

Report of ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of Consumer Societies



**November 22-23 2002
Phuket, Thailand**

**ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of the User Groups and Consumer Societies of the
Telecommunications Sector
Phuket, Thailand, November 22-23, 2002**

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1. Introduction

This report aims to provide only a brief overview of key points from the meeting. The full papers and presentations presented are available at the meeting website: <http://www.itu.or.th/consumer>. Interested readers are strongly recommended to refer to the original papers.

The meeting was opened on behalf of the ITU with welcomes to all and thanks to those involved in organizing the event, especially to CACPK (Citizens' Alliance for Consumer Protection of Korea) and ITU who had secured the funding. The keynote speech by Ms. Jaio Kim of CACPK highlighted the growing importance to consumers of information and communication services, the need for consumer protection measures to keep pace with the rapidly changing environment, and CACPK's involvement in achieving 8% annual telecoms price reductions for Korean consumers. Mr. R. Sivanason of Consumers International (CI) pointed to the vital role played by free and universally accessible media in counteracting unwanted consequences of globalisation and maintaining cultural identity.

Mr. K.K. Gunawardana outlined the structure and functioning of ITU. He reported on the progress that had been made on the work programmed at the last meeting. Lack of follow up work between meetings by some participants has hindered attainment of planned targets. He stressed the need for greater continuity of effort and interaction between meetings.

To facilitate this the ITU has developed a bulletin board to enable participants to report progress of work. A tool has also been developed for assessing the affordability to consumers of their daily preferred use of services. The work carried out by the ITU on analysis of annual reports of operators, and submitted to CI for follow up action, was also mentioned.

One noteworthy outcome was that ITU had invited three consumer society representatives to speak at the Global Regulatory Symposium to be held in Hong Kong in early December 2002. These would be Mr. Victor Hung, Ms. Jaio Kim, who was elected Chair of the meeting, and Dr. T.H. Chowdary who was elected Vice-chair. An immediate goal for this meeting would be to produce a paper for these three to present at the GRS. It is also planned to submit a similar paper to and/or attend the World Summit on the Information Society.

The conference proceedings were convened under the five sessions given below, with Session Chairs as shown:

Access and affordability: Ms. Tini Hadad

Customer care and billing: Mr. Alexandre Ho

Structuring regulation for maximum consumer benefit: Mr. Victor Hung

Consumer information and education: Mr. Gunaseelan Thuraiamy

Involving consumers in policy formulation: Mr. R. Sivanason

2. Access and affordability

2.1 Telephone tariffs in Vietnam - moderate usage costs 20% of average income

Mr. Do Gia Phan explained the structure of telephone tariffs in Vietnam. Domestic telephone tariffs, while low compared with those in other countries, were still very high compared with typical incomes. Moderate usage of 1000 minutes a month (i.e. 30 minutes a day) would cost 20% of average income. International call charges were very high even compared with the rest of the region, which itself had high charges by world standards.

2.2 Nepal – rise in local call charges

Mr. Kamalesh Adhikari presented the situation in Nepal, where an already bad picture was made worse by damage caused by Maoist insurgents. The recent 50% rise in local call rates had caused particular hardship to consumers. It did not appear justified in view of NTC's profit levels, even if there had also been some decreases in long-distance and international call charges.

2.3 Malaysia – mobile, urban and rural markets

Mr. Gunaseelan Thuraiamy discussed consolidation in the mobile market in Malaysia and how rural areas continue to lag far behind urban areas, even with government intervention to encourage rural investment. He stressed that telephone services are no longer luxury items but daily essentials.

2.4 Papua New Guinea and Bangladesh - low teledensity and high cost

Papers by Mr. Paulus Ain of Papua New Guinea and Mr. Quazi Faruque of Bangladesh were summarised in their absence. They presented gloomy pictures of poverty, illiteracy and very low teledensity in both countries. A survey of consumers in PNG showed that most people found even payphone prices too expensive, and quality of service poor. In Bangladesh, new (mainly mobile) operators were starting to improve matters, but consumers remained in a very weak position.

