ITU-APT Foundation of India

October 5, 2019

To,

Shri S.K. Singhal, Advisor (BB&PA)
Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
New Delhi

By e-mail to sksinghal@trai.gov.in

Subject: Comments/Counter comments on Consultation Paper on Review of Scope of Infrastructure Providers Category-I (IP-I) Registration

Dear Sir,

ITU-APT Foundation of India is a non-profit, non-political, non-partisan Industry foundation registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act, 1960. IAFI is working for last 15 years with the prime objective of encouraging involvement of professionals, corporate, public/private sector industries, R&D organizations, academic institutions, and such other agencies engaged in development of Indian Telecom sector in the activities of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT). The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has recognized the Foundation as an international/regional Telecommunications organization. ITU-APT is also having close working relations with similar organizations in many other countries including, Japan, Indonesia and USA. ITU-APT Foundation of India (ITU-APT) is sector Member of the ITU Development Bureau (ITU-D) and ITU Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (ITU-T) which manifests its usefulness of the Indian Telecom industry

ITU-APT Foundation of India welcomes the consultation initiated by TRAI on reviewing the scope of IP-1 Registration. ITU-APT comments/counter comments on the subject are enclosed herewith. The vision of providing 50 Mbps universal broadband connection to every citizen, as envisaged in the National Digital Communication Policy (NDCP) 2018, can only be achieved by creating the necessary infrastructure. These initiatives will also be critical for preparing the groundwork for future technologies like 5G, which will involve much higher volumes of data flow necessitating higher capacity needs for backhaul.

IP-1 is a critical category for telecommunication and digital communications, as it forms the backbone of the entire ecosystem. The role played by the extant IP-1 in promoting the digital revolution in India is well acknowledged. ITU-APT response to the present consultation paper is in the spirit of the consultation process, which is to explore possibilities to enhance the

ITU-APT's views and counter comments on TRAI Consultation Paper on "Review of Scope of Infrastructure Providers Category-I (IP-I) Registration" are privded in the enclosure

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ITU-APT's views and counter comments on TRAI Consultation Paper on "Review of Scope of Infrastructure Providers Category-I (IP-I) Registration"

Q1.   Should the scope of Infrastructure Providers Category–I (IP-I) registration be enhanced to include provisioning of common sharable active infrastructure also?

ITU-APT's Response:

1. **Yes, ITU-APT recommends that the scope of IP-1 should be enhanced to include provisioning of common sharable active infrastructure.**

2. **As brought out by TRAI in Consultation Paper, IP-1s were permitted by the DoT to provide Active infrastructure/ network elements vide their notification dated 09th March 2009, However, this was withdrawn by DoT on 28th November 2016 nullifying the entire purpose of increasing investment in infrastructure provisioning by IP-1.**

3. **NDCP-2018 which has now been approved by Union Cabinet and Gazette Notified by the Government of India in Oct'2018 also envisages enhancement of scope of IP-1 vide Clause No. 1.1(f) as under:**

"Encourage and facilitate sharing of active infrastructure by enhancing the scope of Infrastructure Providers (IP) and promoting and incentivizing deployment of common sharable, passive as well as active, infrastructure."

4. **Various benefits that would be accrued to the telecom industry especially the debt-ridden service providers due to active infrastructure sharing are:**

i.   **Capex and Opex saving**

ii.   **Faster time to roll-out services**

iii.   **Cost & Energy efficiencies**

iv.   **Increased Connectivity**

v.   **Reduces entry barriers and increase competition**

5. Considering the above benefits, TRAI had also recommended for enhancement of scope of IP-1 to include active infrastructure as well, vide its recommendations dated 2nd February 2018 regarding "Input for formulation of NTP-2018" to the Government.

6. In view of the above, ITU-APT strongly recommends that scope of IP-1 should be enhanced to cover active infrastructure as well.

Q2. **In case the answer to the preceding question is in the affirmative, then**

i) What should be common sharable active infrastructure elements which can be permitted to be owned, established, and maintained by IP-I for provisioning on rent/lease/sale basis to service providers licensed/ permitted/ registered with DoT/ MIB? Please provide details of common sharable active infrastructure elements as well as the category of telecommunication service providers with whom such active infrastructure elements can be shared by IP-I, with justification.

