

BTA - BOTSWANA
COUNTRY REPORT
TO
CRASA
10TH AGM - 2007

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Overview of the Regulator's Activities

This report provides an overview of some of the major activities undertaken by the Botswana telecommunications Authority (BTA) since its last report to the 9th Annual General Meeting of CRASA held in Tanzania in February 2006. The report also highlights some of the planned activities or projects.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

Further Liberalisation of the Telecommunications Market in Botswana

Following the recommendations of the BTA, on 21 June 2006, the Minister of Communications, Science and Technology announced a '**Timetable of Further Liberalisation of the Botswana Telecommunications Market**' charting the way forward with respect to further opening the Botswana Telecommunications market. The 5-stage timetable outlines among other things approximate dates for the lifting of restrictions for VoIP provision by the VANS providers, self provision of transmission links by the mobile operators, introduction of service neutral licences for both fixed-line and mobile cellular operators, introduction of service-neutral rural/district level licenses, liberalisation of the international voice gateway, tariff rebalancing by the incumbent, as well as indicative dates when new entrants may apply for service-neutral national licences.

Licensing Framework

The current licences issued by the BTA are service specific as operators are licensed to provide either mobile or fixed telephony. In June 2006, the Government of Botswana, after consultation with the regulator and other stakeholders, took a policy decision to migrate to service-neutral licensing environment in order to accommodate technological convergence and promote effective competition. BTA is now preparing a licensing framework that will allow operators to provide a wide range of services including fixed telephony, mobile telephony and value-added services under one licence. The

new licensing framework is expected to be in operation during the course of 2007.

Universal Access/ Service Policy

In an effort to promote universal access to communication services the BTA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications Science and Technology undertook a study with a view of formulating a Universal Access and Service Policy for Botswana. The policy seeks to devise ways and means of rolling out communication infrastructure and services to underserved areas, which are otherwise not commercially viable. Among others things, the policy provides for a Universal Access/Service Fund to which the BTA has already pledged P10 million as seed fund for the implementation of the policy throughout the country.

Automated Spectrum Management System (ASMS)

The Authority has acquired the Automated Spectrum Management System (ASMS), which comprises a frequency licensing subsystem (FLSS), 16 remote radio frequency monitoring stations spread throughout the country, and two mobile monitoring stations. The FLSS consists of two servers and workstations which are used for frequency licensing database maintenance and the licensing of radio users. The equipment was acquired from TCI international, a USA based company.

The acquisition of the ASMS was a major project which cost more than P100 million and it took more than 3 years to implement from January 2004 to December 2006. To ensure optimal utilization of the equipment the BTA has signed a five (5) years maintenance contract with TCI.

Development of a Digital Broadcasting Frequency Plan (Both Sound and Television)

The BTA has developed a broadcasting frequency plan for terrestrial digital broadcasting for both sound and television. The plan was developed through a regional radiocommunication conference organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The main task outstanding is to develop a migration plan from analogue television transmission to digital television transmission known as the "Digital Switchover".

Telephone Numbering Policy

The Authority has also developed a Telephone Numbering plan to accommodate the changes from the 6 to 7 digits for the fixed lines. The numbering plan is currently being reviewed and in addition a numbering policy is being developed. The Final Report for the Telephone Numbering

Policy will be presented to the Board for approval during the course of the first quarter of 2007.

Type Approval Specifications and Procedures

The Authority has carried out a consultancy study which produced a set of comprehensive specifications and procedures suitable to the Botswana Telecommunications market. The Specifications covered both radiocommunication and telecommunication equipment. The report also produced a set of Type Approval procedures for Botswana. The report has been approved by the Board and awaits implementation.

Development of Spectrum Management Strategy

The BTA is currently undertaking a consultancy study aimed at developing a comprehensive Spectrum Management Strategy. The Consultancy study is carried out by Teleplan of Norway in association with an ICT Consultants a Botswana consultancy company.

Registration of Pre-Paid Mobile Phone Services

The BTA has undertaken this project after concerns have been raised by the law enforcement agencies that cell phones have been used in number of serious crimes committed over the past years. A draft report has been produced by the consultant (Adam Smith International) and is currently being reviewed by the BTA Management.