2.5 Generic structure of telecom networks, their costs and usage

Mr. K.K. Gunawardana explained the generic structure of telecom networks, their usage and costs, with focus on components shared among all users and others dedicated to a single line. The usage intensity of shared components, such as long distance, is very high, whereas usage of dedicated components is very low. One of the aims of networking is to concentrate traffic flows from low usage devices to high usage devices, which are costly and distribute the traffic to terminating access networks. Operators could recover these costs by one time up-front charges (connection charges), by periodic fixed charges (rental), by usage-related charges (call charges) or by a mixture of all three. No one method was "right", but operators often preferred to recover as much investment cost as quickly as possible, while consumers would prefer to spread it over a longer period. Sometimes operators charged as if to recover costs that had already been fully allowed for in other ways, for example those associated with Short Message Services (SMS) using devices of the common signaling channel network, the cost of which is already included in the charge for the voice call.

2.5.1 Evaluating promotional service products - value for money

Competitive markets offer a wide range of promotional service products with varying mixes of tariffs, including fixed periodic and usage charges, which are often confusing to the consumer. Too often, promotional material focuses on incremental or off-peak prices only, distracting attention from monthly or up-front charges. Comparisons of overall price charged per unit of consumption¹ (e.g. per minute of conversation or per megabyte of data) are of great value to consumers in selecting the best package for their needs

¹ Based on their preferred basket/choice of services.

2.5.2 Declining per line costs and increasing per line daily usage

Costs of all network components are steeply falling. This is revealed from the results of the analysis of annual reports quoted in **Part C of the ITU paper “Evaluating Affordability of Service - What the Consumer Should Know”**. For new build, the cost of fixed assets can now be well under \$300 per line. Furthermore, there is evidence of significant and continuing growth in average use per line - for example, from 25 minutes a day in 1995 to 70 minutes a day now. Mr Gunawardana said that these two facts should mean that there is no need for domestic tariffs to rise, even in the face of falling international tariffs. This is evident from the high return - prior to taxation - on fixed assets, revealed from the results of analysis of annual reports of operators, discussed at item 2.5.3

2.5.3 Per line costs - comparison of a privatized network with non-privatized networks and transparency of market competitiveness

Analysis of operators' annual reports over a run of years could provide valuable insights into their changing costs and revenues. This is illustrated in the analyzed results of the annual reports of the incumbent operators² in Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The comparison suggested that the per line fixed asset cost of SLT despite liberalization/privatization was nearly three fold that of PTCL and NTC. The results also show that the critical mass for viable operations is diminishing. Unfortunately the annual reports³ often did not contain all the information needed for such an analysis, in particular not the capacities of plant installed. He proposed that consumer representatives should convince regulators that the following information should be included in the annual reports - in order to ensure transparency of market competitiveness, –

- (a) Investment and depreciation of access networks
- (b) Investment and depreciation of long distance networks
- (c) The plant capacities of (a) and (b) installed and the working lines
- (d) Daily (diurnal) capacity utilization of the subscriber line (in minutes per day)

2.6 Encouraging rural telecom investment

The question of how to encourage telecoms investment in rural areas was discussed. It was pointed out that although investment costs per line were typically higher in rural than in urban areas (say \$400 versus \$200 per line in some developing countries) some options have field-proven success, for example:

- a. **setting up rural cooperative ventures (e.g. Finland, Canada operating profitably)**
- b. **punitive regulations threatening licence loss (Ireland)**
- c. **simple government requirements (Korea)**
- d. **subsidies from a Universal Service Fund based on industry levies of a percentage of revenue (5% in India, 6% in Malaysia).**

2.7 Discussion

Topics included the following:

² The time frame for annual reports analysed cover the pre and post privatization performance of SLT, and those of PTCL and NTC, which at the time were not privatized.

³ CI provided annual reports without information on capacity of plant installed. Hence these could not be analyzed (see annex C parts 1 to 3 of the ITU paper referred to at item 2.5.2 of this report).

- a. Ability for any person, with or without convenient access to telecom services, to contact any person in any part of the world with or without access to telecom services (for example using physical message delivery, or a “man on a motorbike” roving mobile phone service, maybe in conjunction with voicemail).
- b. Levies such as licensing fees or Universal Service Funds would end up as higher prices for existing consumers. No agreement was reached on an appropriate level for such levies, although it was suggested that it might be better to restrict their recovery to business rather than residential customers.
- c. Viability of rural investments by accounting for terminating long distance and international traffic.

