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For Immediate Release

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

TRAI Conducts 1st Workshop on Achieving Set-Top-Box (STB) Interoperability through Downloadable Conditional Access System (CAS).

New Delhi, 9th May 2019: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), conducted a workshop to discuss the Downloadable CAS based solution to implement STB interoperability today at TRAI Headquarters.

2. TRAI promulgated the new regulatory framework for Broadcast and Cable Television sector, after a long process of intensive deliberations with various stakeholders, effective from 29th December 2018. Transparency, non-discrimination, protection of consumer interest are the cornerstones of this new framework. For consumer, freedom of choice and paying only for the chosen channel is the underlying objective of the new framework.

3. Choice entails the freedom to avail better service-offerings by various players in the market. As a logical next step towards this objective, TRAI has been exploring the important issue of inter-operability of STB. Presently, a consumer is bound to her/his service provider as each STB is bound to the service provider. In case a consumer wishes to change the service provider, the consumer is required to invest in a new STB, thereby forcing a cost to such switchover. Many STB's of erstwhile service provider remain unused, thereby creating huge electronic waste. Inter-operability of STB is also desirable for creation of open and competitive market bringing in advantage of volume of scale and consumer preference.

4. TRAI has been engaging with the stakeholders since last two years for introducing STB interoperability. The issue has its own challenges with disparate interest' groups among Distribution Platform Owners, CAS vendors, STB manufacturers and other stakeholders. Broadcasting sector being content centric, the security of content and robust anti-piracy features is necessary. Affordability of STB remains an important criterion and any suggested solution should not cause undue increase in price of STB. Ensuring proper content security, strong anti-piracy features and flexibility (to service providers for offering value-added-services) while keeping the STB costs reasonable are the main challenges for achieving STB interoperability.

5. There are few possible solutions for achieving interoperability in unidirectional broadcast network. This includes a smart-card based solution designed by C-DOT. Another solution, using a simul-crypt allowing downloadable-CAS has now been proposed. The authority is working with system integrators, SOC vendors, CAS providers and other stakeholders for technical discussions. After detailed consultations, a Proof-of-Concept (POC) Testing of the proposed solution will be arranged. A successful POC testing will address the vital concerns of industry stakeholders related to security, piracy and practicality.

6. Speaking on the occasion Dr. R.S. Sharma Chairman TRAI highlighted that Consumer interest remain the focus of the Authority. "The interoperability brings the economies of scale, freedom of choice, promotes competition that results in overall growth of the sector", he said. STB interoperability is very important to empower the consumer and engender further growth in the broadcasting sectors. Based on the experience of Mobile Number Portability, it is certain that interoperability will promote competition and will be a win-win for all stakeholders on medium to long term basis.

7. The workshop was attended by more than 60 participants representing leading Broadcasters, Direct To Home (DTH) operators, Multi Systems Operators (MSOs), SOC[1] vendors, CAS suppliers, STB manufacturers and System Integrators. TRAI will further deliberate with the stakeholders to identify the gaps, if any in the proposed solution before taking up the Proof-of-Concept testing. The Authority expects that involvement and support of all the industry stakeholders will help in developing the acceptable solution for STB interoperability by the year end.

8. TRAI invites suggestions/ technical inputs for enabling STB interoperability. Stakeholders can send suggestions to Sh. Anil Kumar Bhardwaj Advisor (B& CS) at advbcs-2@trai.gov.in or at project.stb@trai.gov.in .

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(S.K. GUPTA)
Secretary (TRAI)

[1] A system on a chip (SoC) is an integrated circuit that combines the required electronic circuits of various computer components onto a single, integrated chip (IC).