

Contribution from Tunisia

regarding the consultation on the Global Symposium for Regulators 2013 (GSR 13)

With the present convergence of services and technologies and the development of IP networks, we are seeing an explosive growth in the number of services and applications responding to the needs of users, at both private and professional levels, and this is helping significantly to improve quality of life. It also poses the challenge of developing and universalizing access to the broadband systems that can carry the new types of content. 4G mobile network technologies offer speeds comparable to those of fixed networks, as well as rapid deployment at lower cost than with fixed networks, and are a valid alternative option for helping to bring about universal broadband access.

The Tunisian authorities, and in particular the National Telecommunications Authority (the national regulator), are aware of the great importance of these developments for the country's social and economic development and have formulated a strategy for implementing a number of measures and regulatory tools that will help us to attain these goals. These in essence concern three main areas.

1. Spectrum management policy for the development of new generation mobile networks

In order to meet the ever growing demand for the frequency resources needed to deploy latest-generation mobile technologies offering broadband services, Tunisia, as part of its spectrum management policy, is taking appropriate steps to

- sign up to and implement international or regional agreements, notably regional plans (such as those relating to RRC-06 – digital TV) and international plans drawn up by the WRCs;
- identify national frequency requirements in accordance with international agreements and recommendations and in the light of international market trends and local market conditions;
- refarm portions of the spectrum to satisfy new requirements, including the 2.1 GHz band for 3G technology, and free up the 800 MHz band as a result of the digital dividend. Tunisia will begin the process of awarding 4G licences during 2014 and will honour commitments to neighbouring countries regarding the use of the band in question, which will be a key vehicle for providing broadband access in rural areas.

In preparation for the next round of frequency allocations for 4G licences in Tunisia, the following initiatives are planned:

- updating of the regulatory framework governing procedures for awarding frequency licences and authorizations;
- refarming of the 1800 MHz and 2.1 GHz bands for possible use by 4G technologies;
- studies of different business models for the rollout of 4G networks with the aim of minimizing costs and ensuring that these networks contribute to socio-economic development.

2. Establishing a regulatory approach for ensuring network neutrality

The National Telecommunications Authority is aware of the economic, social and political importance of applying the principle of network neutrality, which is understood to mean the ability to ensure free flow of content on networks with total transparency and in a non-discriminatory way. It has set up a working group to study different aspect of this question and formulate some preliminary conclusions regarding the forms of regulation that are needed to ensure network neutrality, as well as identifying appropriate traffic management practices for network operators and the conditions needed to apply them.

The results of the working group's deliberations should be available at the end of 2013 and will form the basis for guidelines on network neutrality in Tunisia, which will be issued by the National Telecommunications Authority.

3. Changes in regulation

As a result of the new trends and constraints in the information and communication sector, the National Telecommunications Authority needs to review its overall approach to regulation. The multitude of different stakeholders (network operators, content and service producers, users, and so on) and the convergence of services and technologies require regulation based more on dialogue, promotion and arbitration (**flexible regulation**) than on enforcing restrictions. Appropriate measures in this area are being adopted informally by the authority pending revision of the relevant laws and regulations.