Accounting for the termination charges levied for originating and international traffic terminating on rural networks could make all the difference to the viability of rural networks. Overall, rural ventures could be much more profitable than projected by operators (and often accepted by regulators). A typical example of lines with zero calls is those of the Internet Service Providers. These lines generate very heavy revenue from calls received despite not generating any originating calls and hence no revenues from their usage.

- d. Examples of innovative approaches to providing low-cost service included:
 - (i) **new wireless (CDMA/WLL) technology in India, which for a one-off payment of US\$300 gives unlimited local telephony and internet access, with mobility, for three years. With external financing assistance the up-front payment could easily be converted to a modest regular period charge.**
 - (ii) another modality practised in some villages is delivery of a mobile phone to the recipient of a call, sharing the mobile phone on a cooperative basis.

3. Customer service and billing

3.1 Vietnam, Fiji, Nepal and Korea highlights

Four short presentations touched on a range of consumer problems:

- a. bills for calls to Vanuatu for Vietnamese customers, eventually traced to rogue internet dialers that had been downloaded accidentally from the web. It was agreed that customer education was the only currently viable approach to this problem, though in the longer term international co-operation to achieve redress was worth pursuing.
- b. difficulties in Fiji with billing for unauthorized calls
- c. an analysis of problems of every kind experienced in Nepal
- d. large numbers of complaints relating to every stage of ownership of mobile phones in Korea. CACPK's surveys of mobile phone coverage were an example of a consumer society making a valuable contribution

3.2 India - Consumer Charter and opinion surveys

On a more positive note, two presentations India and Hong Kong dealt with how consumer societies had been able to help to improve matters.

Dr. T.H. Chowdary talked about the Indian Consumer Charter of 1998, which was put together by the Telecoms Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in consultation with consumer groups. It specified reasonable expectations for different elements of service quality. He also gave the findings of opinion surveys on the performance of incumbent and private operators (showing the latter mainly doing better than the former, but with plenty of room for improvement). Very modest financial contributions by all consumers would enable this type of activity to continue. Such contributions need to be encouraged by the regulator.

3.3 Hong Kong - Consumer Council's experience of quality assurance

Dr. Victor Hung presented the Hong Kong Consumer Council's experience of working with the regulator and industry to introduce a quality assurance system for telecoms metering and billing. This had entailed a major commitment of time and effort, but was felt to be worthwhile because accurate bills are so fundamental to customer satisfaction. The result was an improvement on the few other similar systems known (UK and Australia) and could provide a good starting point for other countries. The process had itself led to valuable learning, both about technical aspects and on how to handle the industry and the regulator. Without HKCC's involvement the new system would probably never have reached fruition. Their professionalism was of particular note and inspired respect among the industry.

3.4 Discussion – time limits, number portability, health hazards

Other points included:

- (i) time limits (if any) after which operators can no longer pursue claims against consumers (e.g. billing calls six months or a year after they were made).**
- (ii) safety of mobile phone handsets and masts is unproven; the Italian approach to limiting radiation levels may be worth looking into.**
- (iii) number portability (the right for a consumer to keep his or her phone number when changing operator) is becoming standard in high teledensity countries.**

4. Structuring regulation for maximum consumer benefit

4.1 Indonesia - unclear regulations

Ms. Tini Hadad outlined the current situation in Indonesia, a country with a population well over 200 million and highly variable teledensity, lowest towards the east. The new approach now being adopted to bring service to rural areas is a partnership between the (publicly owned) incumbent and the private sector, with no interconnection fees. However it is proving hard to find interested investors because of unclear regulation, and political and security problems. She called for an independent regulatory body, but acknowledged the difficulty of achieving this given prevalent corruption.

4.2 India - issue of licences by the incumbent

Dr. T.H. Chowdary explained that the first set of competitive entrants in India had had their licences awarded by the incumbent operator (before the formation of the regulator). Unsurprisingly, the licence conditions were unfavourable. Litigation led to independent judgements going against the incumbent, and this in turn to a reorganization of the regulatory body TRAI. This moved power away from TRAI and back towards the Ministry. He felt that TRAI's stance was now insufficiently pro-consumer.

