

ITU-T Technical Report

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DSTR-ROAMREG

Regional roaming initiatives



Technical Report ITU-T DSTR-ROAMREG

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Summary

This Technical Report describes recent International Mobile Roaming (IMR) policies and multilateral efforts to reduce international roaming rates and to help traditional operators co-exist with alternative service providers and reduced churn.

Keywords

IMR, initiatives, policies, roaming.

Note

This is an informative ITU-T publication. Mandatory provisions, such as those found in ITU-T Recommendations, are outside the scope of this publication. This publication should only be referenced bibliographically in ITU-T Recommendations.

Change Log

This document contains Version 1 of the ITU-T Technical Report DSTR-ROAMREG on "Regional Roaming Initiatives" approved at the ITU-T Study Group 3 meeting held in Geneva, 10 November 2023

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Technical Report ITU-T DSTR-ROAMREG

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1 Scope

This Technical Report describes recent international mobile roaming (IMR) policies and multilateral efforts to reduce international roaming rates and to help traditional operators co-exist with alternative service provider and reduced churn.

2 References

[ITU-T D.607R] Recommendation ITU-T D.607R (2021), *One network area roaming*.

3 Definitions

3.1 Terms defined elsewhere

This Technical Report uses the following term defined elsewhere:

3.1.1 international mobile roaming (IMR) [ITU-T D.607R]: A service (voice, SMS/multimedia messaging service (MMS), data) that subscribers to post-paid or prepaid mobile services purchase from a mobile operator in their home country, that is, from the 'home operator'.

NOTE – It allows subscribers the convenience to continue to use their national mobile phone numbers to access voice, short message service (SMS) and data services while visiting another country, by accessing a mobile operator's network in the visited country; that is, accessing the network of the 'visited operator' with all arrangements made by their home operator.

3.2 Terms defined in this Technical Report

None.

4 Abbreviations and acronyms

This Technical Report uses the following abbreviations and acronyms:

APT	Asia Pacific Telecommunity
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMR	International Mobile Roaming
MMS	Multimedia Messaging Service
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
OTT	Over-The-Top
RLAH	Roaming Like At Home
SATRC	South Asian Telecom Regulators Council
SMS	Short Message Service
TSP	Telecommunication Service Provider

5 Roaming initiatives in the different regions

5.1 Africa

5.1.1 "Free Roaming" initiative of the West African subregion (Abidjan Protocol)

5.1.1.1 Background of the Abidjan Protocol

Addis Ababa, 31 January 2016 – Meeting of the Smart Africa Board:

- Instruction to ministers and regulators to immediately extend the East Africa One Network Area initiative to all Smart Africa Member States;
- Kigali, 18 April 2016: Smart Africa Steering Committee meeting (ministers in charge of ICTs, directors-general of national regulatory authorities and representatives of operators from Smart Africa Member States);
- Adoption of a regional telecommunication framework with the aim of establishing a "One Africa Network," using a multi-stakeholder approach which includes operators and regulators from the target countries;
- "Roam like at home" principle.

Abidjan, 28 November 2016 – Signature of the Abidjan Protocol by the five (5) telecommunication sector regulators of Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal on 28 November 2016 in Abidjan.

The free roaming protocol follows the broad outline of the One Africa Network regional framework. Additional provisions include:

- Establishment in each country of a national technical committee led by the regulatory authority and made up of all operators and the government telecommunication authority;
- Obligation to bring free roaming into effect between countries by 31 March 2017, at the latest;
- Evaluation, with a report submitted to the government authorities of the countries concerned, by 31 July 2017.

9-10 March 2017 – A consultation and harmonization meeting in Dakar prior to the effective implementation of the Abidjan Protocol, followed by project launch in May 2017 by the signatory countries.

Operators are required to renegotiate their bilateral agreements to ensure full implementation of the One Africa Network initiative.

The implementation process was punctuated by three stocktaking meetings (in Guinea and Togo), involving the carrying out of tests to assess the effectiveness of technical and tariff conditions under the Abidjan Protocol. 2017.

5.1.1.2 Status of implementation

Currently, the Abidjan Protocol is being implemented by the following nine countries: Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Togo, Benin and Liberia; however, a migration from the Abidjan Protocol to Regulation No. C.REG/21/12/17 is under way.

