



PRESS RELEASE

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DRAFT ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS BILL

Castries, December 10th 2010 - The Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority has commenced its public awareness and consultation campaign on a new draft Electronic Communications Bill with a full day public consultation held at the National Insurance Service conference centre in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines on Tuesday November 23rd, 2010.

In his opening remarks at the consultation, the Chairman of the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC), Mr. Kenneth Douglas said that a process of integration and convergence of telecommunications services has rendered obsolete the existing telecommunications regulatory regime which was established ten years ago.

“As the Telecommunications landscape in our islands has evolved, so too must the regulatory regime that governs it. This new Communications Act is designed to fill the gaps in the current Act and address shortcomings that have spawned inefficient and limited regulations, which to some extent have hamstrung the operations of both the regulators and providers. Instead, it is hoped the provisions of this new Act will be flexible enough to anticipate and enact new regulations and eliminate the obsolescence of the existing ones”, Mr Douglas added.

A short address was delivered by Dr. the Hon. Jerrol Thompson, Minister of Telecommunications, Science, Technology and Industry, who described the draft Bill as one of the most significant documents presented for public discussions in recent times. Dr. Thompson, who is also a member of the ECTEL Council of Ministers, stated that stakeholder participation in the consultation is very critical, and that there should be sustained discussion

on the draft Bill throughout the region.

The main presentations at the consultation were made by Mr. Embert Charles, Managing Director of ECTEL, and Mr. David Cox, General Counsel of ECTEL, who outlined the functions of the current regulatory regime and the main provisions of the draft Bill respectively.

The highlight of the discussions was the need for the new draft legislation to embrace, as far as possible, all new services in the ICT sector. Among the matters raised in the discussion were the regulation of content, licensing requirements for broadcasting services via the Internet and the regulation of the national wireless broadcasting sector. The expansion of the membership of ECTEL to include other OECS countries was also presented for consideration.

The participants included the members of the NTRC, representatives of telecommunications service providers, broadcasters, public sector agencies and non-governmental organisations.

The new Bill is designed to ensure that the current regulator, ECTEL and the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC), have oversight of the ICT sector in an open, fair, independent and transparent manner. The new Bill is a response to the changes which have occurred in the telecommunications and ICT sector during the first decade of operations of ECTEL and the NTRC.