4.3 India – internet access

Mr. Rishi Chawla of GIPI – VOICE India presented the progress being made on internet access in India. Relatively liberal market policies had enabled many ISPs (charged almost zero licence fees) to set up in business, and following pressure from civil society voice over IP was permitted from April 2002 (though not yet for national long-distance telephony). He stressed the importance of Internet Exchanges to bring down the cost of Internet access and improve quality, unlimited access (flat rate) tariff options and of local content in building both the user base and the amount of usage. He also suggested some policy initiatives to improve the growth rate of Internet penetration in developing countries.

4.4 Fiji - overlapping control/regulations of government institutions

Mr. Timoci Qionibaravi said that Fiji was in many ways similar to Indonesia, but with additional difficulty in attracting investments because of the small size of the country. Also it suffered from several overlapping control and regulations imposed by the Prices and Incomes Board, the Commerce Commission and the Ministry of Communications, all involved in the telecoms sector. To date, telecoms liberalization was only peripheral and did not yet apply to basic services. An ISP that had attempted to offer low-price international calls had been scrutinized by the Ministry of Communications and threatened with legal action to consumers' great dissatisfaction.

4.5 Korea - Digital Divide Dissolution Act

Prof. Eun Gui Kim outlined key features of relevant legislation in Korea, treated more fully in his paper. Of special interest was the Digital Divide Dissolution Act, which aimed to break down barriers not only between urban and rural areas, but also between men and women, young and old, rich and poor, and developed and developing countries. He promised to provide more details. The success of the Korean approach seemed to depend on industry willingness to comply with regulations, which is not replicated in most other countries represented.

4.6 Discussion

Topics of discussion included:

- a. Absence of balanced representation of stakeholder interests on regulatory boards, including in particular consumers, and lack of expertise in network infrastructure as well as professional competencies such as law, economics, and finance, is severely eroding realization of the prime goals of sector reform. Clear and fair procedures for appointment and removal of board members are also essential.
- b. How far arrangements were in place for monitoring the success of regulation and ensuring its enforcement. The situation was better in Hong Kong, Korea and India than in Vietnam, Nepal or Fiji, although in all countries it was felt that consumer welfare received less attention than industry demands.
- c. The damage done by and possible consumer protections against unwanted commercial email (spam) – again the Korean regulations seemed far more satisfactory than most, though plainly international co-operation would be needed for cross-border enforcement.
- d. The desirability of applying to telephone billing⁴ the new consumer protection standards now in place in Korea for e-commerce billing. The web-based dialed applications cited by Vietnam were another example where enhanced protections were needed.

⁴ Telephone billing is perhaps the pioneering instance of e-commerce billing, but without the protection standards now being developed for e-commerce.

- e. In respect of Mr. Chawla's paper, the need to monitor the session times of Internet based applications and their trends.

5. Consumer information and education

5.1 Macau - mobile tariffs, emphasis on roaming

Mr. Alexandre Ho described the study carried out by the Macau Consumer Council into mobile tariffs and service, with particular stress on roaming tariffs. The study had been publicized in the press and was available on the Council's website. He concluded that consumers who relied only on advertisements when choosing their operator could easily be misled by unsubstantiated headline claims. It was vital to choose with full information on which package and operator would be best for individual usage patterns and needs.

5.2 Nepal - difficulties faced by women

Ms. Yuna Sharma described the particular difficulties faced by women in Nepal. In this male-dominated society, the problems faced by all consumers are compounded for women, who often have restricted mobility and little education. They are in special need of outreach programmes, and could benefit enormously from appropriate telecoms and internet provision.

5.3 Discussion

Other points arising from discussions included:

- a. Consumers should benefit from choice among varied price packages, but as these become numerous, the consumers need help in understanding which packages are most beneficial for them (see item 2.5.1 of this report).
- b. If subsidized tariff packages are on offer, they need to be carefully targeted (or available only to restricted eligible groups, e.g. old-age pensioners) in order to contain the cost.
- c. E-commerce will only flourish when consumers are confident. To develop confidence requires consumer information and education.
- d. Nearly 45% of errors arise due to system defects, according to the presentation made by Korea. These are likely to be caused by network infrastructure inefficiencies arising from shortcomings in efficient routing of traffic and end quality of service, often ignored by regulators due to lack of expertise in network management. Korea was requested to provide detailed information about these errors.