5.1.2 ECOWAS Regulation No. C.REG/21/12/17 on Community roaming within the ECOWAS space

5.1.2.1 Background

Community roaming within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) space is a means of ensuring borderless communication and regional integration, and thereby significantly improving the daily lives of citizens moving around the space. In addition, though, it is a business opportunity for mobile operators. Consequently, to ensure digital ubiquity and facilitate the integration of ECOWAS peoples, a meeting of ECOWAS ministers in charge of telecommunications/ICTs was held in Praia on 6 October 2017, where it was decided to push for the establishment of a harmonized regulatory framework for roaming services in the ECOWAS space. To this end, the ministers adopted a draft Community regulation.

The regulation was ultimately signed and adopted by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers on 16 December 2017 in Abuja.

It is worth noting that the regulation takes into account the encouraging results of the Free Roaming initiative implemented by Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Guinea, Senegal and Togo since 31 March 2017, following the decision of the Heads of State of the Smart Africa Member States. This regulation, therefore, is an expansion of the Free Roaming initiative to a larger area and is testament to the common interest of ECOWAS Member States in this matter.

5.1.2.2 Objective of the regulation

The objective of the regulation is to establish a harmonized legal and tariff framework for roaming on mobile communication networks open to the public within ECOWAS Member States. It aims, on the one hand, to resolve the problem of high roaming costs within the ECOWAS space through the elimination of all surcharges on internal international communications and, on the other hand, to determine the rights and obligations of Community roaming service providers, regulators and ECOWAS Member States. The regulation also establishes the minimum guarantees for consumers of roaming services.

1) Obligation to offer Community roaming services

The regulation addresses wholesale access to Community roaming services by setting out the conditions and practicalities of such access in order to establish a greater offering of wholesale Community roaming. It also sets out the regime for the separate sale of retail roaming services by determining the access rights of roaming clients to Community roaming services for calls, short message service (SMS) and data services and by defining correlative duties of retail roaming service providers.

2) Regulation of Community roaming rates

The regulation sets intra-Community tariff ceilings for wholesale and retail Community roaming services. These tariff ceilings are fixed for calls made and SMS messages sent while roaming within the ECOWAS space and will be subject to regular monitoring by national regulatory authorities. The ultimate objective is to create an internal market for communication services where national tariffs and Community roaming tariffs converge.

In addition, the Regulation establishes that incoming calls are free of charge while roaming for a period of up to thirty (30) consecutive days spent outside one's country of origin. This length of time is considered a reasonable period of use of Community roaming services. Voice messages are also free of charge while roaming within the Community space.

3) Transparency in the provision of Community roaming services

The regulation sets out general and specific transparency rules for Community roaming services. These rules impose obligations on providers of Community roaming services and

allow roaming customers to access information on roaming services in order to avoid abuses in connection with tariff information.

4) Characteristics of Community roaming services

The regulation establishes a policy on the reasonable use of Community roaming services to the effect that reasonable use amounts to a maximum of thirty (30) consecutive days in one of the countries of the ECOWAS space. It also imposes quality of service obligations on providers of Community roaming services.

5) Monitoring and oversight

The regulation on roaming defines the monitoring and oversight responsibilities of Member States and national regulatory authorities.

6) Settlement of cross-border Community roaming disputes and sanctions regime

Lastly, the regulation provides for methods for the settling of cross-border disputes related to roaming within the Community. The dispute settlement procedures provided for are referred to in Articles 16 and 17 of the Additional Act A/SA 1/01/07 regarding the harmonization of policies and the regulatory framework of the ICT sector. It also specifies the regime of applicable sanctions and provides that sanctions should be effective, proportionate or dissuasive.

During the 16th meeting of ECOWAS ministers in charge of ICTs, held from 1 to 4 October 2019 in Ouagadougou, the ECOWAS ministers designated a "champion" country, Côte d'Ivoire, to follow through and coordinate the implementation of the ECOWAS regulation on roaming.

Meetings between the different national regulatory authorities will have helped to identify obstacles and analyse difficulties encountered in the implementation of the regulation, in particular surcharges on incoming international communications, difficulties associated with the signing of agreements between operators, poor collaboration among regulators, timely communication of information and the delayed publication of the regulation in the official gazette of certain countries.

In terms of these difficulties, discussions helped to identify possible solutions, which were set out in Resolution 1, adopted on 25 September 2020 by the presidents and directors, and Resolution 2, adopted on 31 March 2021 with a view to the effective and complete implementation of the regulation within the ECOWAS space.

