A PRESENTATION ON REGIONAL REGULATORY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY


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PART A
INTRODUCTION

■ The last 50 years have witnessed the emergence of a number of regional economic blocks around the world.

■ The proximity of the countries to each other within a region, often dictates socio-cultural and commercial ties.

■ Also countries coming together as one economic block is seen as advantageous in an era of globalisation.

■ Regional integration no doubt increases commercial opportunities within the given region.
PART B
Regional integration is usually associated with free flow of people, goods and services across the region.

Commercial transportation (air, land and sea) no doubt play a very important role in social and commercial activities.

However, one cord that runs across all activities, is the need for timely flow of information (voice, data and video) across all the sectors of the regional economy.

Effective information flow, both within the region and from the region to the rest of the world, is essential for economic well being of the region.
A look across the world reveals that some regional blocks have the challenge of countries in the region not having the same level of development in ICT.

A number of sub-regional blocks in Africa and the Asia Pacific regions still have huge disparities between the nations with respect to ICT infrastructure.

More challenging is the fact that some regional blocks do not have transmission infrastructure that directly connect the nations to one another nor cross-border connectivity for the nations that share common borders.
The result is that calls from one neighbouring country to another are routed via satellite through another distant country at great expense to the calling parties.

Thus limiting the flow of information at affordable rates.
To address the need for regional ICT capacity development and facilitate regional connectivity a number of regulatory unions emerged especially in Africa.

- TRASA for the South African Sub-region
- WATRA for the West African Sub-region
- ARICEA for the East African Sub-region
- ARN for the ARAB states

With the wave of deregulation and market liberalisation in the Communications industry several countries have found the need to set up National Regulatory bodies to manage the evolving competitive market.
Market Liberalisation must come with strong Regulatory framework to ensure viable competition

Regulators must be skilled, well trained and empowered to be effective

Regional Regulatory Bodies can share resources, facilities and experiences to save high costs of setting up effective regulatory institutions

Regional Regulatory Bodies can help to articulate regional positions; encourage adoption of uniform technical and quality standards; promote harmonisation of ICT policies within the region; and facilitate regional/cross border connectivity
PART C
NEED FOR REGIONAL/ CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIVITY

- To facilitate trade, commerce and socio-cultural integration through the establishment of an effective ICT infrastructure, appropriate policy, legal and regulatory framework for cross-border connectivity need to be put in place.

- Following the global trend of vigorous pursuit of market liberalisation in individual member states, it may also be necessary that incentives are also given to investors to encourage regional/cross border connectivity.
The economy of most individual member states may be too small to sufficiently encourage the desired level of economic activities.

Integrating all the economies of a region into one big market will create the impetus for more investment.

The need to grow the official intra-regional trade and improve the competitiveness of the region in world trade demands free flow of information within a region. This will deter competitive threats and take advantage of the opportunities that emerge in the global market, such as transport of international ICT traffic.

The region will present a larger market to investors and provide an opportunity to achieve standardization and economies of scale, factors that may be decisive in investment decisions.
Regional integration usually presents big challenges in coping with the potentially huge volume of information to be generated, and the transmission of such information from one country to another within a region.

- Interconnection of ICT infrastructure across the region will be a necessary requirement.
FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN REGIONAL/CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIVITY
FACTORS THAT INHIBIT REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- Lack of policy harmonization within the region and possible policy inconsistency within individual member states

- Over emphasis on territorial integrity and independence of member states
FACTORS THAT INHIBIT REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- Lack of cooperation between private operators within the region, leading to low investment initiatives for regional connectivity.
- Lack of established common interconnection framework across the region
- Lack of pervasive regional roaming facilities.
FACTORS THAT WILL PROMOTE REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

- Establishment of an effective Regional Regulatory forum for the development of a common facilitative policy, legal and regulatory framework for the region

- Improvement in the sources of investment capacity available to network operators and service providers in the region
CONCLUSION

- Governments must as a priority, facilitate the building of a Regional Backbone Infrastructure that is Robust and Big enough to support seamless regional/cross-border connectivity.

- The installation of fibre optic cable on power lines that carry electricity supply between countries (where they exist) must be made mandatory to reduce costs associated with Rights of Way.

- Investors who have interest in setting up operations in several countries in the region should be accorded priority status in the Issuance of Operating Licences.

- There is need to encourage competition in the International Gateway Services to improve efficiency.
CONCLUSION - CONT'D.

- Regional initiatives such as TRASA, ARIECEA, WATRA, to be encouraged and strongly supported by governments in the region.

- Governments to encourage the establishment of a Regional Forum for Regulators, Policy Makers and Telecom operating companies to meet on a regular basis (at least once a year) to articulate strategies to enhance roll-out and connectivity.
Thank You.

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