6. Involving consumers in policy formulation

6.1 Consumers International - involving consumers at all stages in policy issues

Ms. Sharifah Bakar Ali of Consumers International spoke of the benefits of consumers being involved at all stages in policy issues. Not only would consumers get a better deal, but also regulators could gain first-hand market intelligence. To contribute fully in this technical area, the consumer organisations would need to build their capacity and pool resources both nationally and internationally.

6.2 Korea - achievements of consumer organisations

Ms. Jaiock Kim mentioned several examples of constructive contributions already made by consumer organisations in Korea. They have helped to bring down telecom prices, to bring in new legislation, and to make e-commerce successful.

6.3 Monitoring of performance of critical sector outputs, policy review and remedial action – involvement of consumers

The ITU explained the importance of clearly linking sector objectives, and policy to the critical outputs essential to be realized, to accomplish timely provision of access to affordable service to all segments of society. Equally important is measurability of these outputs and involvement of consumers in periodic monitoring of sector performance, review of policy implementation and swift remedial action. If not, the vast numbers waiting in hope for affordable service are unlikely to realize their expectations during their life span.

6.4 Discussion

Other speakers supported the points already made. Additional points made by them and in discussion included:

- a. The importance of a professional approach by the consumer bodies. This will earn them respect and credibility.
- b. Consumers should be represented on committees responsible for managing universal service funds – it is their money that is being spent.
- c. International bodies like ITU and APEC need consumer participation not only to sustain their legitimacy but also to be properly informed. Currently INTUG (International Telecoms User Group, an umbrella organisation for national telecoms user groups, mainly representing business users) seems to be the only body with recognized consultative status at ITU.
- d. The paper by Ms. Helen Campbell of Consumers' Telecoms Network, Australia *Building user needs into the process of standards making* provided a good example of how consumer organisations could contribute internationally.
- e. Constitutional difficulties, as well as overwork, could make collaboration among consumer organisations less productive than would be hoped.
- f. Unlike the industry, consumer organisations were in no position to bribe politicians or exercise behind-the-scenes influence. The press could be a powerful tool for consumer groups, although industry interests might still mask consumer interests.
- g. Relations between consumer groups and industry did not normally need to be adversarial. Many examples could be given of cordial, constructive relationships. In particular, there was often commonality of interest between consumer groups and smaller or newer industry entrants, as both need to manage in the face of a dominant incumbent.

7. Conclusions and follow up action

The meeting closed with all those present stating their priority objectives. There was consensus on the following points:

7.1 Conclusions

- a. Access for all to affordable services must be at the top of the consumer agenda. This is an ambitious but achievable goal, given recent and continuing improvements in technology, sector reform trends, cost decreases and rising usage – if sector performance is realistically monitored.
- b. Working closely with regulators must be the best way to influence movement towards this goal. The Global Regulatory Symposium to be held in Hong Kong in early December 2002 offered a good opportunity to put across consumer views to many regulators together.
- c. A truly independent regulator is indispensable to successful liberalization. Methods for appointing (and dismissing) the members of regulatory commissions must be transparent and fair. At least one member of every such commission should be capable of and charged with championing consumers' interests.
- d. Sector goals must include affordable access for all (with acceptable quality). Progress towards this goal should be measured in ways that encapsulate consumer experiences. For, example high teledensity was not in itself an adequate indicator of success. Deviations from targets should be monitored, and policies reviewed to correct the position.
- e. Close collaboration among consumer representatives would be of immense value to all, as most interests were common. Examples of good practice in other similar countries were especially useful.
- f. Because of funding problems, progress on last year's action programme had been less than intended. However there was now some manpower, and certainly enthusiasm, to relaunch this programme.
- g. The next shared event should be a workshop to train consumer representatives on the use of the new tools that ITU had developed. One tool captures usage patterns by market segment; its outputs and the second tool capture the market tariffs. These two tools estimate price comparisons among operators for each usage pattern, and also generate statistics from the inputs. Another is a bulletin board designed for sharing data, experience and views among consumer representatives (which had been briefly demonstrated) and also provides for continually reporting progress.