As of 31 March 2021, nine of the fifteen countries have partially implemented the regulation, with a new deadline of 30 June being set for the full availability of roaming services in all fifteen ECOWAS Member States.

5.1.3 Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) "Home and Away" roaming project

5.1.3.1 Background

The SADC "Home and Away" roaming project, involving roaming both in country of origin and abroad, is an initiative aimed at reducing roaming rates in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The 16 SADC Member States are participating in the project. Launched in 2007, the project has been implemented in three phases, as described below.

Phase 1: Implementation of roaming transparency measures

Phase 1 of the roaming project consists in implementing transparency measures aimed at informing users on roaming costs so as to avoid any bill shocks. Operators are obliged to inform users by SMS when the latter are roaming within the SADC region. This phase was implemented in 2008 and the measures remain in force.

Phase 2: Roaming like at home (RLAH)

The second phase of the project consisted in harmonizing roaming costs within the SADC region by applying the principle of roaming like at home. The roaming fees charged to users were equal to the price of a local call plus the operator's roaming costs. This second phase took place in several stages with the gradual harmonization of roaming fees over a period of five years. The second phase began in 2013 and was completed in 2018.

Phase 3: Regulation of cost-based roaming fees

The third and final phase of the SADC project consisted in using a cost-based model to calculate wholesale and retail roaming prices. This phase began in 2018 with the recruitment of an international consultant to conduct studies on roaming costs for the SADC region. The costing project was completed in 2019 and implementation began in 2020. The implementation of the third phase is ongoing, with the current level of implementation standing at 20 per cent, owing to slow appropriation of the outcomes of the roaming costing models.

5.1.3.2 Difficulties encountered

The main difficulties encountered in project implementation are the following:

- 1) The different regulations required for the effective adoption of the roaming project. Certain countries of the region do not have the requisite regulatory texts to be able to regulate roaming services.
- 2) The reluctance of countries that are major beneficiaries of high roaming prices to fully adopt the project.

5.1.4 "One Africa Network" initiative

The One Africa Network initiative was launched on 18 July 2016 at the African Union Summit. The objectives of the initiative are as follows:

- Reduce roaming fees for voice and mobile data services in the region;
- Harmonize tariff schedules for voice, short message and mobile data services; and
- Support Africa-wide integration.

In addition, the Member States decided to put in place anti-fraud systems to combat grey traffic, in particular the registration of SIM cards. The One Africa Network was launched on the back of the successful One Network Area initiative, implemented in five countries of the East African Community (Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda), given the need to expand the concept to the whole continent. In 2016, the agreement on the One Africa Network initiative was signed by 11 African Member States. This number has since risen, with 30 signatory countries as of 31 March 2021, and many bilateral agreements have been concluded between operators of the region.

In 2020, the Smart Africa Alliance formalized a partnership with BICS, an international service provider based in Belgium, to implement a pilot project aimed at reducing the cost of voice calls in Africa. Proof of concept work was carried out and six Member States of the Smart Africa Alliance were selected based on the volume of traffic carried by BICS. The countries selected were South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Kenya and Senegal. It was noted that 65 per cent of traffic carried by BICS goes through switching centres outside the region. The aim is to ensure that all regional traffic remains within the region in order to reduce transit costs. Wholesale tariffs for the six countries selected should be confirmed by April 2021, after which the migration of traffic between mobile network operators and BICS should be completed by July 2021. The official project launch is slated for August 2021. With Orange also involved in the project since the end of 2020, it is expected that more countries will join in the near future.

5.1.5 Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) initiative

The Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) comprises the following six members: Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad and the Central African Republic.

CEMAC's vision is based on the Regional Economic Programme, the aim of which is to make CEMAC "an integrated and emerging economic area where security, solidarity and good governance reign" by 2025.

This includes strengthening Community integration by means of deploying a single telephone network which ensures service continuity, at prices not dissimilar to those applied locally, and for all users within the CEMAC area.

In February 2020, the CEMAC ministers in charge of telecommunications approved the Community regulation to remove roaming charges on electronic communications in the CEMAC area. The idea was to take steps to speed up the development and effective implementation of the removal of charges for roaming services.

During the meeting, the "*draft Community regulation on roaming and charges on publicly available mobile electronic communication networks for deploying a single network*" was approved by the ministers in charge of telecommunications of the subregion.

