

Telecommunications Regulatory Affairs Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Meeting Held on Wednesday, 31 July 2024 at 2:30 p.m. in OFCA Conference Room, 20/F Wu Chung House

Members Present

Mr Esmond Chiu	Office of the Communications Authority ("OFCA") ("Chairman")
Mr Sidney Tsan	OFCA ("Secretary")
Mr Ben Li	The Institution of Engineering and Technology Hong Kong ("IETHK")
Mr Alex Wong	Communications Association of Hong Kong
Mr Francis Fong	Hong Kong Information Technology Federation
Mr Karson Ng	China Telecom Global Limited
Mr Law Jia	Easy Tone Network Limited ("Easy Tone")
Ms Sophia Yap	Hong Kong Broadband Network Limited / HKBN Enterprise Solutions Limited / HKBN Enterprise Solutions HK Limited ("HKBN")
Mr Kevin Chu	Hong Kong Telecommunications (HKT) Limited / PCCW-HKT Telephone Limited and Hong Kong Telecommunications (HKT) Limited / PCCW Global (HK) Limited ("HKT") / Genius Brand Limited
Ms Sarah Hui	Hutchison Telephone Company Limited ("HTCL")
Miss Katherine Kwok	HGC Global Communications Limited
Mr Patrick Ng	NTT Com Asia Limited
Mr Tin-Lun Or	SmarTone Communications Limited / SmarTone Mobile Communications Limited ("SmarTone")
Ir Chi-Wah Tang	Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF")
Dr Justin Chuang	Ad Personam
Dr Patrick Tsie	Ad Personam

In Attendance

Ms Vivien Lau	Consumer Council
Ir Ken Chan	The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (“HKIE”)
Mr Bruce Chan	IETHK
Mr Kenneth Kwok	ComNet Telecom (HK) Limited (“ComNet”)
Mr Malcolm Leong	HKBN
Mr Alex Lai	Hong Kong Cable Television Limited (“HKCTV”)
Mr Tak Chow	SmarTone
Ms Shelley Ng	Village Telephone Limited (“VTL”)
Ms Irene Lau	Localised Wireless Broadband Service (LWBS) / Localised Wireless Broadband System (Private) (LWBSP) / Public Radiocommunications Service (PRS) / Wireless Internet of Things (WIoT) Licensees as a group (“LWBS/LWBSP/PRS/WIoT Licensees as a group”)
Mr Eddy Ng	OFCA
Ms Christine Chim	OFCA
Mr Desmond Young	OFCA
Mr Dennis Leung	OFCA
Mr Michael Chan	OFCA
Mr Raymond Ho	OFCA
Ms Vera Chung	OFCA
Mr Eric Yung	OFCA
Mr Orion To	OFCA
Ms Pancy Cheng	OFCA
Mr Penny Lo	OFCA
Ms Eilly Ngan	OFCA
Mr Freeman Wong	OFCA
Ms Sherrine Lo	OFCA
Mr Tony Yeung	OFCA

Observers

Mr Alex Tsang	China Mobile Hong Kong Company Limited ("CMHK")
Ms Noel Chu	CMHK
Mr Kit Chan	Easy Tone
Ms Celeste Chong	HKCTV
Mr Ken Cheung	SmarTone
Ms Ling Wong	Towngas Telecommunications Fixed Network Limited
Mr Francis Ko	VTL

Members Absent

Mr Michael Kan	Consumer Council
Ir Dr Philip Chan	HKIE
Mr Tony Tsang	VNET Group Limited
Ms Karen Mo	CMHK
Ms Sarah Zhang	China Unicom (Hong Kong) Operations Limited / Mobile Virtual Network Operators as a group
Mr Dickson Ip	ComNet
Miss Xen Lim	Equinix Hong Kong Limited
Mr Raymond Chan	HKCTV
Mr Hing-Wah Ngan	Towngas
Mr Terence Ho	TraxComm Limited
Ms Clio Ip	VTL
Mr Haining Hu	Vodafone Enterprise Hong Kong Limited
Mr Julian Chow	Unified Carrier (External Fixed Services) Licensees as a group
Mr Chung-Ho Yuen	Services-based Operators Licensees as a group
Mr T. Y. Hui	LWBS/LWBSP/PRS/WIoT Licensees as a group
Ms Katy Lau	Ad Personam
Prof Yingjun Zhang	Ad Personam

The Chairman welcomed all participants to the meeting.

Item 1 Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting

2. The Chairman said that the draft minutes of the 26th meeting were circulated to Members for comment on 23 February 2024. With adoption of some textual amendments suggested by a Member, the minutes of the 26th meeting were confirmed.

Item 2 Matters Arising

3. Regarding the progress on the legislative amendment to strengthen the fifth generation mobile (“5G”) infrastructure by ensuring availability of space in and access to new buildings for installation of mobile communications facilities, the Secretary reported that the relevant bill was passed by the Legislative Council on 21 February 2024 and the Telecommunications (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 (“Amendment Ordinance”) was gazetted on 1 March 2024, and following that, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development appointed 1 October 2024 as the day on which the relevant provisions of the Amendment Ordinance came into operation. This would make the new requirements to reserve space for installation of mobile communications facilities applicable to new commercial, industrial, residential and hotel buildings (or redevelopment of such buildings) with general building plans approved by the Building Authority with effect from 1 April 2025.

