



TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY ISSUES DRAFT REGULATION ON CARRIER PRE-SELECTION

-- Interested Parties Given Two Weeks to Comment Prior to Adoption of Final Regulation --

MANAMA – 28 March 2004 –The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) today announced the issuance of its draft regulation on the issue of Carrier Pre-Selection (CPS), following the completion of two public consultations, through which comments were received from all interested parties from within the telecommunications industry as well as the general public.

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

This draft regulation sets out the basic terms upon which CPS will work in Bahrain. It specifies the rights and obligations of the operators who provide the service and defines the specific telecommunications service to which carrier pre-selection applies.

The planned CPS for Bahrain will allow consumers to nominate the carrier for most of their national calls and another (possibly the same carrier) for their international calls. The draft regulation provides that the scheme is restricted to calls from fixed lines, although the option of extending it to calls from mobiles is left open in the event that the recently introduced competition does not have an effect on lowering the cost of calls.

A key feature of the regulation is its measure in the protection of consumer interests. A considerable amount of attention has been given to ensuring that consumer preferences are catered for and that there are safeguards against unauthorized changes to a consumer's pre-selected options.

Further, the draft regulation provides for the creation of the Kingdom's first Telecoms Consumer Advisory Group, which will be tasked with developing and presenting to the TRA its recommendations on a number of key consumer issues in relation to CPS. Based on these the TRA ma

issue additional regulations, codes of practice , etc. This group will be the first in what the Authority expects will be numerous such groups to be created in the future to work with the TRA and the telecommunications industry on other important issues.

As part of the TRA's ongoing commitment to transparency and its dedication to close co-operation with both the telecommunications industry and the community, the TRA will commence, today, an additional two-week period during which time all interested parties can provide relevant comments on the draft regulation.

The deadline for final comments will be 11th April 2004, following which the TRA expects to issue the final regulation on CPS in early April 2004.

Commenting on the announcement, General Director of the TRA, Mr. Andreas Avgousti said, "After a lengthy consultation process, we are drawing nearer to the adoption of a final regulation on the issue of carrier pre-selection, which reflects the comments and participation of both market operators and the general public at large. The TRA takes seriously the interests of all parties affected by this and in conjunction with the interests of end users and remains committed to ensuring that its decisions balance these whilst at the same time promoting competition in the market."

The draft regulation can be viewed on the TRA website at www.tra.org.bh and to ensure that all relevant parties are given the opportunity to comment, the TRA is taking measures to alert industry participants, government bodies, businesses and consumer protection organisations of this final opportunity for putting forth their views on the issue of CPS.

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