



**AN OPEN LETTER TO MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY Shri RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD
SPECTRUM SHORTAGE THREATENS "DIGITAL INDIA" VISION**

24 November 2014

Honourable Minister,

Mobile technology is the primary means of communications for many of India's citizens and mobile broadband is expected to be critical in bridging the digital divide for those who are yet to be connected. The mobile industry is ready to support your ambitious goals for establishing a 'Digital India', as a key enabler for transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge-based economy.

Mobile broadband will be the backbone of 'Digital India'. Building smart cities, creating new businesses and e-commerce opportunities, being able to access e-Government services or improving the delivery of education, healthcare and financial services are many of the benefits that rely on broadband connectivity.

However, ubiquitous mobile communications and broadband services will not become a reality without the availability of sufficient spectrum. In this context, current plans to auction spectrum could have severe consequences for India. Failure of operators to retain their currently used spectrum would not only jeopardise existing investments, but seriously threaten the continuity of the services provided to citizens across the country.

The GSMA, on behalf of its member operators, is concerned about the Government's intention to conduct an auction next year in an environment of severe spectrum shortage. We fully support the recommendations from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India to make additional spectrum available prior to holding any further auctions. Over 60 per cent of harmonised spectrum is yet to be allocated to mobile in India¹. The next round of auction should only be conducted after adequate spectrum is made available in all key 800, 900, 1800 and 2100MHz frequencies, which are globally harmonised bands with mature ecosystems.

Unleashing sufficient harmonised spectrum at affordable prices, could see a sharp increased mobile broadband penetration in India, with over 250 million connections on either 3G or 4G networks by 2017².

Under the leadership of His Excellency, the Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Government of India has an opportunity to reinvigorate the mobile sector and re-ignite investor confidence so that the industry becomes an active partner for delivering on the Government's Digital Agenda.

We respectfully call on the Government to urgently address these concerns to avoid irreparable damage to the Indian mobile industry and consumers and to enable long-term investment that will support future economic growth.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Bouverot". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Bouverot
Director General, GSMA

¹ GSMA Mobile Economy India 2013

² GSMA Intelligence projection for Q4 2017