



## **TRA publishes its position on the regulation of VoIP and internet cafes providing international calls**

**Manama, 30 May 2007** – TRA today published two papers outlining its position with respect to the regulation of Voice over Internet Protocol (“VoIP”) in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and also its guidelines for internet cafes and shops, often referred to as “Call Shops”, in order to ensure that the services they provide are in accordance with the Telecommunications Law. “Call shops” often provide customers the possibility to use cheaper VoIP-type international voice services than traditional international voice services.

The first paper (“the VoIP paper”) outlines the TRA’s approach to the regulation of VoIP service providers, and in particular international services that can be accessed from Bahrain, as well as to the issue of consumer protection.

VoIP has been at the cutting edge of technological developments in telecommunications and allows providers to offer services at prices much lower than those on offer by traditional service providers, and in some cases even for free. Consumers who take advantage of these new services, must be aware that there may be risks regarding protection of consumer rights in cases of foreign VoIP operators that fall outside the TRA’s legal powers.

The second paper (“the Call Shops paper”) sets out the requirements for Call Shops reselling the services of Bahraini licensed operators. Call Shop owners and operators must ensure that they comply with the regulatory regime of the Kingdom, and the position paper explains how they can do this by adopting the reselling/agency model. Call Shop owners will only need a license if they want to offer telecommunications services of their own, in other words where they are not acting as mere resellers or agents of another licensee.

TRA’s General Director, Mr. Alan Horne, commented as follows on the publication of the papers on VoIP and call shops: “We realize that a lot of consumers in Bahrain use call shops to contact their families at cheaper rates. While we encourage diversity in services provided to consumers in Bahrain, we also need to remind call shop owners and operators of their legal obligation to comply with the rules and regulations of the Kingdom. Consumers must also be aware that there are certain services, such as access to emergency number, that are not always provided through VoIP services”

The position papers can be found on the TRA website at [www.tra.org.bh](http://www.tra.org.bh).

## **Notes to Editors:**

### VoIP

VoIP technology makes possible transfer voice calls via modern data networks, including the Internet. Technological and market developments allow service providers to make their services available to a global customer base from limited points of presence and target consumers with innovative and attractive service offerings.

### About 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)