Position paper for a new World Radiocommunication Conference agenda item for WRC2016

The importance played by the ITU[1] and WRC's in helping to achieve scale

The GSMA believes that the ITU and WRC's play a vital role in helping to ensure that spectrum is harmonised to the extent required to control radio interference and allow for economies of scale to be realised by the industry. Such economies of scale have allowed GSM to go from a niche product to nearly 4.5 billion GSM and 3GSM connections in 20 years.

The need for such widespread international harmonisation has meant that the process of acquiring such harmonised spectrum needs long term planning. For example the core 3G/IMT (UMTS in Europe) was identified by the ITU World Administrative Radio Conference in 1992, and was finally awarded in around the year 2000 and fully available around the year 2004. This means that it is important to ensure that planning process for identifying such spectrum takes place in good time, to allow for such long time horizons. However the benefits of such international harmonisation can be very great for mass market services such as mobile. Identification of bands by a WRC does not guarantee that allocations will be the same between different ITU regions or that there will not be different regulatory restrictions and timings. However WRC identifications do go a long way to giving industry confidence to develop products and help create the markets that will persuade administrations to implement what has been recommended.

Therefore GSMA welcomes the outcome of WRC-07 and propose to continue the work that could not be finished by WRC-07 in order to further maximise the degree of harmonisation of the frequency bands identified for IMT. The earliest point in time for this work is at WRC-16.

With this in mind, the GSMA has begun to think about the agenda items that will be required at WRC-16. However for a discussion to take place at WRC-16, it is necessary to define a proper agenda item during the WRC-12. The debate about agenda items for WRC-16 is starting to taking place now, in the run up to WRC-12 in January 2012.

The GSMA therefore believes that WRC-12 (under agenda item 8.2) should request that at WRC-16, the following should be made an agenda item, namely:

"To consider the frequency bands identified for IMT with a view to rationalising, consolidating, and expanding these as appropriate, with the objective of achieving internationally harmonised bands, preferably on a global basis."

Such an agenda item would give WRC-16 the flexibility it would require to ensure the best outcome for consumers and the most efficient use of the scarce spectrum resource.

Conclusion

The GSMA therefore would like to work with regulators and other stakeholders to discuss the formulation of a suitable agenda item to be agreed at WRC-12 for including in the debate and consensus at WRC-16.

[1] www.itu.int

Annex

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WRC-07 considered "frequency-related matters" for the future development of IMT and this was interpreted as enabling the conference to make new allocations. A complex outcome included, in addition to the existing provisions at 1800 MHz, 2 GHz and 2.6 GHz, allocations at UHF:

- 450 – 470 MHz world-wide
- 698 – 806 MHz Region 2 (Americas) and some Region 3 (Asia-Pacific) countries
- 790 – 862 MHz in ITU Region 1 (Europe, Africa and the Middle-East);

and above 1 GHz:

- 2300-2400 MHz world-wide
- 3400-3600 MHz in many countries of Region 1 and some countries in Region 3 (and some Region 2 countries extended the primary mobile service allocation to the whole of this band but with no reference to IMT).

These new allocations came into force as part of the International Radio Regulations at the beginning of 2009.

The rapid decision around the new frequency allocations for Mobile and identification for IMT during the WRC-07 had been very helpful to fulfil the initial requirements for additional spectrum for UMTS and LTE: this was certainly the greatest possible outcome that could have been achieved during this WRC-07 but it wasn't really possible to maximise benefits from a wider harmonisation (higher economies of scale and easier border coordination) and this has led to high fragmentation of the spectrum in the Frequency Table from the Article 5 of the Radio Regulations that should be somehow compensate at a future WRC.

It is therefore necessary to review – nine years after WRC-07 – the frequency bands identified for IMT at WRC-07 and try to remove inconsistencies and to obtain a greater degree of international harmonisation.

GSMA - August 2010