

September 12, 2010

Dr. J. S. Sarma
Chairman
The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
Mahanagar Doorsanchar Bhawan
Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg (Old Minto Road)
New Delhi-110 002

Re: Consultation Paper on the issues of Technical Interoperability of DTH Set-top-boxes

Dear Sir,

This has reference to the Consultation Paper No. 11/2010 dated August 20, 2010 released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India ("TRAI") on Technical Interoperability of DTH Set-top-Boxes ("**Consultation Paper**").

Introduction:

At the outset, we welcome the initiative taken by the Authority to generate the debate on the issue of Technical Interoperability of DTH Set-top-boxes. Since the start of DTH operations in India from 2003 onwards, DTH services have registered an impressive growth. The number of DTH subscribers across India is reported to be over 21 million as on March 2010. The growth in terms of the number of subscribers continues to be significant and is expected to be of the order of 21% on CAGR basis for the period 2009-2014. Today, besides Doordarshan, there are six private DTH service providers. **Since there exists an effective competition, with six private DTH operators offering Pay TV services directly to subscribers on all India basis, a subscriber is able to chose the service provider after evaluating prices, quality and range of services.**

Technical Interoperability

Under the TRAI Regulations, DTH operators are covered under the definition of 'Distributor of TV Channels'. Therefore, the principal role of the DTH operator is also to retransmit television signals. In order to fulfill their primary obligation and to ensure technical interoperability, we are of the view that all DTH operators must offer a standard DTH Set-top-box. In this regard, we have drawn an analogy from the telecom sector, where SIM cards are inserted into the same mobile device to receive the services of different service providers. **In this background, we agree with the TRAI's view that in order to maintain sanctity of effective competition, technical interoperability is must. Our recommendations on this issue are as below:**

The Conditional Access Module (CAM) needs to be separated from the rest of the device and all Set Top Boxes should feature a common interface. Any subscriber who wishes to change his/her DTH service provider should be able to do so by purchasing the CAM from the new operator and inserting the same into his old Set Top Box. In short all Set Top Boxes should have Open Architecture (non-proprietary) Set Top Box, which will ensure technical compatibility and effective interoperability among different DTH service providers. The Government from time to time should also lay down specifications for Set Top Boxes to be provided by the DTH service providers.



Wholesale Level Tariffs

Given the above, it is submitted that tariff regulations was imposed when the market was developing and required protection. However, in view of the competitive DTH market, in response to issue no. 3.5 of the Consultation Paper, we request the Authority to carve out an exception to the 'the Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Fourth) (Addressable Systems) Tariff Order, 2010' with respect to the DTH Platforms and allow forbearance in Tariff at all levels in the interest of competition, consumer choice and future development of the DTH industry.

We would be glad to provide any clarifications, should the Authority need any support.

Yours sincerely,
For Viacom18 Media Private Limited.



Authorized signatory