



ITU-BTRC Asia-Pacific Regulators' Round table
“New Regulatory Frontiers to support
Digital Economy”
6-7 August 2018
Dhaka, Bangladesh



Supported by



Australian Government

Department of Communications and the Arts

DRAFT OUTCOME REPORT RR- 2018

The 8th Asia-Pacific Regulators Round table on the theme of “New Regulatory Frontiers to support Digital Economy” was successfully organized from 6– 7 August 2018 at Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Round table was jointly organized by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with support from the Department of Communications and the Arts (DoCA), Government of Australia. The Round table was attended by 32 participants from 21 Countries from Asia- Pacific region.

Mr. Md Jahurul Haque, Chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC), delivered the welcome remarks, followed by the keynote address delivered by Mr. Ioane Koroivuki, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The inaugural address was delivered by H.E. Mr. Mustafa Jabbar, Minister of Posts, Telecommunications & Information Technology. The participants from Asia-Pacific Region shared their views regarding digital economy, digital transformation and new technologies and the challenges and barriers faced by regulators and the way forward to overcome those barriers to transform into a digital society. Details of the Round table are available at <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Pages/Events/2018/rr2018/home.aspx>

SESSION 1: Digital Transformation: Ecosystem for Digital Economies

Session Moderator: Dr Shahjahan Mahmood, Former Chairman, BTRC and Chairman, Bangladesh Communication Satellite Company Limited

Presently, the context of convergence in ICT has expanded from telecommunication, IT and broadcasting to all facets of society. ICT has become critical for the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). In particular, the role of digital technologies including mobile is very crucial in the growth of digital economy. Discussions were held about the components of digital economy, digital transformation, the ecosystem involved with that and current barriers impeding the growth of the digital economy. In order to leverage a seamless transition, the round table recognized the major barriers, namely, taxation, spectrum and license fees, technological barriers, bureaucracy, etc.

The regulators highlighted the need to have comprehensive frameworks, appropriate strategies and roadmaps, proper implementation and modernisation plans and also the post implementation analysis to observe progress. By doing so, regulators can enable and promote a strong economy through robust global digital ecosystem as a platform for innovation, competition, and economic growth today and in the years to come.

It was acknowledged that there is a need of a forward looking regulatory framework with cross sectoral collaboration, private public partnerships for creating digital networks, expansion of innovative technologies that would help resolve challenges pertaining to digital transformation including the boundaries / limitations of regulations. Quality of service is a major challenge with a dependency on the user equipment and as well as the user experience which is quite subjective and complicated in nature. For diversified and innovative consumer centric services, regional & cross sectoral collaborative mechanisms need to be considered to ensure smart and secure delivery of services to citizen. The round table acknowledged that ICT regulators need to be agile for taking the whole of government approach.

SESSION 2: Addressing the barriers for development of Digital Connectivity

Session Moderator: H.E. Moa Chakrya, Chairman, Telecommunication Regulator of Cambodia (TRC), Cambodia

The session deliberated on the digital connectivity, tools to enhance affordable ICTs for SDGs mostly international/national connectivity and strategies to leverage financing for ICTs across the sectors, models to reduce the digital / broadband divide, along with investment opportunities for private sector with effective regulatory approach. The round table recognized the necessity of access to reliable and robust digital facilities that need to be available countrywide. While defining digital connectivity, considerations need to be given to best practices and developmental models in order to address the barriers for development of Digital Connectivity and relevant policy / regulatory enablers.

The regulators emphasized the need to enhance access to ICT facilities/ services together with development of human and institutional capacity in particular need to develop digital skill set and enhance usage of ICT. They also recognized the existing barriers to digital inclusion while looking for the way forwards including promoting conducive policy and regulatory environment that encourages investment in infrastructure by developing regulatory road-map based on best practices guidelines. The round table highlighted that reduction of tax on mobile & fixed communication network can have direct impact in the whole sector due to its wide spread economic benefit, and recommended the need for development of local content to extract the full benefit of digital society. Universal Service Obligation fund can play an important role for bridging the digital divide by enhancing the coverage in rural / remote areas in partnership with private sector. It was acknowledged that, availability of affordable smart devices with innovative applications can create a great impact of digital service usage. The round table recommended to use suitable blend of connectivity & local content usage with skill development to improve overall digital connectivity.

