Consultation for the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-20) Best Practice Guidelines on "The Gold Standard for Digital Regulation":

Contribution from the Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC)

Demonstrating regulatory thought leadership for digital transformation.

Providing excellent services for users and preparing a nation for the next digital revolution does not necessarily take time but targeted investment and farsighted regulation. To enhance the future readiness and resiliency of the ICT sector, Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) has stressed out the importance of early investment in the ICT infrastructure, accelerated by polices that incentivize the engagement of all stakeholders. The Kingdom's government and the private sector have invested more than $ 15 billion in just the last three years. This early investment culminated in providing future looking ICT services for 99% of the vast area of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This was stress tested during the COVID-19 pandemic by absorbing the significant data traffic demand in local networks. Data consumption per capita in the Kingdom grow three times the average global consumption due to the pandemic also between February and April 2020 mobile and fixed data usage in Saudi Arabia grew 34%, rising from 52,417 TB to 70,120 TB monthly.

It is also very important to put in place and share with the ICT market stakeholders plans and forward looking strategies, that are SDG oriented, to better direct any investment in the sector. For example CITC has set up a **National Spectrum Strategy**, which aims to optimize national spectrum usage and efficiency by 2025. The plan seeks to allocate a total of 4,660 MHz for commercial use, contribute over $133m to the GDP annually and position Saudi in the world's top countries for investment in radio systems by 2025. Furthermore, there are over 7000 commercial 5G towers across Saudi Arabia, which serve 30% of the population. By 2030 it is estimated that 5G deployment will contribute to 10x faster average internet speeds in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, over $8 billion additional revenue in the telecom market and more than 45 million new devices connected via Internet of Things (IoT).

Vectors of regulatory action: Inclusiveness, agility, and resilience

Coronavirus pandemic has proven the vital importance of an available, resilient and full-fledged ICT services to enable other aspects of the digital economy to function. During critical times, like the pandemic of COVID-19, the urgent for collaboration between CITC and other government agencies and stakeholders is pivotal to take action that ensure the upmost level of ICT readiness to meet the new market realities and the challenges. Thus, CITC adopted new perspective and policies harness the power of ICTs in the social and economic fronts. Some of which are:

- Ensuring the continuity of ICT services at the highest quality.
- Providing operators with additional spectrum.
- Fully utilize delivery services applications with mandatory health measures and e-payment solutions to preserve the safety and health of beneficiaries.

- Issuing guidelines and best practices to facilitate remote working for government agencies to ensure business continuity.
- Granting free access to virtual education, e-learning and e-health portals and applications.
- Launching a social initiative with the private sector to provide more than 100,000 free Mobile sim cards and 30,000 tablet devices.
- Offering more data for fixed and mobile broadband at no additional cost.

Collaboration across sectors, cooperation across borders, and engagement across the boards.

Overcoming the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will require international coordination on an unprecedented scale. As president of the G20, the Kingdom has a crucial role in overseeing cooperation between member countries and the rest of the world in finding global solutions, while putting consumer benefits and protection in focus to balance between people's rights and the technologies. An extraordinary meeting of G20 digital economy ministers on April 30 discussed how to deploy digital communication technologies in the fight against COVID-19. Minister of health, joined to discuss the role of digital technologies in health care. It was agreed that digital capacities should be expanded, in particular access to affordable, secure broadband, to underserviced areas and vulnerable people. In addition, all available digital capacities should support health care systems and local small businesses, and protect global supply chains.

CITC has worked with other government entities to digitize vital sectors including health and education. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, CITC gave free access to e-health so it does not consume data from the user's internet plan whether via the app or website. This allows the ministry to detect and track COVID-19 cases and provide treatment. In education, the government enabled free access to e-learning applications and waived data costs for university students using educational platforms. The volume of services provided by government agencies since the start of the lockdown increased by 70 percent from the same period last year.

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