



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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URCA Publishes Public Consultation on a Draft Reference Access & Interconnection Offer “RAIO” by BTC today

Today, Utilities Regulation & Competition Authority (URCA) released on its website a Public Consultation on a draft Reference Access and Interconnection Offer (“RAIO”) by Bahamas Telecommunication Company Ltd. (BTC) for comments by stakeholders and the general public. The draft RAIO is designed to facilitate access and interconnection between BTC and other licensed operators (OLOs) of fixed networks and services in The Bahamas.

URCA issued a Final Decision on 22 April, 2010 on the Types of Obligations imposed on BTC under the Communications Act. URCA set out its final list of products that were found to be in the high-level SMP (Significant Market Power) market and the list of specific *ex ante* obligations to which BTC must adhere. The Final Decision and the RAIO consultation document are available on URCA’s website at www.urbahamas.bs

The Public Consultation document contains URCA’s preliminary views and recommended amendments to the draft RAIO published by BTC. The consultation provides an opportunity for members of the public, licensees and other interested parties to submit comments and submissions to URCA by 19 October, 2010. The document has proposed a number of questions to assist respondents in preparing the written comments on BTC’s RAIO.

URCA has comprehensively reviewed BTC’s draft RAIO from a legal, contractual, technical and economic perspective, to both ensure that the terms and conditions are consistent with the Communications Act, BTC’s licence conditions, regulatory and other measures issued by URCA and other documents. In reviewing the draft RAIO, URCA sought to identify any aspects of the document that may not reflect best practice and which, in URCA’s preliminary view, if left unchanged may not support the development of sustainable competition. URCA has identified areas in the draft RAIO that are likely to be of concern to OLOs, for example:

- Structure of the offer which impose SMP obligations on OLOs;
- Limitations or gaps in some of the services proposed
- Restrictions on the ability of OLOs to initiate a review or amendment to the RAIO.
- The level of charges;
- Limited Points of Interconnection.

Mr. Usman Saadat, Director of Policy & Regulation at URCA said “Reference offers are important to establishing competitive environments that can facilitate interconnection. Traditionally, incumbents or

SMP operators are reluctant to quickly reach mutually agreed arrangements with emerging operators. Therefore, acceptable regulatory principles in many countries require that the Dominant or SMP Operator publishes a Reference Access and Interconnection Offer (“RAIO”) once it has been formally accepted and approved by the regulator. The Communications Act in The Bahamas has a similar requirement.”

URCA will review all comments and submissions from the consultation ending 19 October, 2010 and following URCA’s formal approval of the RAIO, BTC will be required to publish its approved RAIO to the public. The approved RAIO will provide the basis for interconnection negotiation between BTC and OLOs and establish the foundation for further liberalization.

URCA remains committed to transparency and fairness in its decisions.