir Al-Gibreen, Group Chief Regulatory and Compliance Officer, STC, stressed the imperative for regulators to establish a level playing field across various telecommunications industry sectors. He emphasized the necessity of updating regulatory frameworks to keep pace with technological advancements, thereby fostering fair competition and encouraging innovation. Mr Al-Gibreen noted the still nascent stage of AI regulation and emphasized the importance of defining clear boundaries and growth paths for AI technologies to drive industry benefits. He advocated for robust regulatory measures to ensure comprehensive end-to-end user protection, balancing consumer rights with promoting fair competition.

Ms Ruth Sebatindira, Founding Partner, Ligomarc, shared personal and professional experiences managing Uganda Telecom amidst financial challenges and discussed the regulatory landscape in Uganda. She recommended practical steps such as reducing license fees and taxes to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in the telecom sector. Ms Sebatindira highlighted the significance of energy-efficient investments and disaster preparedness in infrastructure development. She proposed the development of effective mechanisms for resolving technology-related disputes to foster a conducive business environment.

Mr Fraser Graham, Director of Public Policy at Ooredoo Group, explored strategies for policymakers to create an equitable market environment that maximizes the benefits of transformative technologies like AI and IoT. He aimed to inspire regulators to adopt flexible, forward-looking regulatory frameworks that are technology-neutral and equally applicable to all service providers. Mr Graham advocated principles-based regulation that encourages innovation and reduces regulatory burdens, promoting positive market behaviors through comprehensive policy frameworks. He emphasized the importance of collaboration between government and industry to achieve an inclusive digital future.

FLOOR INTERVENTIONS

Participants were invited to take the floor. **Ms. Mei Lin Fung, Chair from People Centered Internet**, emphasized the critical need for standardized metrics to measure the impact of regulations across different sectors and regions. Ms Fung proposed the establishment of regional digital regulatory sandboxes, citing their potential to foster

collaboration and innovation among countries. According to Ms Fung, this approach aligns with the spirit of the Internet, promoting an inclusive digital economy driven by measurable outcomes.

GSMA focused on key priorities in the telecommunications sector. GSMA underscored the significance of integrating satellite and terrestrial communications to extend network coverage, particularly highlighting advancements in NGSO (Non-Geostationary Orbit) satellites for direct-to-device communications. They stressed the necessity of predictable regulatory frameworks and a level playing field to encourage investment in digital infrastructure and services, as well as the need to tackle the affordability of devices, boost digital skills, and address online safety and security concerns.

Mr. Jose Toscano, Managing Director, Global Government Affairs, Intelsat US, echoed sentiments regarding the need for measures that prioritize regulatory certainty, multistakeholder cooperation, and innovative regulation and harmonization between regions and on a global scale. He emphasized the importance of streamlined and simplified regulatory procedures particularly for new technologies like satellite communications. Mr Toscano called for regulatory frameworks that accommodate terrestrial and multi-orbital infrastructure cooperation, ensuring a conducive environment for innovation and investment.

Ms. Lematua Gisa Fuatai Purcell, the Regulatory Authority of Samoa, intervened, drawing attention to the widening digital divide in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Ms Purcell emphasized the unique challenges faced by SIDS in accessing and adopting digital technologies, calling for collaborative efforts to mitigate these disparities. The authority highlighted the industry's role and international organizations like the ITU in effectively supporting SIDS to bridge the digital gap.

The Chairman, Mr Ba, closed the session by acknowledging the diverse perspectives shared and emphasizing the importance of collaboration and inclusive digital transformation. He reiterated the commitment of IAGDI-CRO to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between industry stakeholders, regulators, and policymakers to drive impactful regulatory frameworks. The floor was then handed over to Ms. Lele Modise, VICE-Chair, to moderate the discussions of the 2nd segment of the meeting.

Dr. Chafic Chaya, Regional Manager, Public Policy from Réseaux IP Européens Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC), expressed that, as a technical community as a regional Internet registry, so we are committed to developing the infrastructure of the Internet to connect the unconnected, to connect the new technologies, and building capacity for a secure, sustainable digital future. He highlighted the need to champion multistakeholder collaboration, flexible regulation, and build expertise. To this end, he suggested the creation of a technical advisory committee to support regulators and policymakers with technical expertise.