4. While the Communications Authority would promulgate a code of practice to provide guidance for mobile network operators (“MNOs”), building developers and construction professionals, the Buildings Department would update its current Practice Note APP-84 accordingly for the relevant building developers and construction professionals to observe in compliance of the new statutory requirements.

5. The Secretary reported the latest progress of the new policy initiatives to promote 5G development –

- (a) Based on the inputs from MNOs and relevant Government departments, OFCA proposed in a consultation document issued on 12 July 2024 the implementation framework for the Subsidy Scheme to Extend 5G Coverage in Rural and Remote Areas. The consultation was in progress;

- (b) To enhance 5G network capacity at major public event venues, MNOs had installed and activated 5G radio base stations (“RBS”) at AsiaWorld-Expo, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and near Victoria Park. 5G RBS installation works at Central Harbourfront Event Space, Hong Kong Coliseum and Kai Tak Sports Park were in progress, and the 5G RBS at these three venues had been installed and activated in phases; and
- (c) On 19 July 2024, OFCA published two information memoranda for two auctions to be conducted in November 2024 (one for spectrum in the 850/900 MHz and 2.3 GHz bands, and another for spectrum in the 6/7 GHz band), inviting interested parties to submit applications before 20 September 2024.

Item 3 Implementation of the SMS Sender Registration Scheme and Other Measures to Combat Fraudulent SMS (TRAAC Paper No. 3/2024)

6. The Chairman invited Mr Michael Chan to brief Members on the implementation progress of the Short Message Service (“SMS”) Sender Registration Scheme (“SSRS”) and other measures to combat fraudulent SMS.

7. The Chairman encouraged Members to invite their corporate customers and business partners, where appropriate, to participate in the SSRS, so as to further enhance its effectiveness for the benefit of the general public at large.

8. Ir Chi-Wah Tang stated that the HKPF had been sending SMS with the prefix “#” in the sender ID since January 2024, and enquired whether OFCA would consider extending similar measures to voice calls. The Chairman said that OFCA had been adopting a multi-pronged approach in combating fraudulent calls, including insertion of “+” sign in the calling number display to help identify telephone calls originated from outside Hong Kong, sending alerts for suspicious calls originated from outside Hong Kong, and suspension of telecommunications services of

local phone numbers suspected to be involved in scam cases. Owing to technical constraints of the telecommunications networks, it was currently not technically feasible to use alphanumeric characters in the calling number display for voice calls. OFCA would continue to work on other measures to combat fraudulent calls, and welcomed the industry to share ideas on this matter.

9. Mr Ben Li suggested shortening the voice alert for suspicious calls originated from outside Hong Kong, as some callers might hang up the call early due to the long duration of the voice alert. The Chairman mentioned that since the current alert message was trilingual, operators had already endeavoured to keep the message duration to within approximately eight seconds, which should be acceptable to the general public.

10. In response to Mr Kevin Chu's enquiry regarding any deadline for participation by all Government bureaux/departments in the SSRS, the Chairman replied that OFCA had been actively encouraging Government bureaux/departments with need for sending SMS to members of the public to join the SSRS as soon as possible. Mr Kevin Chu further enquired whether OFCA could provide any recent statistics from the HKPF regarding the effectiveness of the various anti-scam measures implemented. The Chairman mentioned that OFCA would collect the relevant statistics from the HKPF and report in the next TRAAC meeting.

11. With regard to Mr Francis Fong's comment that major companies in the transportation sector, e.g. airlines, should also participate in the SSRS, the Chairman responded that OFCA had already taken proactive steps to reach out and invite such companies to join.

[Post-meeting note: As of 16 August 2024, some companies in the transportation sector, such as Greater Bay Airlines and KMB, joined the SSRS.]

12. Regarding Mr Francis Fong's questions on whether overseas mobile users would be able to receive SMS with the prefix “#” in the sender IDs, the Chairman replied that Hong Kong mobile subscribers using roaming services abroad should be able to receive SMS with the prefix “#” in the sender IDs.

Item 4 Progress of Implementation of the Subsidy Scheme to Extend Fibre-based Networks to Villages in Remote Areas (TRAAC Paper No. 4/2024)

13. Mr Dennis Leung briefed Members on the implementation progress of the Subsidy Scheme to Extend Fibre-based Networks to Villages in Remote Areas (“Rural Broadband Subsidy Scheme”).

14. Ms Vivien Lau enquired how the villagers and members of the public would know the availability and implementation progress of the fibre-based networks under the Rural Broadband Subsidy Scheme in specific villages. Mr Eddy Ng said that upon completion of roll-out works to villages, the fixed network operators (“FNOs”) concerned were required to provide a contact point to villagers to facilitate their subscription of high-speed broadband services. The FNOs concerned would also need to post on their websites the villages connected with fibre-based networks under the Rural Broadband Subsidy Scheme. The Chairman supplemented that as extension of fibre-based networks to the villages involved civil works, the FNOs concerned needed to maintain close communication with the villagers throughout the process. Members of the public could also contact OFCA for information about the work progress.