7.2 Follow up actions

The main programme of actions should be based on a revision of last year's programme, quoted in Appendix 1. Other specific actions proposed were:

- a. Each participant to contribute monthly to the bulletin board the progress of their priority follow up actions.
- b. Determine the basket of services of prominent market segments of society based on their typical daily use of the service when restrained by affordability, and their expected needs when unrestrained by price.
- c. All to check what statistics on household expenditure on telecommunications are available in their country, and send whatever they can find to Claire Milne for comparative analysis.
- d. All those with websites to provide links to the ITU conference website.

- e. Future meetings to allow more time (at least 3 days rather than 2).
- f. Produce a volume of edited papers from all conferences so far, for example to give to WSIS delegates.

Appendix 1: Annotated version of last year's action programme

Comments are added in CAPITALS on the status of these actions.

1. CI immediate actions

CI ROAP will by 30 November circulate to its members for comment in draft, and by 10 December finalise, a programme of work relevant to the telecommunications sector, under the familiar headings of:

- i. The right to basic needs
- ii. The right to safety
- iii. The right to be informed
- iv. The right to choose
- v. The right to be heard
- vi. The right of redress
- vii. The right to consumer education
- viii. The right to a healthy environment

CIROAP TO REPORT STATUS

The near-term actions listed below are likely to be reflected in the CI ROAP work programme. CI also plans to produce a handbook to support its members in dealing with telecoms policy issues, and to carry out further training in the field for more members.

CIROAP TO REPORT STATUS

- a. CI ROAP will also devote its next newsletter (due end of December) to telecommunications topics. **STATUS - DONE.**
- b. CI ROAP will work towards equipping all its members to use the internet as a collaborative tool. This will call for both adequate physical facilities and certain new competencies. **CIROAP TO REPORT STATUS**
- c. Some of the work items likely to be proposed will be capable of completion by CI members alone or with support that can be provided by the CI ROAP office, while other items will need or would benefit from outside support, for example from the ITU. Funding will be sought to enable CI ROAP to support its members in this work programme. **CIROAP TO REPORT STATUS**
- d. CI ROAP will write to ITU in support of improving its sensitivity to consumer concerns, with particular reference to the forthcoming WSIS. **STATUS - DONE.**
- e. CI will also provide guidelines for effective consumer representation (how to be a watchdog, not a lapdog). **CIROAP TO REPORT STATUS**

2. ITU immediate actions

- a) ITU will carry out improvements to the consumer part of its website as suggested by the meeting, so as to make it more user-friendly, to meet the requirements of:
 - i. people who are new to internet use (e.g. very simple interfaces, clear error messages, avoid jargon)
 - ii. robustness to poor network performance (e.g. off-line and email alternatives to web browsing)**STATUS - SOME IMPROVEMENTS DONE, OTHERS OUTSTANDING**

- b) ITU will provide suitable database software to enable expansion of the website to become a repository for information from all the countries involved.
STATUS - NEARLY COMPLETE
- c) Medium term, ITU will also make available for evaluation of affordability of service a model for comparison of basket of services by market segment which can take as input the tariff data supplied by CI members and produce meaningful international comparisons.
STATUS - NEARLY COMPLETE
- d) ITU will produce a final report of the conference and circulate it to all present, and also to other interested parties.
STATUS - DONE
- e) ITU will make available the services of a co-ordinator to help keep the continuing programme of collaboration on track between now and the next meeting (envisaged for third quarter of 2002).
STATUS – STARTED LATE, DONE WITH REDUCED TARGETS
- f) ITU Bulletin Board for reporting progress

3. Priority and near-term actions

It was agreed that a shared top priority was making telecoms service available and affordable in the poorer countries and regions. Actions in support of this goal include:

- a) **sharing knowledge and understanding from a consumer perspective of technical and other advances which can allow service to be provided at lower cost**
- b) sharing tariff information so that everyone is aware of “best practice” pricing across the region
- c) sharing information on the approaches adopted in different countries to improving service provision to rural areas, with assessment of successes and failures.

