

# BROADBAND IN AN AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT

## Broadband: Challenges for African Regulators

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# WHY SO MUCH ADO ABOUT BROADBAND

- Broadband is no doubt an accelerator of social and economic development in the modern world with its applications enabling and facilitating economic and social services such as Public Safety, National Security, Telemedicine, E-government, E-education/Distance learning, utility applications etc.
- Broadband has the potential to integrate even isolated areas into the national and global economic activity and make businesses more efficient and competitive.
- Africa cannot afford to be left behind

# LESSONS FROM OTHER LANDS

- In the UK the provision of access to broad band connections was important enough to be embodied in their government policy. The British Telecom (BT) recently announced that all households in the UK would be in reach of broadband connection by 2005.
- Korea's government has consistently promoted the development and use of Information and Communications Technology infrastructures since the mid 1980's. Today Korea is one of the worlds most advanced users of information technology and boast of highest broadband penetration density in the world.
- China has been growing their ICT networks at an astonishing rate since the past decade and is currently the world's largest telecommunications market, both for fixed and wireless networks.
- US spending on Telecommunications equipment have continued to grow and are estimated to reach \$1 trillion by 2007, up from \$720 billion in 2003.

# LESSONS

- While we are racing to increase access to basic telephone services, the more advanced countries are increasing access to new technologies such as internet and broadband at such an exponential rate.
- As at March 31, 2004, the total broadband connections worldwide had reached 111.7m lines, mainly using either ADSL or cable modem.
- The world's biggest or "G7" economies are now in the broadband "top ten".

# WE NEED TO ACT NOW

- There is already a major broadband divide between Africa and the rest of the world.
- There is therefore an urgent need to initiate national policies aimed at promoting ubiquitous broadband deployment.
- We must continue to work hard at narrowing the information gap to make sure that Africa becomes a major knowledge centre in the information age.

# BARRIERS TO BB

- One of the factors that have militated against more rapid roll out of broadband services is the inadequacy of transmission infrastructure within and between most African countries.
- Typically in many African countries, optic fiber and microwave transmission infrastructure is available to only a limited number of cities.

# BARRIERS TO BB

- A second factor militating against rapid broadband rollout is the lack of pervasive copper infrastructure in most of our cities, towns and villages.
- Perhaps most African Countries did not have the financial capacity nor the expertise to deploy such networks in the past.
- This makes wide deployment of DSL / ADSL impracticable.

# WAY FOWARD

- Access to broadband connections to be embodied in government policy as priority.
- Support deployment of high capacity national and regional fibre optic backbones

# WAY FOWARD

- Since we have infrastructure limitations in access networks for fixed line broadband, Africa must encourage the deployment of wireless broadband.
- WiFi for example enables PDA, laptop and desktop computers to access the internet at warp speeds.
- Wireless phones today are able to offer mobile internet access.
- Satellite-based wireless broadband holds great promise as a solution for Africa.

# WAY FOWARD

- Realising that the adoption of broadband is inescapable even in the short run, regulators must ensure that deployment of bb services is encouraged.
- It is also important to ensure that any regulatory action is to facilitate and not discourage deployment of broadband services.

# COST & AVAILABILITY

To make broadband widely available and affordable in Africa, three drivers can be considered:

- **Competition**
- **Regulatory oversight**
- **Right Operators**

# COMPETITION

- An essential requirement for pervasive broadband deployment is that it should be low cost and affordable.
- Competition is a prerequisite for innovation and introduction of new services such as broadband to ensure choice, quality and affordability.

# REGULATORY OVERSIGHT

It is essential for issues such as:

- Licensing operators to provide broadband
- Mandating unbundling of the local loop
- Making spectrum available for wireless BB
- Facilitating a healthy competitive operating environment
- Protecting the Consumer

# RIGHT OPERATING COMPANIES

- Care should be taken to provide the right environment and regulatory structures to attract only serious investors with access to sources of capital required for adequate network build out and expansion.
- Serious investors that have long-term business perspectives.

# FACILITATING BROADBAND IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, we have embarked on:

- Facilitation of massive build out of Optic fibre transmission infrastructure nationwide... WiN project.
- Facilitation of Broadband & Internet Infrastructure deployment in state capitals and commercial centres ...SABI project.

# CONCLUSIONS

- One of the fundamental priorities of a regulator in Africa today must be to seek to meet the requirements of the consumer for good quality, widely available and affordable broadband services.
- This can be achieved through facilitating an environment for investment and healthy competition

# CONCLUSIONS

Government and Policy makers have a key role to play in ensuring that access to broadband connections be embodied in government policy.

**END**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**

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