15. In response to Mr Tin-Lun Or’s enquiry about how the MNOs could obtain information of network roll-out to facilitate their negotiation with the FNOs concerned for provision of fibre-based services to support mobile backhaul, the Chairman said that MNOs could make inquiry with OFCA or the FNOs concerned for getting the information.

Item 5 Proposed Framework for the Subsidy Scheme to Extend 5G Coverage in Rural and Remote Areas (TRAAC Paper No. 5/2024)

16. Mr Dennis Leung briefed Members on the proposed framework for the Subsidy Scheme to Extend 5G Coverage in Rural and Remote Areas (“Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme”).

17. Ir Chi-Wah Tang asked whether the proposed Government venues stipulated at the annex to the consultation document would also be

covered in the 2022 Policy Address initiative for installation of mobile communications facilities in new buildings. The Chairman said that the 2022 Policy Address initiative mainly covered four types of specified new and redeveloped buildings (namely commercial, industrial, residential and hotel buildings). New Government buildings and public housing would also follow similar arrangements. OFCA would actively liaise with relevant Government departments to facilitate the timely installation of RBS under the Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme to enhance 5G coverage in rural and remote areas.

18. Ms Shelley Ng, Mr Ken Cheung and Mr Tin-Lun Or enquired if costs of civil works for the provision of fibre and electricity to the proposed RBS sites would be covered under the Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme. Mr Eddy Ng pointed out that the Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme mainly focused on subsidising RBS installation, equipment and facilities directly related to RBS installation, and therefore, costs of civil works for the provision of fibre and electricity would not be covered.

19. Mr Francis Fong asked whether the proposed RBS sites would be shared among MNOs and if not, whether an RBS site of a particular network without shared use by other MNOs could still connect emergency calls made by customers not subscribed to that network. Ms Shelley Ng also enquired whether an application with one single participating MNO would be considered. The Chairman said that the lead MNO was required to observe the shared-use principle and confirm whether other MNOs would share the site when making the application. Higher priority would be afforded to those applications that would be shared by more MNOs. Even if not all MNOs might participate at a site location, all mobile users could still make emergency calls in areas covered by any single mobile network.

20. Mr Kevin Chu enquired about the handling of application for installing RBS in sites outside the list mentioned in the consultation document. The Chairman said that OFCA was seeking MNOs' further views for finalising the list of proposed RBS sites. MNOs might put forward alternative sites based on actual condition for OFCA's consideration.

21. In response to the enquiry from Mr Francis Ko on whether MNOs might propose to install RBS in private buildings, such as village

houses, under the Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme, the Chairman said that such proposals of MNOs would be considered on a case by case basis subject to infrastructural availability and other practical considerations.

22. Ir Ken Chan asked whether, apart from country park areas, venues in remote villages, such as public toilets, would be considered under the Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme. The Chairman said that OFCA had all along implemented various measures, for example, the 2022 Policy Address initiative on reservation of space in new and redeveloped buildings, which would also benefit villages in the surrounding areas of the buildings. The Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme mainly focused on enhancement of mobile coverage and capacity in underserved areas, such as country parks, which would not only ensure safety of rural activities but also benefit remote villages in the vicinity.

23. Ms Sarah Hui asked whether MNOs would be allowed to terminate a subsidised RBS due to low usage. Ms Christine Chim pointed out that MNOs would be required to ensure that each subsidised RBS would provide stable, quality mobile services for not less than 10 years. If MNOs failed to comply with their service pledge, they had to return part of the subsidy received based on the actual circumstances, in order to ensure the proper use of public funds.

24. Ms Sarah Hui enquired about the detailed procedures for reimbursement of the subsidy. Mr Eddy Ng said that relevant application guidelines would be published upon launch of the Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme. The guidelines would provide details about the reimbursement procedures. To ensure streamlined procedures for administering the Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme, the subsidy would be granted to the lead MNO, who would be responsible for allocation of the funding received to the sharing MNOs according to their agreement.

25. Dr Patrick Tsie asked whether the Rural 5G Subsidy Scheme would mandate MNOs to cover specific areas, such as underserved hiking trails. The Chairman said that in order to strike a balance between enhancing mobile coverage and timely implementation of RBS installation so as to ensure the public can benefit as soon as possible, the Government venues identified for the proposed RBS sites were chosen based on the availability of suitable structure, electricity supply and fibre connectivity. It was expected that mobile coverage in hiking trails would also be

enhanced upon completion of RBS installation.

26. The Chairman welcomed the views and opinions from Members. Further comments of Members, if any, could be sent to OFCA within two weeks' time.

Item 6 Any Other Business

27. As the current term of TRAAC would expire in August 2024 and the present meeting would be the last meeting of the term, the Chairman expressed gratitude to all Members for their participation, invaluable advice and support throughout the two-year term.

28. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

**Office of the Communications Authority
September 2024**