



TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY BEGINS PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON CARRIER PRE-SELECTION

***-- All Interested Parties Encouraged to Submit Comments
By 21 January 2004 deadline --***

MANAMA – 24 December 2003 – As the next step in the ongoing liberalization process, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) today announced the start of a public consultation on the issue of Carrier Pre-Selection and invited all interested parties from within the telecommunications industry as well as the general public to submit comments.

Carrier Pre-Selection is yet another way in which consumers will be provided with greater choice once the liberalization process is fully implemented and new operators enter the market across a broad spectrum of communications services.

Effectively, Carrier Pre-Selection will allow consumers to choose to make certain call types, such as international calls for example, from a pre-selected operator whilst maintaining their existing numbers and continuing to make calls as usual.

The issuance of this first consultation paper on Carrier Pre-Selection, the contents of which can be viewed on the TRA website at www.tra.org.bh, is the first step in this process, which will result in a final regulation setting the relevant rules through a transparent and open dialogue with all operators, businesses and the general public.

To ensure all relevant parties are given the opportunity to comment, the TRA is taking measures to alert industry participants, government bodies, businesses and consumer protection organizations of the start of this process and relevant deadlines for putting forth their views.

The deadline for initial comments is 21 January 2004. Based on these comments, the TRA will produce a second, more detailed consultation paper by the end of January 2004 that will propose the implementation, operational and cost details for Carrier Pre-Selection in Bahrain.

A second consultation period will then begin in mid-February with a mid-March deadline for response. A draft regulation will subsequently be issued at which time interested parties will be given an additional two-week period to provide further

comments. **A final regulation on Carrier Pre-Selection is expected in early April 2004.**

General Director of the TRA, Mr. Andreas Avgousti said, "As part of the TRA's ongoing commitment to transparency and ensuring the liberalization of the market in Bahrain takes place in a manner that will be beneficial to consumers and the Kingdom as whole, we encourage all interested parties to submit their comments on issues of specific concern to them. In the preparation of a final determination, the TRA will take the utmost care to ensure that the interests of all the parties affected by this and related issues are taken into account, including the interests of consumers and operators."

About the TRA

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) was established by Legislative Decree No. 48 promulgating the Telecommunications Law. The 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 the TRA can be viewed at www.tra.org.bh

- The TRA will be happy to provide hard copies of the consultation document, for those who do not have access to the internet.