



For Immediate Release

URCA presents 2010 Annual Report and 2011 Annual Plan at Public Meeting

The Utilities Regulation & Competition Authority (URCA) presented its 2010 Annual Report and 2011 Annual Plan at a meeting on Wednesday, May 25 at the Harry C. Moore Library and Information Centre. This was the full financial year for URCA and members of the general public, media representatives, and industry stakeholders attended the event, which was held to fulfill URCA's mandate of transparency and public accountability.

Kathleen Riviere-Smith, URCA's Director of Policy & Regulation, revealed that in 2010 URCA expenses were over budget by 2.9 percent, with a projected budget of \$4,775,765 and actual expenditure of \$4,917,410. The disparity is due to several additional costs, including the costs of membership of international organisations which were previously the purview of Government, travelling expenses for two out-of-town Board members to attend meetings locally, additional staff costs, implementation of new performance management system, professional services for regulatory advisors, and costs associated with URCA's move to its UBS Annex House location. Nonetheless, the Authority reported a comprehensive income of about \$131,000 for the year, which represents the surplus of revenues over expenses.

Mrs. Smith revealed that last year's amendments to the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA) Act 2009 required URCA to remit \$5.9 million to the Government's Consolidated Fund. In January 2011 URCA paid \$4.3 million into the Fund.

As URCA continues its mandate to facilitate electronic communications in The Bahamas, it has tabled a 3-year plan to begin in 2011. In the first quarter of 2011, URCA hopes to implement formal regulatory safeguards, promote sustainable competition in the market, establish public interest through public service broadcasting and content regulation, and ensure that consumers across The Bahamas have access to the same quality of service.

In the second quarter, URCA plans to establish a Consumer Advisory Council made up of members of the public and stakeholders who will help URCA develop certain policies by providing input and feedback. URCA will also consult on the publication of the Separated Accounts prepared by Significant Market Power (SMP) operators, alternative dispute resolution between operators, complaints handling and consumer dispute resolution; and conduct a market review of the methodology to assess Significant Market Power. The review is currently

underway, and the public can download the “Methodology for Market Review of SMP, ECS 9/2011” consultation document on URCA’s website, www.urcabahamas.bs.

In the third quarter of 2011, URCA will conduct a study of BTC’s efficiency, consult on a proposed 2012 fee schedule, and consult on an official Codes of Practice for Broadcasters with regard to content. In the fourth quarter URCA will consult on the digital switchover from analog television broadcasting, in response to mandate by the International Telecommunication Union that all broadcasters must switch to digital signals by June 2015.

Other panel members at Wednesday’s public meeting included Wayne Aranha, URCA’s Chairman; J Paul Morgan, Deputy Chairman; Katherine Doehler, communications specialist; and Vincent Wallace-Whitfield, Senior Case Officer and Secretary to the Board. URCA’s Board is comprised of three non-executive members - Mr. Aranha, Mr. Morgan and Ms. Doehler, and two executive members - Mrs. Smith, and Mr. Usman Saadat, CEO. Non- executive appointments are made by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister and, with respect to the Chairman’s appointment, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

Addressing the gathering during his welcome address, Mr. Aranha noted the absence of Mr. Saadat from Wednesday’s meeting, and said that the Board, respecting the validity of Mr. Saadat’s reasons for wishing to terminate his relationship with URCA, accepted his resignation, which will take effect on 31 August 2011.

“I’d like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge the contribution that Mr. Saadat has made to the development of URCA during his time here. He brought great intelligence, experience and professionalism to the task which has been challenging, as pioneering times often are. The professionals of URCA charged with carrying the organization forward have benefitted from his tenure. We wish him success in his future endeavours,” said Mr. Aranha. The Board is now in the early stages of initiating a “competitive selection process” for the selection of a new CEO. .

Copies of URCA’s 2010 Annual Report and 2011 Annual Plan were distributed at the public meeting. The report is also available through URCA’s website, <http://www.urcabahamas.bs>. The report includes the audited financial statements for fiscal 2011 and an unqualified audit opinion from the independent auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers.

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