



*News Release*

## **TRA Proposes a Procedure for the Erection of Wireless Networks**

Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain - Wednesday 2 September 2009

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) Chairman Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Al Amer along with TRA's General Director Mr. Alan Horne, Mr. Mohammed Mahmood TRA's Director of Technical and Operations and Mr. Basil Al Arrayed TRA's Director of Communications and Consumer Affairs today discussed wireless networks with Muharraq Municipality along with the Water and Electrical Authority, Environment Authority and a representative from the Ministry of Interior.

It was agreed that wireless technology is an important enabler for many mobile and broadband telecommunications services which enrich quality of life in many ways, including supporting the generation of jobs, improving education and enhancing the reach of eGovernment services to the public. No longer can wireless technologies just be thought of as cellular telephones. Wireless technologies are now being used to deliver high speed (Broadband) communications giving access to the internet for information research and business development even when the user is away from their office or home. Further, wireless broadband technologies are also key to the provision of telecommunications services in new developments where there may be no wired infrastructure, so people living or working in such areas will be connected from day one.

TRA's Chairman Dr. Mohammed Al Amer said "Consumers and businesses are expecting 100% mobile coverage anytime, anywhere. This is only possible by allowing more aerials on roof tops and masts to be deployed. We are working closely with the industry and the municipality to ensure the existence of a high speed wireless infrastructure that complements the fixed infrastructure whilst, at the same time, ensuring the protection of public safety by ensuring that operators are adhering to international best practices."

Dr. Al Amer went on to say "We have a clear mandate to achieve the objectives of the Kingdom 2030 economic vision by giving all citizens of the Kingdom the opportunity to access broadband services at the best international prices."

Wireless infrastructure, which includes aerial on the roofs of tall buildings as well as free standing masts, are critical to the delivery of high quality wireless telecommunications services. The Municipality Council play a vital role in providing the permits for such infrastructure. Further, it is important in order to meet the Government Policy for providing competitive telecommunications services, that applications for permits for such infrastructure are treated speedily and equally for all applicants with the required telecommunications and frequency licences from TRA such as those held by Batelco, Zain, Mena Telecom, Bahrain Broadband and STC.

It was agreed that detailed procedures and guidelines must be completed and followed by all stakeholders including telecommunications operators, TRA, Municipalities, Water and Electrical Authority, Environment Authority and the Ministry of Interior. These would set out the responsibility and the technical requirements for the erection of wireless antennas and masts. The procedures should include the time frame in which each party should respond so that operators are able to meet their commitments to provide telecommunications services to the general public in a timely manner.

TRA General Director Mr. Alan Horne said "TRA has been working with the Telecommunications Operators to develop the procedures and Guidelines. He stated that these would be presented to all stakeholders for their review and input."

Members of Muharraq Municipality stated that there were many people who were concerned about the safety of the radio signals as well as the impact that a free standing mast might have on the value of their property.

Mohammed Mahmood gave a presentation (available on the TRA web site [tra.org.bh](http://tra.org.bh)) which detailed the standards to which the Licensees must adhere and the checks that TRA and the Commission are undertaking to ensure that the radio signals are below the levels set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) which, following research costing more than US\$300Million have been shown to have no impact on human health. His presentation also included the steps TRA is taking in order to ensure that Telecommunications operators are sharing masts, wherever technically feasible, and the steps being taken to lessen the visual impact of masts.

Mohammed Mahmood in his presentation stated that "TRA is working with the industry to ensure that future telecommunications aerials and mast will, progressively, visually blend within the surrounding environment. He stated that TRA had conducted measurements of telecommunications signals in Muharraq at 5 different sites which show that the signal levels are significantly below the recommended levels set by the World Health Organisation.

Members of the Muharraq Municipality Council stated that there were now many wireless antennas and masts within Muharraq which do not have the required permits and the intention of Muharraq Municipality was to remove these installations.

TRA expressed concern of the widespread consequences of removing such antennas and the considerable impact which would be felt by consumers and businesses in the area and the potential impact on the economy. TRA suggested to form a working group to include all the concerned departments (TRA, Municipalities, Water and Electrical Authority, Environment Authority and the Ministry of Interior) to set a procedure explaining everybody's responsibility and the technical requirements for the erection of wireless antennas. TRA suggested that these should be completed by the end of September.

Mr. Horne stated "There will always be concerns from the public about wireless technologies, our role here is to provide the public with all the required information to relive their concerns and to ensure that licensed operators adhere to the rules and regulations of the country in protecting the safety of the public whilst, at the same time, providing the vital services which people and businesses have come to expect."

Dr. Mohammed Al Amer concluded by thanking the members of the Council and recommending that a review should be conducted of all sites which do not have permits. Any site which if found not to meet the standards and guidelines will be required to be upgraded in an agreed timeframe.

The Chairman of the Council thanked all the participants for their inputs and said that they would now deliberate on what they had heard and come to a clear decision.

The discussion concluded by agreeing on forming a working group to set a procedure and standards for the erection of wireless networks. This procedure shall be agreed with all the municipality councils.



## **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](http://www.tra.org.bh)

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