

Syrian Arab Republic

Syrian Telecommunications and Post Regulatory Authority

Contribution of the Syrian Telecommunications and Post Regulatory Authority (SY-TPRA) to the deliberations on Digital connectivity for all: new and innovative approaches, mechanisms and tools at the 2019 Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-19)

Introduction

In Syria, we recognize that the telecommunication and information technology sector is one of the most important levers for the growth of many service sectors and a principal driver of socio-economic development, benefiting the daily lives of all citizens, particularly in terms of the knowledge economy, job creation and service provision. The sector requires, however, continuous, innovative and far-sighted regulation through the adoption of new technologies which can promote sustainable development and digital connectivity.

There is no denying that we still face the challenge of ensuring that everyone, irrespective of location or age bracket, can benefit from all technological development, especially in terms of next-generation networks, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and cloud computing. Consequently, we need to put in place advanced regulatory frameworks that can facilitate implementation of digital connectivity, build confidence among consumers and pave the way for a truly advanced and effective digital transformation, rather than mere incremental improvement. In turn, this requires greater cooperation and effective partnerships among the other sectors in order to bring about radical change in the digital marketplace, which will enable the creation of infrastructure and provide open access to networks nationally and regionally, thereby contributing greatly to the provision and widespread uptake of digital services, leading to the achievement of digital connectivity. That notwithstanding, the creation of advanced regulatory frameworks, however important they may be, is not an end in itself; rather, they are to form a legislative tool aiming to facilitate and expedite the deployment of digital services and applications, while ensuring the security of users and their data, in line with internationally agreed principles, and, consequently, the achievement of digital connectivity.

We are convinced that digital connectivity for all represents an enormous opportunity and a key milestone on the path towards digital transformation and the full enjoyment of its benefits and services. While we recognize that there is no single comprehensive approach to best practices, we nevertheless agree that it is possible for all of us to benefit and exchange experiences.

On the basis of the above, we set out our position as follows:

Benchmarks for regulatory excellence and market performance which form the basis for digital infrastructure regulation:

We believe in the importance of establishing a reference framework to foster competition, interconnectivity and interoperability among all telecommunication network operators and among application and service providers. Furthermore, encouraging the sharing of networks at all levels and of the spectrum among all operators and service providers will help to avoid duplication of costs and provide consumers with affordable, fast and reliable access.

New regulatory tools and approaches for enabling digital experimentation:

We believe that it is necessary to put in place new joint regulatory frameworks, based on cooperation and partnerships among all sectors and capable of creating joint infrastructure and providing open access to networks nationally and regionally. As a result, they will contribute greatly to the provision and widespread uptake of digital services leading to the achievement of digital connectivity. In addition, it is possible to make use of the Universal Service Fund to provide partial or full funding for the deployment of networks and services to remote areas, thereby helping to advance the digital transformation. These frameworks should consider the establishment of a licensing system that seeks to relax or even remove requirements for the granting of licences for digital services and applications, thereby helping to ensure their broader penetration. They must also consider the importance of creating ways to increase transparency vis-à-vis the public, which will facilitate their involvement in the regulatory process.

Syria is one of the main supporters of these new and innovative approaches, mechanisms and tools with a view to digital connectivity for all. We are currently in the midst of recovery following a difficult period in the country's history and hope that everyone, in particular the International Telecommunication Union, will provide us and countries in a similar position with the requisite support to achieve the goals to which we all aspire.