2nd Group of Firestarters



Mr. Christopher Hemmerlein
Senior Public Policy Manager
Amazon



Mr. Ahmed Riad
Senior Director, Strategy and
Industry Development
Huawei Technologies



Ms. Tatiana Lawrence
VP and International Regulatory
Iridium Communications Inc



Mr. Aboubakar Haman
Chief Regulatory Officer
Axian Telecom

Mr. Christopher Hemmerlein, Senior Public Policy Manager, Amazon, discussed Project Kuiper's ambitious goal of providing broadband connectivity through a constellation of low earth orbit satellites. He emphasized the crucial role of transparent and predictable regulatory environments in enabling long-term investment and fostering continuous

innovation in satellite broadband services. Mr Hemmerlein proposed specific regulatory measures to streamline licensing procedures and spectrum access policies to align with international standards. By advocating for clear regulatory frameworks, he suggested an enabling environment that supports sustainable deployment and operation of satellite technologies. This approach seeks to maximize the socio-economic benefits of broadband connectivity, particularly in remote and underserved areas globally.

Mr. Ahmed Riad, Senior Director of Strategy and Industry Development at Huawei emphasized the critical need to address the digital divide through sustainable digital transformation. Highlighting challenges, Mr Riad noted that over 30% of the global population remains unconnected, with significant usage gaps even where connectivity exists, especially in low-income countries. He underscored issues such as device affordability and spectrum availability as essential barriers pointing out that overcoming these challenges presents substantial economic opportunities, citing research showing a multiplier effect on GDP growth from ICT investments. He proposed recommendations including ensuring sufficient spectrum resources at reasonable costs, reducing import duties on devices, leveraging Universal Service Funds (USF), and promoting fair competition and consumer protection to foster sustainable business models.

Ms Tatiana Lawrence, International & Regulatory Vice President, Iridium, focused on regulatory considerations for satellite direct-to-device (D-to-D) services. She highlighted two primary models: mobile satellite spectrum (MSS) and terrestrial spectrum-based D-to-D services. Ms Lawrence emphasized that MSS-based operations can deploy immediately without additional licensing requirements, while terrestrial-based services involve complex regulatory hurdles such as spectrum coordination and ITU approval. Ms Lawrence advocated for flexible regulatory frameworks, public-private partnerships, and regulatory sandboxes to accelerate deployment and bridge the digital divide, stressing that satellite D-to-D services offered a vital opportunity for universal connectivity and called for collaborative efforts to ensure successful implementation across countries.

Mr Aboubakar Haman, Chief Regulatory Officer at Axian Telecom, addressed the challenges posed by advanced technologies like AI and IoT, emphasized the need for flexibility to respond to evolving industry dynamics yet uphold some control to mandate transparency to operators, to ensure accountability, and to build trust of users. He advocated for regulatory sandboxes tailored to AI-driven technologies and IoT innovations to foster a safe testing environment and ensure safety and privacy regulations compliance. Mr Haman highlighted the importance of data-driven regulation for informed decision-making and closing the digital divide. He proposed mandating transparency from operators using AI and IoT, particularly in customer interactions, to uphold user trust and privacy. Haman concluded by emphasizing the role of regulators in balancing flexibility with accountability to promote responsible technological advancements.



Wrap-up and Conclusions

IAGDI-CRO 2024 fostered insightful discussions and active participation from all attendees, emphasizing the need for multifaceted incentives for private sector investment, local engagement, capacity building, and developing innovation ecosystems for secure connectivity. **Mr. Bocar Ba, CEO of SAMENA Telecommunications Council and Chairman of the meeting**, highlighted the importance of intensifying collaboration between government and private sectors, ensuring fair market access, spectrum efficiency, reduced taxation, and partnerships with local operators. The meeting underscored the necessity of rural connectivity, digital inclusion, government support for innovation, and regulatory sandboxes. Recommendations were presented to policymakers at the closing ceremony of GSR-24, and further discussions can continue through ITU-D platforms and IAGDI-CRO. Warm thanks were also extended to the Government of Uganda and UCC for their hospitality.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE OUTCOME STATEMENT](#)

IAGDI-CRO Management



Mr. Bocar BA

Chairman, IAGDI-CRO
CEO, SAMENA
Telecommunications Council



Ms Lele Modise

Vice-Chair, IAGDI-CRO
Group Chief Legal and Regulatory
Affairs Officer, MTN Group



Ms Amy Alvarez

Vice-Chair, IAGDI-CRO
AVP – International External
and Regulatory Affairs, AT&T