



## **The initial consumer consultation reveals that telecoms consumers feel they are not properly protected**

### **--TRA proposal to set time limits for the sending of bulk SMS--**

**Manama – 4 February 2007.** The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) issued today its second public consultation on consumer protection issues.

This consultation comes after the study of the responses to the initial consultation that was issued last year. These responses discussed a number of possible solutions for protecting consumers against the insolvency of prepaid telecommunications providers, protecting consumers from nuisance bulk communications, and protecting consumers from unfair disconnection practices. The responses also revealed that consumers feel they are not properly protected in these aspects.

As of today, TRA is consulting on the solutions and mechanisms to be implemented for the three areas of concern to consumers that were discussed in the first consultation. TRA proposes to adopt the safeguard of a bank guarantee to protect consumers against the insolvency of prepaid telecommunications providers. In relation to bulk SMS, the TRA is minded to protect consumers by implementing a code of practice which at least applies "opt out" system. The consultation also proposes the adoption of an industry code of practice to protect consumers from unfair disconnection practices. This code of practice would set out the minimum acceptable standards that telecommunications operators should meet.

TRA views this consultation as a step towards establishing a consumer-centred environment in which consumer rights will be protected in line with the highest international standards.

All TRA stakeholders and interested parties have the opportunity to comment on the issues discussed in this document. TRA's permanent consumer groups, both residential and business, will be invited formally to provide their views and voice their concerns. In order to maximize consumer involvement, the advisory groups and consumer societies will take part in drafting the industry's code of practice.

TRA looks forward to receiving a significant amount of feedback from consumers and consumers' societies, as it believes that the consumers' voice should be heard, especially on matters of direct relevance to them. The comments period for this consultation ends on 4 March 2007. TRA will review the received feedback and take it into account in drafting the regulation. TRA will also prepare the implementation mechanism for each adopted solution and will set up the groups that will be involved in drafting the code of practice.

The General Director of TRA, Mr. Alan Horne, commented as follows on the issuing of the new consultation: "In its consistent effort to protect consumers, TRA proposes to introduce bank guarantees for prepaid services and bring into force a code of practice for bulk communications and disconnection procedures. These steps are designed to support the steps taken to make the market more competitive and strengthen the protection of consumers against unfair practices. Consumers are encouraged to have their say in order to get the maximum out of their telecommunications providers."

### **Note to Editors:**

#### About the 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)

- TRA will be happy to provide hard copies of the draft regulation 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 17 520044.