The ultimate aim of the draft regulation is to remove the surcharges levied on roaming services and on international telecommunication services between CEMAC members.

The next step consists in adopting the regulation at the next session of the Council of Ministers of the Central African Economic Union (UEAC).

The ministers in charge of telecommunications have encouraged Member States to continue to sign bilateral interconnection agreements for the fibre-optic interconnection of various countries as well as for the interconnection of Internet exchange points. They have also promoted the sharing of the electronic communication infrastructure deployed in the subregion, including data centres.

The timetable for implementing this process provides, until 31 December 2020, for the signing of bilateral agreements and the removal of surcharges on intra-community telephone traffic between Member States and the harmonization of intra-community mobile electronic communication service charges (voice, SMS and data) with national tariffs, pursuant to the Community regulation.

To date, Cameroon has signed interconnection agreements with Chad (as of 2012) and Gabon (in 2019). The process initiated with other countries has been stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2 Asia and Oceania

5.2.1 Korea (Republic of)

The Republic of Korea has been putting in extensive efforts in lowering the price of IMR services to prevent bill-shock experiences of consumers. The efforts also promote consumer benefits by expanding economic and cultural exchanges in the regional and global community. While acknowledging that the pricing of IMR service is predicated upon inter-operator tariff negotiation among operators of different countries, numerous domestic efforts have been made in parallel by Korea Communication Commission (KCC) and other key stakeholders to protect consumers from bill shock issues since early 2010s. The following summarizes these efforts.

5.2.1.1 Enactment of bill cap alert (August 2012)

In August 2012, KCC enacted an article in the Telecommunications Business Act entitled "standards for notification of exceeding the bill charge limit". The article applies to mobile services that may cause "bill shock" to consumers covering domestic mobile voice and data, international calls, and IMR services. Per the article, immediate alert (minimum of 2 times) should be sent to subscribers

when the IMR service usage approaches and exceeds a certain amount of limit. Also, the article stipulates that IMR subscribers shall have IMR data roaming service blocked when the usage exceeds KRW 100 000 (approx. USD 100) of IMR charges. The standards for sending bill cap alert for IMR services are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 – The standards for sending bill cap alert for IMR services

Voice/SMS roaming	For consumers exceeding KRW 50 000 of service charge, an alert should be sent once a month as soon as the billing information is settled.
Data roaming	<p>For flat rate pricing, alerts should be sent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least once when the usage gets close to the price limit • immediately when the usage exceeds the price limit • at every additional usage of KRW 30 000 above the price limit up to total usage of KRW 100 000 • at every additional usage of KRW 200 000 above total usage of KRW 100 000 • at every additional usage of KRW 500 000 above total usage of KRW 1 000 000 <p>For usage-based pricing, alerts should be sent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at every additional usage of KRW 30 000 up to total usage of KRW 100 000 • at every additional usage of KRW 200 000 above total usage of KRW 100 000 • at every additional usage of KRW 500 000 above total usage of KRW 1 000 000
General	Mobile network operators (MNOs) shall provide information on how to check real-time IMR service usage and price information.

5.2.1.2 IMR subscription procedures reform (March 2012)

IMR services are typically rendered through the international carriers affiliated with each MNO. However, views existed that this may limit consumers' right of choice in using IMR services. In recognition of this, KCC reformed the procedures of subscribing to IMR services to enhance consumers' awareness on IMR services. It allowed IMR service users to select international carriers for incoming IMR calls. The following outlines the reform.

- Mandatory provision of information on voice call rates of international carriers within airport roaming centres
- International voice call rates on the global roaming information kiosk print-outs
- Promoting availability of selection of international carrier on the LCD screens in airport roaming centres
- Providing clearer and more transparent IMR information on MNOs' websites
- Providing updates on IMR services improvement.

5.2.1.3 Campaign for safe and smart use of global roaming (July-August 2012, July-August 2013)

KCC together with MNOs (KT, SKT, and LGU+), conducted campaigns for safe and smart use of global roaming in 2012 and 2013. Preventing IMR bill shock as its primary focus, the campaign promoted options available to users in controlling data roaming capabilities:

- Instructions on how to shut off data roaming capability from smart phones when it is not in need
- Instructions on how to unsubscribe from data roaming service prior to departure

- Instructions on how to subscribe to data roaming price plans that allows unlimited usage of data roaming service.

