



ACCESS SERVICES & CONSUMER ISSUES TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Manama 5 June 2005 – The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), today issued its work plan for the next 12 months based on the draft plan published by the Authority which sought feedback from the industry and public at large on what it should concentrate on over the next 12 months.

The overwhelming majority of respondents identified defining an Access Framework as a top priority for the newly liberalized Bahraini telecoms market. The respondents stated that with new operators entering the market, there is a growing need for a robust access framework that is workable and clear for all the parties involved. Another top priority was the issue of consumer protection starting from awareness campaigns that tell consumers about their rights but also in terms of other important issues such as dealing with bulk SMS and protection of consumers in the event of service termination for non payment.

This was the first time that the TRA consulted on its plan but also sought to publish the comments received themselves. The TRA received comments from 7 organizations on its draft plan. Three respondents agreed to publish their comments being The Ministry of Industry & Commerce, the Bahraini Consumer Protection Society and MTC Vodafone Bahrain and as such their comments can be viewed on the TRA's website (www.tra.org.bh). The TRA welcomes the stand of these organizations for agreeing to publish their comments as it takes transparency one step further. People can view the comments as they were written by the respective respondents and not as summarized.

In addition the TRA also issued today its response to the TRA Development Review Panel Report as it had promised. The TRA has issued its response to the report in conjunction with its work plan for 2005/2006 as the plan deals to a great extent with the issues addressed by the Panel as priorities.

The General Director of the TRA, Mr. A. Andreas Avgousti made the following statement: “ Today we took the formal step of putting together the recommendations of the Panel and the comments of the public on the priorities for our work for the next twelve months. It was clear from the responses received and the recommendations of the

Panel what they considered to be the top priorities for this year. We do realize that there is a lot to be done and we hope that by planning our work in terms of priorities, we can achieve the best results given time and resource constraints.”

He also added : “ I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Industry & Commerce, the Bahraini Consumer Protection Society and MTC Vodafone Bahrain for agreeing to publish their comments on the draft plan. We hope that this initiative will further the public consultation process. In future consultations we hope to see many more respondents adopting this transparent approach as access to information is very important for the market and the players.”

The TRA work Plan 2005/2006, responses and related report can be view on the Authority’s website (www.tra.org.bh). The TRA’s response to the Development Review Panel report is also available on its website under the TRA Development Review Panel section.

Notes to Editors :

1. About the TRA

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) was established by Legislative Decree No. 48 of 2002 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 Plan document for those interested parties who do not have access to the Internet. Documents are also available in large print or Brail for those who are visually impaired. The TRA can be contacted on telephone number 17520044

2. About the TRA Development Review Panel

The TRA has always sought to carry out its duties in line with best international practices and to meet the highest standards of

regulation for the benefit of the telecommunications industry and consumers alike.

As part of its efforts in doing so and so that the way TRA formulates the way forward, within the parameters of the law and the telecommunications plan, are effective and foster the development of a healthy telecommunications sector, the TRA established a system of independent reviews of the way forward for the TRA.

With this in mind, the TRA established, on an annual basis, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority Development Review Panel. This panel will be an independent panel, comprising of three members, with experience in the area of telecommunications. The panel will be asked to carry out a review of the developments in the market, the work of the TRA and listen to the views of the industry. Based on these the panel will, during a public meeting, provide advice to the TRA about areas of improvement, which the TRA will be taking into account in planning its work and strategy for the next twelve months.

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