ITU-TRCSL Review of Licensing Framework Workshop
Colombo Sri Lanka
10th March2016

Welcome Speech

Mr SAMEER SHARMA

SENIOR ADVISOR
ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Mr. Sunil S Sirisena, Director General, TRCSL,

Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and a privilege to be here with you at this important workshop, and also to join you in the beautiful city of Colombo.

On behalf of ITU, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Sunil S Sirisena, Director General, TRCSL, for your personal presence, and your support for this ITU-TRCSL Review of Licensing Framework Workshop.

TRCSL has been host to several ITU global as well as regional events and in particular I would like to recall Cloud Computing 2015, GSR 2012 and Greening the Future: Bridging the Standardization Gap on Environmental Sustainability in 2013 and inauguration of Connect a School Connect a Community in 2013.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now come to the theme of the Workshop. The term "Convergence" has been around for over two decades now. I recall that the topics for our prestigious "Trends in Telecommunication Reform" publication was "Convergence and Regulation" as early as 1999 while several countries; for example; Malaysia adopted a converged regulatory legislation 1998.

Over the decade that followed, a number of countries in the Asia and also the Pacific adopted Converged Regulatory Institutions and Frameworks. In its earlier manifestation, we were discussing convergence of telecommunication, broadcasting and information technology.

We have been living in the Internet age. And now, progressing rapidly towards a society where Internet or ICT connectivity is becoming pervasive; not only in humans, but also "things" with convergence of regulatory frameworks, institutions, technologis and platforms.

- Globally 3.2 billion people using the Internet by end 2015, of which 2 billion are from developing countries
- Mobile broadband is the most dynamic market segment; globally, mobile broadband penetration reaches 47% in 2015, a value that increased 12 times since 2007
- The proportion of households with Internet access at home increased from 18% in 2005 to 46% in 2015
- 3G population coverage is expected to reach 69% by population by 2015
- In 2014, in 111 countries the price of a basic (fixed or mobile) broadband plan corresponds to less than 5% of average GNI per capita, thus meeting the Broadband Commission target
- However, in developing world and in rural areas, there is still a lot to be done to bridge the Internet access gap. 4 billion people from developing countries remain offline; representing 2/3 of the population residing in developing countries while 3G coverage by population in rural areas is estimated to be less than 30%
- The Internet of Things (IoT) is rapidly becoming a reality, and machine-to-machine (M2M) communications are expected to grow significantly in the near future
- The term "big data", used to define high-volume, -velocity and -variety information assets that demand cost-effective, innovative forms of information processing for enhanced insight and decision making. It is estimated that 40 Zettabytes (10^21 bytes) of data will be created by 2020, an increase of 300 times from 2005

We all now recognize the vital importance of ICT as a social and economic development tool, as it enables high-speed, evidence-based, remote decision-making, bringing efficiencies to all sectors, and enhancing

possibilities for cross-sectoral collaboration. More than 190 countries have either adopted or in the process of adopting a national broadband plan, policy or strategy.

Convergence is real and has moved on from a couple of sectors, viz. telecommunication/ICT and Broadcasting, to the entire ICT embedded society. The users of telecommunication/ICT services, whom we called telephone subscribers, have now become the citizens in the Digital era.

There is a need for close collaboration and 'smart' partnerships amongst regulators at international, regional and national level across sectors. In an ICT embedded society, the efficiency, productivity and security of citizens necessitate cross-sectoral collaboration mechanisms to reap the full benefits of ICTs in areas such as health, education, agriculture, electricity, transport etc.

Let me give you some examples of ITU collaboration with our sister UN agencies:

- ITU and WHO have developed a national e-health strategy that we work together to adapt at national level in order to facilitate ICT adoption in the health sector; ITU-T recently came up with Focus Group output on M2M communication for the health sector.
- ITU and FAO are currently working on an e-Agriculture toolkit.

GSR 2004 Licensing in the Era of Convergence best practices encourages regulators to take into consideration the convergence of platforms and services and that they regularly reassess regulatory regimes to ensure consistency and to eliminate unfair market advantages or unnecessary regulatory burdens.

This workshop is an excellent example of initiative from TRCSL involving ITU, TRCSL and licensees as well as other stakeholders to discuss and debate the challenges and barriers of current licensing regime and how to create enabling environment so that regulator can create a role of facilitator for industry growth promoting conditions for investment in infrastructure, services and creating choices for consumers. I thank you all for your contribution and thank the participants who have joined this Workshop.

I wish this workshop every success. Thank you for your attention.