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SERIES D: TARIFF AND ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES
AND INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION/ICT
ECONOMIC AND POLICY ISSUES

Recommendations for regional application –
Recommendations applicable to the African Region

One network area roaming

Recommendation ITU-T D.607 R

ITU-T



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Recommendation ITU-T D.607 R

One network area roaming

Summary

Recommendation ITU-T D.607 R, based on African regional experiences, aims to promote regional integration by bringing down the high cost of mobile roaming. It provides a framework and tools for facilitating and making affordable international telecommunication services to and from Africa's countries.

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FOREWORD

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The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), which meets every four years, establishes the topics for study by the ITU-T study groups which, in turn, produce Recommendations on these topics.

The approval of ITU-T Recommendations is covered by the procedure laid down in WTSA Resolution 1.

In some areas of information technology which fall within ITU-T's purview, the necessary standards are prepared on a collaborative basis with ISO and IEC.

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Introduction

Recommendation ITU-T D.607 R, based on African regional experiences, aims to promote regional integration by bringing down the high cost of mobile roaming. It provides a framework and tools for facilitating and making affordable international telecommunication services to and from Africa's countries.

Regional- and sub-regional initiatives within Africa provide directions such as on basic principles for the implementation of "free roaming" services [b-ABIDJAN PROTOCOL], the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) regulation [b-REG.21.12/17] for roaming on public mobile communications networks, and a directive of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) [b-SADC ROAMING POLICY] on roaming services.

This Recommendation draws on the success of [ITU-T D.98] and [ITU-T D.97].

Recommendation ITU-T D.607 R

One network area roaming

1 Scope

This Recommendation draws on the success of [ITU-T D.98] and [ITU-T D.97]. It has been widely acknowledged that mobile networks and services have become indispensable to everyday life and to the economy as a whole. International mobile roaming (IMR) is vital to prosperity, to growth of regional trade and to encouraging mobility.

2 References

The following ITU-T Recommendations and other references contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this Recommendation. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All Recommendations and other references are subject to revision; users of this Recommendation are therefore encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent edition of the Recommendations and other references listed below. A list of the currently valid ITU-T Recommendations is regularly published. The reference to a document within this Recommendation does not give it, as a stand-alone document, the status of a Recommendation.

[ITU-T D.97] Recommendation ITU-T D.97 (2016), *Methodological principles for determining international mobile roaming rates*.

[ITU-T D.98] Recommendation ITU-T D.98 (2012), *Charging in international mobile roaming service*.

3 Definitions

3.1 Terms defined elsewhere

None.

3.2 Terms defined in this Recommendation

This Recommendation defines the following terms:

3.2.1 international mobile roaming (IMR): 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.

3.2.2 international mobile roaming (IMR) retail rate: A price that the home operator charges its subscribers for usage of IMR services.

3.2.3 international mobile roaming (IMR) wholesale rate: A price that the visited operator charges the home operator for allowing the home operator's subscriber to roam on the visited operator's network, in some cases referred to as inter-operator tariffs (IOTs).

4 Abbreviations and acronyms

This Recommendation uses the following abbreviations and acronyms:

IMR	International Mobile Roaming
IOT	Inter-Operator Tariffs
MMS	Multimedia Messaging Service
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
NRA	National Regulatory Authority
SMS	Short Message Service

5 Conventions

None.

6 Consumer protection and tariff transparency

6.1 African Member States should take measures to thwart 'bill shock' for regional visitors from other member countries and set fair price limits on international mobile roaming (IMR) tariffs for voice/data/SMS, particularly as the traditional costs of roaming services can be a barrier to use.

6.2 Key measures taken by Member States of the region should include, but are not limited to, the establishment of tariff caps, ensuring quality of service and transparency measures.

7 Determining international mobile roaming costs or tariffs rates

For determining international mobile roaming costs or tariffs rates it is recommended to utilize the methodological principles as defined in [ITU-T D.97], and the principles and measures defined in [ITU-T D.98] for empowering consumers by lowering mobile roaming rates.

7.1 African Member States, taking into account all initiatives in the African region, should consider competition at the regional level for reducing mobile roaming charges for users.

7.2 When necessary, Member States should take a proactive role to establish competitive and more affordable roaming rates in the African region.

7.3 Both prepaid and post-paid customers should be considered by African Member States for reducing roaming charges within Africa.

7.4 When tackling high roaming rates (retail or wholesale), through regulation, Member States might consider one of the principles outlined below.

- a) **Benchmarking:** based on the comparison of relevant retail rates or wholesale rates/costs considering international best practices and experiences (where such benchmarking is available).
- b) **Retail minus:** IMR wholesale rates are estimated from references to relevant retail prices, subtracting a percentage.
- c) **Cost oriented:** calculating the wholesale cost of IMR by identifying relevant IMR provisioning costs including any reasonable rate of return at a level, which promotes investment and innovation. Care must be taken to ensure that artificial and non-related costs are not included in such analysis.

7.5 African Member States are further encouraged to establish these underlying costs in consultation with the mobile operators, in a spirit of transparency and respect for the operators' commercial confidentiality.

7.6 African Member States are encouraged to consider utilizing existing infrastructure, where available, for reducing regional connectivity charges.

8 Regional collaboration

8.1 African Member States should first collectively negotiate regional accords to pursue IMR agreements within a trade area.

8.2 African Member States should act in concert via their regulators in order to:

- eliminate excessive charges for sending and receiving roaming services within the associated countries;
- remove excise taxes and surcharges on incoming regional voice traffic while establishing wholesale and retail price caps on inbound and outbound traffic, be it voice, data or short message service (SMS) messages;
- require mobile network operators (MNOs) to renegotiate with their roaming partners to reduce wholesale tariffs.

8.3 African Member States may consider, on a legal basis, a treaty or regional agreement, to lead the countries in the trade area in a common direction on IMR.

8.4 African Member States should remove, if it exists, the international incoming surtax.

9 Role of national regulatory authorities

9.1 In order to achieve lower mobile rates, African Member States should ensure that their national regulatory authorities (NRAs) have the necessary powers and mandates to obtain relevant roaming data from domestic operators (such as wholesale and retail prices) in order to set IMR rates with the purpose of facilitating more competitive and affordable roaming services.

9.2 African Member States should ensure NRAs are empowered to collect traffic statistics to facilitate regular monitoring and evaluation of regional roaming implementation.

9.3 African Member States are encouraged to improve mechanisms for identifying and handling cases of fraud and misuse (usage abuse) at the national level.

9.4 African Member States are encouraged to set up national committees with operators to follow up, exchange information and resolve any problems that may arise.

Bibliography

- [b-ABIDJAN PROTOCOL] Abidjan Protocol (2016), *On Basic Principles for the Implementation of "free roaming"*.
- [b-REG.21.12/17] ECOWAS (2017), *Regulation On roaming on public mobile communications networks in the ECOWAS region*.
- [b-SADC ROAMING POLICY] SADC/CM/2015/3A (2015), *Policy SADC/CM/2015/3A of SADC Ministers Responsible for Postal, Telecommunications and ICT services*, Meeting of 26 June 2015 Concerning the implementation of the regional directives on roaming services, Southern African Development Community, Walvis Bay, Namibia.

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