SESSION 3: Challenges of New Technologies and regulatory approaches

Session Moderator: Mr. Ilyas Ahmad, Chief Executive, Communications Authority of Maldives

The delegates discussed the ICT ecosystem, new technologies including 5G, AI, Blockchain, Cloud Computing, IOT, Industry 4.0 and their regulatory implications and possible approaches which could lead to effective outcomes for the better quality of life as ICT regulations could have positive as well as negative effects on the innovation process. The Round table emphasized that regulatory reforms in particular embracing 5th generation of regulation have potential for digital transformation. Interventions / contributions were made to the discussion of challenges the new technologies pose and potential regulatory approaches that could be considered.

Regulators encouraged the need to foster cross sectoral collaboration to promote the growth of cross-cutting services such as e-education, e-commerce, e-banking, e-health etc. including cooperation with consumer protection agencies, service providers and other relevant bodies at the national, regional and international levels.

The sessions discussed the merits in reviewing conventional regulatory mechanism as well as explore the advantages of consultative approach which would lead towards a more participatory, transparent and effective ICT ecosystem. The regulatory process must take into account the effects of regulation on innovation as well as the implications of technical change for the rationale and design of regulation.

SESSION 4: Universal Broadband for all

Session Moderator: Ms. Dalsie Baniala, Regulator, Telecommunication and Radiocommunication Regulator, (TRR), Vanuatu

While about half of the world population is yet to be connected to the Internet, there is a need for the regulators to accord due priority to consider digital inclusion to address the broadband divide. The round table discussed the urgency and importance making available affordable broadband as per seven targets set by Broadband Commission for Digital Development to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Deliberation were made on broadband connectivity status and different approaches to implement it. It was acknowledged that the evolution of broadband has made it a foremost medium for accessing the Internet.

The round table highlighted major issues such as high cost of access to internet and implications posed by wider proliferations of OTT services, and also discussed the potential of sustainable collaboration mechanisms for investment in infrastructure. The round table emphasized stimulating investment options for universal broadband by utilizing Universal Service Obligation fund in an innovative manner. The participants acknowledge the value of fostering partnerships amongst policy makers, regulators, telecom operators and digital service providers/OTT players, to address the issue.

SESSION 5: Protecting privacy, ensuring trust and security of consumers while promoting innovation and growth in digital era: Industry- Regulator Dialogue

Session Moderator: Mr. Ioane Koroivuki, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office, Asia-Pacific

Widespread coverage of mobile technologies and rapidly increasing use of social media is resulting in availability of both corporate and personal data in public domain which could be potentially exposed/ exploited. In this context, the panelists shared their views regarding general data privacy and protection, trust and reliability, IPR, pervasiveness of social media and its widespread usage and associated implications. Some suggested that existing privacy regulation should be applied on an equal basis to telco's and other stakeholders in the digital ecosystem including devices, browsers, software, operating systems, applications, and over-the-top (OTT) service providers.

The Round Table discussed on the need to formulate and/or revisit inclusive policy framework for data protection to capture all the points raised by stakeholders and consumers keeping in mind the end goal to make the digital society safe and reliable. Consumer rights and sensitivities regarding their data security need to be addressed properly to expand the advantages of digital society. Round table regulators acknowledge the need for service providers to use a more natural language to convince consumers to feel safe to share their consented data with them. Since data privacy & protection issue is an evolving process, cross border collaborative approach to reassess the policy from time to time may be required. ITU informed the participants its initiative in carrying out a study entitled "Powering the Digital Economy: Regulatory Approaches to Securing Consumer Privacy, Trust and Security" and invited comments following inclusive approach and consultation process.

SESSION 6: Innovative regulatory tools as drivers of cross sectoral collaboration

Session Moderator: Ms. Unutoa Auelua-Fonoti, Regulator, Samoa

As the efficacy of regulation greatly depends on coordination and collaboration amongst the various sectors, the round table concentrated on the need for collaborative regulation for managing cross-sectoral and cross border issues. The roundtable shared their experiences and views regarding collaboration across sectors to address the right regulatory environment to assist to achieve SDGs. The panel also focused on various approaches according to their country perspective.

As smart digital economies are progressively converged, the need for continuous coordination, dialogue and sharing of experience amongst telecommunications/Information and Communications Technology (ICT) regulators and policy-makers, was emphasized by the panel. The round table urged to employ inclusive approach engaging school going children, women and persons with special need. The converged digital eco-system demands collaboration amongst regulators within the country and around the globe as they share a common goal to achieve sustainable development and as the basic human needs through connectivity. Roundtable agreed that engagement platform for regulators such as the RR would promote dynamic and strategic discussions, sharing of relevant experiences, information and practices. The panel also focused on possible solutions and opportunities for potential collaboration to address emerging regulatory issues and challenges.