



## **TRA proposes solutions to enable operators to build new telecommunications infrastructure**

**Manama, 8 May 2007** – The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) published today a consultation document on streamlining the processes for the planning, building, maintenance and protection of the telecommunications network infrastructure in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

This consultation comes as a result of TRA's ongoing dialogue with the telecommunications industry, where current and prospective licensees have identified that one of the most critical obstacles to the deployment of alternative telecommunications networks and the development of competition is the restricted ability of licensees to construct ducts. This is perceived as being mainly due to the fact that Batelco continues to enjoy unique rights with respect to the planning, building, maintenance and protection of the telecommunications network infrastructure.

However, as the telecommunications market of the Kingdom of Bahrain is now an open one and there are more licensees wishing to construct their own networks, it is important to review the framework of the planning, building, maintenance and protection of the telecommunications network infrastructure with a view to ensuring a level playing field for all market players in the liberalised telecommunications market.

The consultation document provides an overview of the current framework for the granting of planning permissions, wayleaves and permissions for maintenance related to the planning, building, maintenance and protection of the telecommunications network infrastructure within the public road network. It also covers the granting of rights to use public property for this purpose. The Document also sets out several options for solving the issues raised in it, assesses them and suggests the way forward.

The document highlights proposed solutions for the interfacing of the telecommunications industry with the system of coordination of infrastructure planning, construction, maintenance and plant protection works, operated by the Central Planning Unit (CPU) of the Ministry of Works, Power and Water. Batelco has so far been the only licensed operator involved in the coordination system. TRA is now considering four different options for granting all operators equal opportunity to participate in the coordination of infrastructure planning, construction, maintenance and plant protection works.

These options include the continuation of the current situation with additional safeguards, non-discriminatory actions by Batelco, and the appointing of an independent body to provide the interface between the CPU system and the telecoms industry.

Interested parties are encouraged to provide their comments to TRA on the proposed solutions until 22 May 2007. The full document can be downloaded via TRA's website [www.tra.org.bh](http://www.tra.org.bh).

The General Director of TRA, Mr. Alan Horne, stated: "One of the most important preconditions for effective competition is the ability of new market players to construct their own telecommunications networks. Often such construction involves the building of ducts,.. It is important to ensure that the administrative processes related to the construction and management of these facilities enable all market players to deploy their networks, enjoying equal rights. Therefore, today we begin this consultation process on proposed solutions which will enable all licensed operators to build their infrastructure and provide services to customers in Bahrain on a fair and equal basis. We wish to hear the views of the industry on the proposed solutions in order to reach a practical and effective solution in a timely manner."

#### **Notes to Editors:**

##### 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)