Botswana Telecom Market and Subscriber base

Presently, the telecom market comprises 1 fixed-line operator, 2 mobile cellular operators, 28 Internet Service Providers, 14 Data Service Providers and 21 Private Network Operators. As at 31 December 2006, the Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC) registered about 135 505 customers representing a teledensity of 7.75%, whilst the combined mobile sector subscriber base stands at an estimated 1,088,238 representing a teledensity of 62.45%.

BROADCASTING ISSUES

Licensing – National Private Radio Stations.

The National Broadcasting Board issued Tenders for the licensing of three private national radio stations. About eight applications were received. At the time of reporting the Board was in the final stages of evaluating the tenders. The licenses were expected to be issued at the end of March 2007. The significance of the licensing is that for the first time in the history of Botswana, Private Radio Stations will be able to broadcast nationwide. This

will enable people in other parts of the country to have access to a more diverse broadcasting content.

Broadcasting Policy before Parliament

After nearly four years at the drafting stage, the Draft Broadcasting Policy for Botswana was brought before Parliament by the Minister of Communications Science and Technology. The draft generated heated debates by both sides of the house. But the house failed to pass the bill because of differences on the issue of Public Service Broadcasting and Community broadcasting services. It is expected that revised draft will be presented before parliament during the course of 2007.

Development of Broadcasting Frequency Plan

The Authority has engaged ICT Consultants in association with ATDI France to develop a broadcasting frequency plan for both sound broadcasting and television broadcasting services. The broadcasting frequency plan will cover the following frequencies Medium Wave Frequencies (526.5 – 1606.5 kHz), FM Frequencies (87.5 – 108 MHz), Television VHF/UHF frequency bands (174 – 254 MHz / 470- 864 MHz) and the T-DAB L-Band (1.5 GHz).

CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

Quality of Service

In order to ensure the provision of quality service by operators, the BTA floated a tender in September 2006 for consultancy to develop guidelines for monitoring quality of service (QoS) and broadcasting content. The tender also sought to procure and install the QoS monitoring equipment. The tender has been evaluated and awaits awarding by the Board.

Enforcement

The BTA continues to enforce the law with regard to telecommunications and broadcasting matters. To this end, the BTA issues directives from time to time for operators to implement. However, two cases relating to such directives are still pending. One issue relates to a permission granted to the BTC (fixed line operator) to launch ADSL services on a pilot basis. BTC is yet to satisfy certain conditions relating to this directive. Another directive relates to BTC's treatment of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) vis-à-vis its subsidiary, Botsnet. These two issues have been referred to the Attorney General for prosecution.

Instrumentation

A Code of Conduct for telecommunications providers has been approved by the September 2006 Board. The Code creates a framework through which service providers will be monitored for efficiency and effectiveness in the way they deal with their consumers. The Code identifies a list of obligations and behaviors expected of an effective self regulating provider of telecommunications service. A strategy for implementation of the code is still being developed.

INTERNAL/MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Performance Management System

Started in January 2004, the Performance Management System, PMS, was meant to facilitate in the implementation of the BTA productivity Strategy. It ensures that the BTA adopts an integrated approach to the management of its staff. In 2006, a consultancy group was commissioned to undertake the organisational readiness survey for the PMS implementation. Several workshops were conducted in order to review organisational score cards, and analyse the results of the Readiness survey report, as well as to finalise the Organisational score cards. It has been clearly indicated that the staff is ready for the PMS implementation.

Social Responsibility

As one of the major players in the ICT industry in Botswana, the BTA also has dedicated some of its resources to improve and promote the use of ICTs through out Botswana. Every year the BTA donates ICT equipments to deserving causes mostly to schools, charitable organisations, and other Non-governmental organisations so as to improve ICT literacy and promote its use.

10th Anniversary Celebrations

During the period under review, the BTA also celebrated 10 years of its existence on the 14 December 2006 with the theme “Harvesting the fruits of hard labour”. Over the past 10 years the BTA has established itself as a world renowned regulatory body that ensures provision of affordable and quality communications. The citizens of Botswana now enjoy greater access to telecommunications, radio and Internet services. The 10th Anniversary Celebrations had as its main speaker, Dr. Hamadoun Tourè - ITU Secretary General elect and was also attended by among others, the former President of Botswana, Sir Q.K.J. Masire, Parliamentarians, captains of the telecommunications industry in Botswana, fellow regulators from Africa, to name but a few. The moment also served to bid farewell to the BTA founding

Chief Executive and the then Chief Executive Mr. C.M. Lekaukau who retired at the end of December 2006.