



TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY PAVES THE WAY FOR GREATER CHOICE FOR TELECOM USERS

-- Strong public participation helps shape new regulation--

MANAMA - 14 June 2004 -The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) today announced the issuance of its final regulation on Carrier Pre-Selection (CPS), which will give the public greater choice in terms of service providers and options once the liberalisation process is complete and additional operators enter the market.

The final regulation sets out the terms under which consumers will be able to select different market operators for the provision of different types of telecommunications services. For example, once competition enters addition market segments such as international or national fixed service, consumers will be able to opt to use-if they wish to- one carrier for their national fixed line calls and another carrier, should they so chose, for their international calls. With the market due to be fully open to competition in all areas in July 2004, this regulation is especially important and critical in allowing consumers to reap the benefits of the liberalisation of the market in Bahrain.

The final regulation is based on the views of 14 public and private sector organisations including government ministries, universities, consultancies and telecoms operators, all of which participated in the TRA's consultation process, which began in December 2003 and was aimed at allowing all interested and affected parties to put forth their views and help shape the final regulation that has been adopted.

Further, the regulation is groundbreaking in terms of its focus on consumer protection issues in Bahrain, establishing the Kingdom's first telecoms Consumer Advisory Group. This group will be tasked with providing the TRA with recommendations on a number of key consumer issues as they relate to CPS. Additional such groups are expected to be created in the future to assist the TRA and the telecommunications sector on the development and monitoring of other critical consumer-

related issues. According to the final regulation, the CPS Consumer Advisory Group is set to be established in 60 days time with representatives to be drawn from Bahrain's academic community, business sector, and the general public.

In line with the TRA's commitment to transparency, the Authority will designate a special section on its website (www.tra.org.bh) to publishing the Consumer Advisory Group's recommendations as well as a Terms of Reference for the public. Further, as CPS comes into use in Bahrain, the website will disclose any legitimate complaints made by subscribers against operators with regard to this specific issue.

Commenting on the announcement, General Director of the TRA, Mr. Andreas Avgousti said, "This regulation is aimed at ensuring that consumers get the promised benefits of liberalisation – including greater choice once the market is fully liberalised and additional players enter the market. We are especially pleased by the significant public response we received on this issue and believe that participation by such a broad cross selection of organisations has allowed the TRA to put forth a fair and well-balanced regulation and importantly, one, that incorporates the views of users of telecommunications services in the Kingdom."

Mr. Avgousti continued, " We thank all of those who participated in this process and remain committed to continuing to issue consultations on all other important issues in order to ensure that the views of the telecommunications industry and the general public are always taken into account and reflected in the decisions taken by the Authority."

The final regulation on CPS can be viewed or downloaded from the TRA's website.

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 final regulation document, for those who do not have access to the Internet. The TRA can be contacted on telephone number 17 540 120.