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Best Practice Guidelines for the Promotion of Low Cost Broadband and Internet Connectivity

We, the regulators participating in the 2004 Global Symposium for Regulators, have identified and proposed best practice guidelines to achieve low cost broadband and Internet connectivity. Our goal is the creation of national regulatory frameworks that are flexible and enable competition between various service providers using multiple transport and technology options. We believe the best practices outlined below will help bring social and economic benefits to the world's citizens.

An enabling regulatory regime that encourages broadband deployment and Internet connectivity

1. We encourage political support at the highest government levels with such support expressed in national or regional policy goals. These include an effective regulator separated from the operator and insulated from political interference, a transparent regulatory process, and adoption and enforcement of clear rules.
2. We believe that competition in as many areas of the value chain as possible provides the strongest basis for ensuring maximum innovation in products and prices and for driving efficiency.
3. We encourage regulators to set policies to stimulate competition among various technologies and industry segments that will lead to the development and deployment of broadband capacity. This includes addressing barriers or bottlenecks that may exist with regard to access to essential facilities on a non-discriminatory basis.
4. We believe that the primary objective of regulation should be to secure fair and reasonable access for competitive broadband services, including Internet connectivity.
5. We encourage the maintenance of transparent, non-discriminatory market policies in order to attract investment.
6. We encourage regulators to adopt policies that are technology neutral and do not favor one technology over another.
7. We encourage regulators to take into consideration the convergence of platforms and services and that they regularly reassess regulatory regimes to ensure consistency and to eliminate unfair market advantages or unnecessary regulatory burdens.
8. We encourage regulators to allocate adequate spectrum to facilitate the use of modern, cost effective broadband radiocommunications technologies. We further encourage innovative approaches to managing the spectrum resource such as the ability to share spectrum or allocating on a license-exempt non-interference basis.
9. We urge regulators to conduct periodic public consultations with stakeholders to inform the regulatory decision-making process.
10. We recommend that regulators carefully consider how to minimize licensing hurdles.
11. We encourage the development of a regulatory framework that permits ISPs and broadband providers to set up their own last mile.
12. We encourage regulators to provide a clear regulatory strategy for the private sector in order to reduce uncertainty and risk, and remove any disincentives to investment.

Innovative Regulatory Policies Must Be Developed To Promote Universal Access

1. We recommend that the promotion of access to low cost broadband interconnectivity should be integrated from “grass-roots” efforts to identify local needs all the way through the “tree-tops” of international law. Governments, business and non-governmental organizations should be involved.
2. We recommend that regulators adopt regulatory frameworks that support applications such as e-education and e-government.
3. We encourage each country to adopt policies to increase access to the Internet and broadband services based on their own market structure and that such policies reflect diversity in culture, language and social interests.
4. We encourage regulators to work with stakeholders to expand coverage and use of broadband through multi-stakeholder partnerships. In addition, complementary government initiatives that promote financially sustainable programs may also be appropriate, especially in filling in the market gap that may exist in some countries.
5. We encourage regulators to adopt regulatory regimes that facilitate the use of all transport mechanisms, whether wireline, power line, cable, wireless, including wi-fi, or satellite.
6. We encourage regulators to explore programs that encourage public access to broadband and Internet services to schools, libraries and other community centers.
7. We encourage regulators to implement harmonized spectrum allocations consistent with the outcome of ITU Radiocommunication Conference process and each country’s national interest. Participation in this well-established framework will facilitate low-cost deployment of equipment internationally and promote low-cost broadband and Internet connectivity through economies of scale and competition among broadband vendors and service providers.

Broadband is an Enabler

1. Regulation should be directed at improving the long term interests of citizens. Broadband can contribute to this by improving and enabling education, information, and increased efficiency. It can reduce costs, overcome distance, open up markets, enhance understanding and create employment.
2. We encourage regulators to educate and inform consumers about the services that are available to them and how to utilize them so that the entire population benefits.
3. We urge regulators to work with other government entities, industry, consumer groups, and other stakeholders to ensure consumers have access to the information they need about broadband and Internet services.