ITU-APT's Response:

1. As mentioned in our response to Q1 above, active infrastructure was already permitted under the scope of IP-1 vide DoT letter dated 09th March 2009, however, the same was disallowed w.e.f. 28th November 2016. The active elements that were earlier covered under the scope of IP-1 includes:

   i. Antenna

   ii. Feeder Cable

   iii. Node-B

   iv. Radio Access Network

   v. Transmission System

2. ITU-APT recommends that in initial phase, same active elements as were permitted by DoT vide letter dated 9th March 2009 should be included in the scope of IP-1. Permitting the same again would not require any further deliberations as the same was already permitted to the IP-1 earlier.

3. ITU-APT further recommends that sharable infrastructure should also be allowed to be shared with entities other than section (4) licensees under Indian Telegraph Act i.e. with the service providers licensed/permitted/registered with DoT/MIB or any other Govt. Department/Ministry for providing communication services. This will ensure other stakeholders/service providers are also benefited from infrastructure sharing.

ii) Should IP-I be allowed to provide end-to-end bandwidth through leased lines to service providers licensed/ permitted/ registered with DoT/ MIB also? If yes, please provide details of category of service providers to it may be permitted with justification.

ITU-APT's Response:

IP-1 should be allowed to provide dark fiber/leased-line to enable respective service providers to lit the bandwidth to enable the services to their respective customers.

iii) Whether the existing registration conditions applicable for IP-I are appropriate for enhanced scope or some change is required? If change is suggested, then please provide details with reasoning and justification.

ITU-APT's Response:

1. ITU-APT recommends that there is no requirement to change any existing IP-1 registration conditions if the above-mentioned (refer to response to Q2(i)) active elements are brought under the scope of IP-1 as the same were also allowed to be provided by IP-1 as per DoT letter dated 9th March 2009.

2. Active Infrastructure Sharing through IP-1 can be implemented successfully without any change in existing conditions as applicable in case of passive Infrastructure.

iv) **Should IP-I be made eligible to obtain Wireless Telegraphy Licenses from Wireless Planning and Coordination (WPC) wing of the DoT for possessing and importing wireless equipment? What methodology should be adopted for this purpose?**

ITU-APT's Response:

ITU-APT recommends that IP-1 should be allowed to obtain Wireless Telegraphy Licenses from WPC wing of the DoT on same terms and conditions as applicable to other stakeholders/service providers possessing/importing wireless equipment.

v) **Should Microwave Backbone (MWB) spectrum allocation be permitted to IP-I for establishing point to point backbone connectivity using wireless transmission systems?**

ITU-APT's Response:

TAIPA recommends that IP-1 should be allowed to own and install non-radiating MW antennas enabling licensees/service providers to establish point-to-point backbone connectivity.

Q3.   In case the answer to the preceding question in part (1) is in the negative, then suggest alternative means to facilitate faster rollout of active infrastructure elements at competitive prices.

Not applicable in view of the response above

Q4.   Any other issue relevant to this subject.

1. **This is necessary to expand the present telecom infrastructure in the country which will aid the implementation of futuristic technologies such as Digital India, Smart Cities, IoT, M2M, Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing and others. Towards this objective, the policy guidelines and regulations should encourage communications infrastructure sharing and discourage duplication of expensive infrastructure by multiple players in all areas.**

2. **While we move towards transforming the nation into technologically led digital savvy nation, with the advent of 5G, IoT, M2M, AI and VR etc. there will be the requirement of mammoth investments for developing telecom infrastructure.**

3. Considering the present financial health of the sector, we feel that IP-1 are well positioned to put in investment in infrastructure for achieving policy aims in most cost-efficient manner if encouraged and incentivized suitably by the Government. Active Infrastructure Sharing by IP-1 is the only way forward for the industry vide which investments can flow into the sector.

4. A neutral stakeholder like IP-1 will be in the interest of the industry. Same has been recognized as successful model globally.

5. IP-1 have expertise and experience in rolling out capital intensive infrastructure in nook and corner of the country including the remotest places and already provide an Integrated Neutral Host Platform that is used by diverse and often competing operators helping build a unique, scalable and successful business model for Telecom.

In view of the above, ITU-APT strongly recommends that the Scope of IP-1 should be enhanced immediately to include common sharable active infrastructure also.