5.2.1.4 Shortening of charging unit (2017)

In 2017, in regard to daily unlimited data roaming usage price plans, KCC and MNOs agreed to switch charging time unit from 24 hours to 12 hours. This freed consumers from the obligation to pay for a whole day of service when they only stay briefly in certain countries and affected the daily pricing scheme to be more reasonable for consumers.

5.2.1.5 Multilateral efforts (2017-2018)

The Government of the Republic of Korea has made a recent stride in shaping the ecosystem for IMR service. Since 2017, the Government has been in ongoing trilateral dialogues with Japan and China. In May of 2018, during the meeting of ICT Ministries of the Republic of Korea, Japan, and China, an intergovernmental agreement was reached to place more efforts in reducing roaming charges to reasonable levels in the backdrop of growing economic and cultural exchanges among the three countries at the time. Proposed approaches included developing special price plans and reducing traffic volume rates between three countries.

5.2.1.6 Korea (Rep. of) Roaming Practices

SKT

SKT offers free incoming/outgoing voice calls if users are subscribed to their data roaming price plans on the condition that subscribers make calls through the SKT mobile app. When subscribers use the mobile app, the calls are connected through data network, which are free of charge to subscribers, and data used for making/receiving calls are not deducted from the data limit. This service is provided by connecting overseas data network and domestic voice network through the mobile app platform. The service boasts improved quality of voice call. The company claims the speed of voice reach increased by an average of 20 per cent and the call connection time reduced by over 80 per cent. This free call service is also available to users who are not data roaming price plans subscribers if they make calls through SKT mobile app with a connection to any Wi-Fi network. If Wi-Fi network is not available, then regular voice roaming rate will be applied.

KT

KT's "Roaming On" service offers domestic standard call rate of KRW 1.98/sec (approx. USD 0.1/min) to roaming voice calls. This service is available for subscribers roaming in 21 countries including Japan, China, USA, many nations in Southeast Asia, Oceania and Europe. The "Roaming On" service dramatically reduced the cost of the voice call price, from 2 to 4 USD/min to 0.1 USD/min. This service is available for all KT subscribers without a specific data roaming price plan. For data roaming, KT's "Roaming On All Day Premium" price plan offers unlimited data at USD 13/day.

LGU+

LGU+ offers free receiving calls for data roaming package subscribers. The company's offer is in recognition that customers do not have choice in receiving calls and includes a package dubbed as "speed and volume worry free data roaming price plan." This package provides unlimited data with no download speed limit at USD 12/day in 37 countries worldwide including China, Japan and the United States.

5.2.2 Viet Nam

Viettel Viet Nam applied roaming as home in their networks in Lao P.D.R. and Cambodia. This trend is growing and requiring an agreement on new roaming tariff policy adaptation from all traditional telecom service providers to avoid roaming churn to over-the-top (OTT).

5.2.3 Thailand

Considering the international nature of, and substitutes readily available for, the IMR services, NBTC has applied the "light-touch" regulatory approach for IMR services and rather put focus on educating and empowering consumers on the matter as well as facilitating bilateral and regional agreement/cooperation.

In December 2017, NBTC issued a regulation entitled "NBTC Notification on Maximum Prepaid Balance for Mobile Services," which applies to prepaid mobile services, including domestic voice and data and IMR services. This regulation stipulates that the mobile service providers shall set the maximum amount of prepaid balance at not more than THB 10 000 for each mobile subscriber, in order to limit the amount chargeable to prepaid mobile users.

NBTC also worked with all mobile service providers to set up a free-to-call USSD number *106#, which consumers can dial from their phones to easily and instantly turn off data services before going overseas. NBTC widely publicized this number through media outlets as well as in airports. The result was a reduction in the number of complaints received regarding bill shock or getting charged high prices for overseas roaming.

As for cooperation at international level, NBTC has also been putting efforts in facilitating bilateral and regional agreement/cooperation in order to bring down the IMR prices.

5.2.4 India

5.2.4.1 Measures taken by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to ensure transparency and prevent bill shocks in context of International Mobile Roaming (IMR)

As per the extant regulatory framework, the Mobile Service Providers in India are mandated to publish details of all tariff offers (including international mobile roaming rates) in a transparent manner and prevent communication of any misleading information.

Further, the telecommunication service providers (TSPs) are required to inform the subscriber when roaming internationally without any IR Pack to switch off the mobile data.

