



Under TRA – Bahrain’s presidency, ARNET members agree on recommendations for lowering roaming tariffs among Arab countries

Manama, 5 June 2007- The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) announced that the Arab Regulators’ Network (ARNET) members reached an agreement on recommendations for lowering roaming tariffs among Arab countries.

This agreement was reached during the fourth Annual Meeting of ARNET held in Bahrain last month, where TRA - Bahrain took over the presidency of ARNET for a period of one year. The meeting was attended by key personages of the telecommunications sector in the Kingdom, TRA’s Board of Directors, and delegations from 13 Arab countries.

As a result of the meeting, member countries were able to agree on recommendations for lowering roaming tariffs among Arab countries, which will be presented to the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers in their upcoming meeting next month. These recommendations are in response to the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers’ request that operators reduce roaming rates in Arab countries to an appropriate and reasonable level, in line with international average roaming rates. The agreement comes as a result of the sustained effort of the ARNET roaming working group which was established in January 2006 and took on the task of collecting the relevant information from Arab countries, listening to stakeholders, such as operators and the GSM Association, and studying the experience in this matter of other parts of the world, such as the EU. The working group then put forward its recommendations to the General Assembly of ARNET during last month’s meeting in Bahrain.

In addition to the roaming issue, ARNET members agreed to form three working groups on common issues of the member countries. The first working group will deal with consumer protection issues, aiming to establish fair standard terms and conditions for consumers. The second working group aims to achieve regional benchmarking by collecting and comparing a standard set of indicators for the telecommunications market in Arab countries, which will give regulators a clearer understanding of the regional market. The licensing framework for new technologies will be the project of ARNET’s third working group. This project aims to establish best practice regulatory frameworks for new technologies, such as wireless broadband, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Mobile Virtual Network Operator (MVNO).

ARNET members also agreed to host workshops in order to share their experience. The workshops will cover issues on Number Portability, Spectrum Management, Ducts or Right of Way, Cyber Security and the Next Generation Network (NGN).

The General Director of TRA and current president of ARNET, Mr. Alan Horne, commented as follows on the agreed recommendations: "We are pleased that ARNET's members agreed on a set of recommendations for lowering roaming prices among Arab countries. We believe that this is a step in the right direction, which should lead to more affordable telecommunications services for Arab consumers. I would also like to thank the previous presidents of ARNET and the roaming working group for all their efforts to this end."

Notes to Editors:

About TRA

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) was established by Legislative Decree No. 48 of 2002 promulgating the Telecommunications Law. TRA is an independent body and its duties and powers include, among other things, protecting the interests of subscribers and users and promoting effective and fair competition among existing and new licensed operators. More information regarding TRA can be viewed at www.tra.org.bh

About ARNET

The Arab Regulators' Network was established in April 2003 and comprises Regulators from 20 Arab countries. The presidency of the ARNET is yearly and rotates alphabetically among the member countries. Each presidency spans the period from one annual ordinary meeting to the next. The Arab Regulators' Network has chosen the Algerian Authority for Post and Transportation to be the permanent secretary.

More information regarding the Arab Regulators' Network can be viewed at www.aregnet.net