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## Direction of Traffic: Trading Telecom Minutes Report – 3rd edition, 1999



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The 3rd edition of the authoritative ITU/TeleGeography Inc. “Direction of Traffic” publication focuses on the transition in international telecommunications traffic away from the bilateral regime, based on accounting rates, to a new, multilateral, trade-based regime. Specifically, the report looks at the impact that the changing telecommunications environment will have on developing countries.

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# **Direction of Traffic: Trading Telecom Minutes**

## **Report – 3rd edition, 1999**

For several years now, the concept of international telecommunications as a traded service has been discussed in hypothetical terms. In 1998, the concept finally became a reality with the implementation, on 1 January, of competition in most Member countries of the European Union and the entry into force, on 5 February, of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) agreement on basic telecommunications. The WTO agreement ushered in a multilateral trading regime for international telecommunications traffic which is slowly replacing the bilateral regime of the accounting rate system. A growing share of international traffic now passes outside the accounting rate system. At the same time, a vibrant market has grown up for the trading of minutes of telecom traffic, and options to deliver traffic. An increasing share of international traffic is now delivered over networks other than the public switched telephone network (e.g. voice over Internet Protocol, voice over Frame Relay, etc.).

The 3rd edition of the authoritative ITU/TeleGeography Inc. "Direction of Traffic" publication focuses on the transition away from the bilateral regime, based on accounting rates, to a new, multilateral, trade-based regime. Specifically, the report looks at the impact that the changing telecommunications environment will have on developing countries which have long depended upon revenues gained from net settlements to sustain their network build-out programmes. Chapter one of the report reviews global traffic trends. Chapter two describes the emerging, post-WTO telecommunications environment and Chapter three analyses the shift from revenue-sharing to cost-orientation, including the work of the ITU Focus Group. Chapter four examines price and cost trends while Chapter five elucidates developing countries' concerns. Chapter six highlights the issue of transit traffic while Chapter seven concludes on the future of trading telecommunication minutes.

In addition to the report, charts and data analysis, a reference section provides the key background policy documents and a series of statistical tables with bilateral, incoming and outgoing traffic flows and tariff data for the top 20 routes for over 100 economies worldwide.

NOTE – Also available from ITU is the "Direction of Traffic Database" which provides additional time-series of route-by-route traffic data for 100-plus economies worldwide. The Database is available as a one-time purchase. The report plus the database is also available as a combined package for the first time on CD-ROM (see Publication Notice No. 199b-9).

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