It has been noted that as per the Directions issued by TRAI the Mobile Service Providers in India are offering consumer protection plans in form of either automatic activation of IR Pack when usage on standard rates exceed a prescribed threshold or automatically disabling mobile data usage internationally if no IR Pack is subscribed etc. The Mobile Service Providers in India have been asked to provide complete details of initiatives taken at their end so that regulatory framework can be amended in a holistic manner.

5.2.4.2 Other initiatives by TRAI to lower the IMR costs and tariffs

TRAI has been engaging with the telecom regulators of the other countries to explore the possibility of getting the respective Mobile Service Providers to agree to provide lower tariffs on reciprocal basis. Dialogue with Bhutan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh is at advanced stage. To this effect, an effort is underway to study the countries with whom roaming traffic to India is substantial and to examine the feasibility of reaching such an arrangement. TRAI has also proactively supported ongoing multilateral dialogue on the issue at Asia Pacific Tele community (APT) and South Asian Telecom Regulators Council (SATRC).

5.3 Americas

5.3.1 International roaming agreement between Argentina and Chile

In November 2017, the foreign ministers of the Argentine Republic and Chile signed a Free Trade Agreement, chapter 10 of which relates to telecommunications.

The chapter in question has a number of antecedents: the sectoral instruments negotiated and approved by Argentina in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), specifically the Annex on telecommunications to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the reference paper annexed to the schedule of specific commitments.

In January 2019 the Agreement was incorporated in the framework of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) as an additional protocol to Economic Integration Agreement No. 35 (MERCOSUR-Chile) (ACE 35), which was approved by Law 27.497 of Argentina.

The additional protocol entered into force on 1 May 2019, following the exchange of notifications between the two sides mentioned in article 3. Chapter 10 established, among other things, that within one year after entry into force the providers of mobile communication services will charge their customers who use international roaming services in the territory of the other country the same prices that they charge for mobile services in their own country, as fixed in each individual client's contract.

Following several postponements in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, the two governments agreed on 29 August 2020 as the day on which charges for international roaming between their countries would be eliminated.

Accordingly, on 19 August 2020 the Subsecretariat for Telecommunications (SUBTEL) of Chile approved Resolution 1395/2020, and on 28 August 2020 the National Communication Authority (ENACOM) approved RESOL-2020-927-APN-ENACOM#JGM, with provisions governing the functioning of international terrestrial mobile roaming at local prices between the Argentine Republic and Chile.

Those provisions include simultaneous implementation in both countries, with criteria fixed for the sake of clarification and principles to govern the functioning of the international roaming service so as to set up safeguards to promote reasonable use of the service and guarantee similar, non-discriminatory treatment between the service providers of the two countries in the agreements they conclude in the implementation of their resulting obligations, in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination, competitiveness and equal treatment that inform the Agreement.

In this way mobile service providers, including virtual mobile operators, will have to take the necessary measures to offer their customers using international roaming services in the other country for voice, messaging or mobile data communications while on the territory of that country the same tariffs or prices as those they charge their local users for those services.

To this end, it is understood that local prices for voice, messaging and mobile data services will correspond to conditions and prices applicable under the contract plans, independently of the mode. Calls and messages between the customers of providers of the Argentine Republic and Chile in international roaming in those countries will be treated as local, regardless of the origin and destination of the communication within the territories of the two countries, for the purpose of fee charging.

Currently, two years after the elimination of roaming surcharges was put into practice, it is being implemented by the providers of both countries; the regulators are not aware of any significant difficulties and have not received user complaints.

6 Importance of roaming for regional integration

At the level of some Regions in Africa, particularly in Central Africa, direct interconnections between operators of Member States are not always effective. Therefore, the cost of communications between these countries remains high due to the transit costs that operators bear. Furthermore, due to the low coordination of frequencies at borders, consumers in border areas continue to be subject to the exorbitant costs of unwanted roaming, forcing them to generally be off-net to avoid such inconveniences. The low cost of roaming puts an end to these inconveniences, facilitates and increases communications between border countries and strengthens the links of regional integration.

7 Conclusion

The Technical Report shows that bilateral and multilateral roaming agreements have significantly reduced the cost of roaming between several countries and even within several economic areas. However, in order to achieve roaming on a global level, it is important that agreements continue to be established within and beyond regions.
