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Thank you, Minister Deora. I am very pleased to be joining all of you here today to provide some perspectives on mobile and its role not only as a communications device, but more importantly, as an enabler for empowerment.

For those of you who might not be familiar with the GSMA, we represent the interests of mobile operators on a global basis, with nearly 800 operator members and more than 230 other companies across the mobile ecosystem. I have been Director General for the GSMA for more than a year, having joined from France Telecom Orange where I was most recently the Executive Vice President for Mobile Services.

One of the most powerful tools in recent history, the mobile phone has had a profound impact on the world. There are more than 6.8 billion mobile connections globally, changing the way that more than 3.2 billion people keep in touch with each other, run their lives and their businesses, and consume information and entertainment.

India is currently the second-largest mobile market in the world of global. There are currently more than 900 million mobile connections and nearly 319 million individual subscribers in India. The difference between the numbers is due to the fact that Indians use on average 2.2 SIMs per person, much higher than the world’s average of about 1.5 SIMs per person, because they want to benefit from the latest local offers and promotions.

Mobile penetration in India, based on connections, stands at 72 per cent and this is forecast to rise to almost 100 per cent by 2017. Meanwhile, the penetration of unique mobile subscribers is currently at 25 per cent and is set to increase to 39 per cent at the end of 2017. 25 per cent penetration today, this clearly shows that there is still much to do to reach the entire population in India, and it is important that both the private sector and the government work jointly to further develop this.

The rapid growth of mobile is perhaps evidenced most dramatically by the projected expansion of Mobile Broadband and smartphones. Mobile Broadband is set to explode over the next five years – we have only 35 million Mobile Broadband connections today, and about the same number of smartphones in India. This could grow more than 10 times, to about 400 mobile broadband million connections by the end of 2017.

Mobile is a transformative technology that has had a significant economic and social impact upon India. Mobile brings access to healthcare where there are no doctors, access to education where there are no teachers, access to financial services where there are no banks.

A great example of this is IKSL, a joint venture between the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative and Bharti Airtel to deliver information to farmers via mobile. SIM cards, which also include agricultural value-added services, are distributed to cooperative members, and each day, they receive 5 pre-recorded voice messages on a variety of topics, such as farming techniques and topical information based on the season or weather, for example.

Farmers also have access to other resources including a farmer helpline. Launched in 2008, in partnership with the GSMA, the service now has 3 million users, and the information and advice has allowed farmers to improve their farming techniques, resulting in higher crop yields and improved economic opportunities.

Another example of how mobile is empowering Indian citizens is a partnership between Uninor and NGO Hand in Hand to train women to deliver information and communication technology training and support to other women in their communities. The aim of the programme is to empower local women with the skillsets that will allow them to improve their income generation and decision making processes. Through the programme, women are trained and then they set up local businesses to provide training in their communities, as well as to sell Uninor products like airtime top-up for a living.

In the future, we see mobile being even more prevalent in our lives, as nearly everyone and everything around us will be connected by mobile. In addition to mobile phones and tablets, we will see connected cars, medical monitors, TVs, game consoles, environmental sensors and a wide range of connected consumer electronics and household appliances.

This “Connected Living” is a very exciting opportunity, and not only benefits the mobile industry, but a wide range of adjacent industries. In India, the top three applications of Connected Living are connected vehicles, private building security systems and telemedicine. There are also many ways to use mobile connectivity to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector.

Mobile has proven to be a success story in India. However, today, I see India being at a crossroads. A key goal remains, and that is to bring connectivity to the 800 million Indian citizens who live in rural areas. This is not just voice services, but critically, it’s about bringing mobile broadband to every corner of this country.

There are currently around 35 million mobile broadband subscribers in India. There clearly is huge potential and the forecasts are promising, but we need to work in close cooperation with all our key stakeholders to build a stable regulatory and business environment. This is essential if we want to enable the next wave of growth and widespread mobile broadband deployment.

We are ready to help realise the government’s vision of making ‘broadband for all’ a reality. The allocation of spectrum for mobile services will be critical. One objective of the India National Telecom Policy-2012 is to ‘make available additional 300 MHz spectrum for IMT services by the year 2017 and another 200 MHz by 2020.’ We welcome this objective. The release of the 700MHz spectrum, for example, provides a unique opportunity to offer broadband to all, especially in rural areas. Having a roadmap for spectrum for the coming years will provide operators greater transparency and certainty over future spectrum allocations.

Pro-investment policies are also essential to the future growth of mobile. A number of elements, such as taxation of the industry, regulatory fees and spectrum pricing play an important role in building a favourable and sustainable business environment for the industry.

In this context, the recent 1800MHz auction revealed how important it is to set realistic reserve prices when auctioning spectrum. It is important to remember that mobile is a capital-intensive industry, with heavy investments needed in particular when it comes to rolling-out networks. Favourable investment policies combined with regulatory certainty are essential for operators to invest in confidence.

Further, we also need to think about what policies are needed to stimulate mobile deployment in the rural parts of India where nearly 70 per cent of the population lives, but where mobile services have a relatively low penetration, particularly compared to urban areas of India.

I would like to remind you of this striking number: mobile penetration in India, in terms of unique subscribers, stands only at 25 per cent today. Mobile presents tremendous opportunities for consumers and businesses throughout India, providing important socio-economic benefits and offering access to education, health services, financial services and much more, and we are focused as an industry on working with the Indian government to make mobile accessible to all.

Thank you.