

ITU-KCC



Asia-Pacific Regulators' Roundtable

14-15 October 2013
Seoul, Republic of Korea



SESSION OUTCOME

The ITU-KCC Regulators Roundtable on the theme of “*Protecting Consumers in the Digital Age*” was held successfully held from 14-15 October 2013 at Seoul, Republic of Korea. It was co-organized by the Korea Communications Commission (KCC) and the ITU with support from the Department of Communications, Government of Australia. The Roundtable was attended by 46 participants from 25 countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

Ms. Eun-Ju Kim, Regional Director ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific delivered the welcome remarks while the Roundtable was opened by Mr. Kyeong-Jae Lee, Chairman, Korea Communications Commission, Republic of Korea. The high level participants held strategic discussions on protecting consumers in the digital age of globalized ICT applications and services, shared their practices and discussed the challenges facing them. (The session speakers and presentations are available at <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/asp/CMS/Events/2013/RR-ITP-2013/index.asp>).

A brief outcome of each session is provided below.

SESSION 1: CONSUMER PROTECTION IN THE DIGITAL ERA – SETTING THE CONTEXT AND IDENTIFYING THE ROLE OF TELECOMMUNICATION/ BROADCASTING/ CONVERGED ICT REGULATORS

Moderator: Mr. Dae-Hee Kim, Standing Commissioner, Korea Communications Commission
Panelists

- *Mr. Suthiphon Thavechaiyagarn, Commissioner, National Broadcasting And Telecommunications Commission, Thailand*
- *Mr. Antonio Corriea, President, Autoridade Nacional De Comunicações, Timor Leste*

Session Outcome

- Convergence has brought in new ICT services that foster innovative cross platform cross border applications that enhances consumer choice. The revenue, advertisement and media consumption pattern trends are also changing.
- However overload of information also creates increased complexity for consumers. In the dynamic ICT Sector, the emerging services are largely becoming user driven and not service provider driven. This has increased the number of complaints in size and scope. Issues such as information leakage and privacy protection, cyberthreats, varying regulatory frameworks resulting in different rules for similar services, poor quality of services and content, information overload from too much competition are being adding to the list.
- While it calls for greater need for consumer protection, it also requires greater clarity on the role of various Sector Specific Regulators and Competition Regulators.
- Unified legal framework, defining consumers and stakeholders involved in protecting the consumers, addressing the needs of marginalized population are required.
- Consumer awareness is a key to mitigate the number of complaints. There is a need to continue dialogue with a wide variety of consumer groups on a regular and structured basis to ensure wider representation and comprehensive solutions.
- Going forward, there is a need to ensure high-quality services, establish user centered regulations, strengthen capacity building to solve the digital divide problem, reinforce response process to protect personal information, and provide more effective damage redress process.
- The consumer protection in the digital age can be identified through 6 key roles of regulators in consumer protection area; consumer's right on access to service, consumer's right on information, obligations imposed to regulator for better consumer protection, protection of personal information and privacy, consumer's right to seek redress including miscellaneous measures for better protection.

SESSION 2: BROADBAND ACCESS SERVICES: PROTECTING CONSUMERS IN A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Moderator: Mr. Leong Keng Thai, Director General (Telecoms and Post), Infocomm Development Authority, Singapore

Panelists

Mr. Ilyas Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer, Communications Authority of Maldives

Mr. Khin Maung Thet, Director General, Posts and Telecommunications Department, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Mr. Ron Box, Regulator, Telecommunications & Radiocommunications Regulator, Vanuatu

Mr. Doan Quang Hoan, Director General, Authority of Radio Frequency Management, Viet Nam

Session Outcome

- One of the key roles of regulation is to provide consumers and businesses to have access to a variety of innovative, quality telecommunication services at competitive prices. While competition has demonstrated capability to benefit consumers, it alone may not be able to meet these objectives due to lack of common interests amongst stakeholders and imperfectness of market.
- The rise of broadband access services has raised several consumer issues such as lower minimum user speeds available vis-à-vis expected or announced; specifying, monitoring and enforcing quality of Internet services; transparency of information to consumers; net neutrality and traffic management concerns.
- Wherever necessary, countries have introduced regulations relating to QoS, created guidelines and codes and raised awareness through media and educational campaigns.
- The Island countries, although are prone to similar issues for consumers, they have unique challenges in protecting consumers arising from geographic spread and adverse demographic situations.
- As mobile broadband and applications become pervasive, availability of adequate spectrum will be critical to ensuring proper quality of the consumers.
- There are rising consumer concerns from the impact of EMF radiations on consumers (citizens)