The following specific near-term actions were agreed:

- i. Assembly for analysis of a run of recent annual reports from telecoms operators in all countries involved, with assistance from the ITU if necessary
STATUS - BEGUN, SHOULD CONTINUE
- ii. A review by CI ROAP members of work already carried out relevant to telecommunications policy.
CIROAP TO REPORT STATUS
- iii. Regular collection of fixed and mobile tariffs from all countries in a standard format, suitable for entry into the database to be provided by the ITU, so that comparisons can be made and trends followed.
CIROAP TO REPORT STATUS
- iv. Collection of the basic telecoms policies and relevant legislation from all countries.
CIROAP TO REPORT STATUS

4. Other actions

Many other desirable actions were identified, including those listed below.

STATUS – STILL DESIRABLE

4.1 **Making consumer consultation more effective**, for example by:

- i. Identifying the legal status of consumer consultation in telecoms policy processes in each country, with a view to making consumer consultation on policy and tariffs a standard practice (both in the law and in actuality) throughout the region. This should also cover the need for central funding (by government or, indirectly, by the industry) of consumer representation.
- ii. Education in telecoms matters of consumer representatives and consumers themselves.
- iii. Sharing ideas on ways of generating enthusiasm for consumer participation in consultative processes.
- iv. Improving understanding of approaches to sector reform, for example by:
 - a) **Devising measurements for assessing (in broad terms, including social effects) the effectiveness of policy measures intended to introduce and maintain sustainable competition in telecoms.**
 - b) Producing a summary of relevant experience of different approaches to telecoms privatisation, liberalisation and structural reform, with results.

4.2 **Guiding poorer countries with experience from richer ones**, for example by:

- i. **Drawing on experience in Australia (codes of practice and/or customer charters) and elsewhere, to compile a list of ethical standards of treatment for customers for telecoms services.**
- ii. Drawing up a “ladder” of service standards that consumers could reasonably expect at different stages of telecoms development, to guide consumer organisations in choosing sensible goals for their lobbying.
- iii. Continuing collection and sharing of data among all countries, in particular:
 - a) Regular collection of per line usage statistics (direct from telephone companies where available, otherwise from user surveys) so as to identify operating efficiency usage trends and consumer profiles. Such data are of special value in discussions of tariff levels.
 - b) Supplementing ITU tariff comparison methodology by incorporating information on usage and income levels so as to permit assessment of affordability (looking a percentage of household income or expenditure that is, or needs to be, devoted to telecoms).
 - c) Collection of internet quality of service and usage data, which might be obtained directly from ISPs, or by continuous automatic measurement of users’ internet quality of service, with central reporting. Such data could support calls for local or regional internet traffic exchanges.

Appendix 2: List of papers presented

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
Mr. Quazi Faruque, Bangladesh	Telecommunication status & consumer rights in Bangladesh
Mr. Timoci Qionibaravi, Fiji	Growth of Telecommunications and IT Business Consumers' perspective of affordable access to communications & the internet
Mr. Victor Hung, Hong Kong	Billing and metering integrity scheme for telecommunications services in Hong Kong
Dr. T.H. Chowdary, India	Telecom regulation and consumer welfare
Mr. Rishi Chawla, India	Internet growth – key learnings from India
Ms. Tini Hadad, Indonesia	Telecommunication in Indonesia
Mr. Alexandre Ho, Macau	Mobile telecommunication industry in Macau
Dr. Gunaseelan Thuraiamy, Malaysia	Information of importance to promote/protect interest of end users of telecom services, in particular those relevant to provision of timely access to affordable service of acceptable quality to all segments of society
Ms. Yuna Sharma, Nepal	Women's access and participation in ICTs
Mr. Kamalesh Adhikari, Nepal	A consumer's perspective on teleservices in Nepal
Mr. Paulus Ain, Papua New Guinea	The basic expectations of affordable access to telephone and internet services from perspective of the end users in Papua New Guinea
Ms. Jaiok Kim, R.O. Korea	E-commerce and consumer protections in Korea
Mr. Janghwan Bae, R.O. Korea	Consumer complaints of mobile telephone in Korea
Dr. Sung Sook Kim, R.O. Korea	User confidence and e-payment in electronic and mobile commerce
Prof. Eun Gui Kim, R.O. Korea	Consumer protection in the information society
Mr. Do Gia Phan, Vietnam	Challenges and opportunities of Vietnamese consumers in the process of information and communication technologies development in Vietnam
Mr. K.K. Gunawardana, ITU	Evaluating affordability of service - what the consumer should know

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