SESSION 3: TELECOMMUNICATION AND BROADCASTING SERVICES OVER COMMON PLATFORMS- NEED FOR REGULATORY COOPERATION TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS

Moderator: Mr. Rajesh Arnold, Member, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
Panelists

- *Mr. Balgansuren Batsukh, Chairman, Communications Regulatory Commission, Mongolia*
- *Mr. Prawit Leesatapornwongsa, Commissioner, National Broadcasting And Telecommunications Commission, Thailand*
- *Mr. Sonam Phuntso, Director, Bhutan InfoComm & Media Authority, Bhutan*
- *Ms. Nur Sulyna Abdullah Head, Int'l Affairs, Legal & Secretariat Division & Ms. Bawaani Selwaaratnam, Head, Policy Development Division, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, Malaysia*

Session Outcome

- The advent of IP based common networks has created opportunities for varying service delivery on common platforms. The structure of regulators also varies from country to country from single sector regulators to multi- sector and converged ones.
- Convergence is enhancing the roles and responsibilities of converged regulators, which on one side assists consumers but on the other blurs the institutional responsibilities;

- For converged regulators network related provisions are designed to ensure access, performance and quality while content related provisions are designed to ensure cultural, public and social protection.
- There is a need to support enough information to users, engage consumers into service monitoring, promote industry self-regulation, Improve cooperation with related agencies and improve monitoring and enforcement in terms of consumer protection.
- The need to progress the work, internationally and national, was clearly established and I am sure that we will all accord high priority to it in our specific areas of concern and influence.

SESSION 4: ICT APPLICATIONS POWERING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY – PROTECTING CONSUMERS (CITIZENS)

Moderator: Mr. Chris Chapman, Chairman and Chief Executive, Australian Communications and Media Authority

Panelists

Mr. Md. Abdus Samad, Commissioner , Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), Bangladesh

Mr. Haji Yahkup bin Haji Menudin, Chief Executive, Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry, Brunei Darussalam

Mr. Lay Mariveau, First Member, Telecommunication Regulator of Cambodia.

Ms. Nabaha Mehmood, Director, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, Pakistan

Ms. Hemali Menaka Pathirana, Deputy Director, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka

Session Outcome

- The converged regulators are increasingly becoming the institution of first approach for all matters relating to the ICT. It requires significant efforts that can win the confidence of stakeholders.
- The regulatory trend is to communicate, facilitate and then regulate if necessary. Experiences suggest the need to be bolder in finding solution, turning organizations to meet the expanded scope and importantly reach out to stakeholders;
- Regulators have broader perspective as compared with stakeholders that are focusing on their narrow areas. There is a need to have a relook at the compliance codes / guidelines from a converged environment point of view and adopt consumer centric approach in cooperation with the industry to strike a win-win.

- Adaptability, instantaneity and ubiquity are now part of consumers' common requirements in addition to affordability, availability and accessibility.

Social Media

- Social media have influenced changes in business practices, consumer behaviors and reach out to citizens, and this is happening both in developed and developing countries. Data traffic is growing rapidly putting additional strains on infrastructure providers while stimulating innovative solutions from new players.
- Social media is creating many challenges to the entire citizenship and requires quick response. Monitoring and subjectivity of online content is becoming a challenge from consumer protection point of view;
- Implementation is a major concern despite the availability of legal framework in consumer interest;
- There is a need to engage media in raising the awareness and enhance the awareness programs;

Dispute Resolution

- Need for consumers to have appropriate legal and out-of-court procedures for the settlement of disputes, which must be simple, transparent, free-of-charge to consumers and allow for a fair and speedy settlement.

Data Protection and Security

- There is a need to put in place a policy and technical measures to safeguard the protection of personal data and ensure security of electronic communications through national legislation and through better cooperation regionally and internationally.
- Child online protection is becoming very important

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