

Report of ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of Consumer Societies



**October 11-12 1999
Colombo, Sri Lanka**

**ITU Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of Consumer Societies
Colombo, Sri Lanka, October 11 – 12, 1999**

Preface

The Missing Link of the Telecom Sector Reform

Globally most countries have enacted laws creating national regulatory entities to liberalise/oversee their Telecom sector to respond effectively to expectations of the market.

Despite variations in the extent/degree of liberalisation, the majority of countries have much commonality in respect of their market objectives and agenda for liberalisation. Delivery of affordable service with convenient access nation-wide, is one of the common objectives for most countries. Likewise issues on policy, privatisation, strengthening market competition application of new technology and independence of regulators are common to the agenda of majority of the countries in the region. Nevertheless the level of competitiveness in many telecom markets, with exception of a few countries, ranks well below that of markets in other sectors where more effective competitive forces exist. The recognition deserved by consumers of these markets is weakened by shortcomings characteristic of a lack of effective competition and ineffective regulation.

The outcome of these endeavours reported in numerous publications statistical information of sector performance highlight national policies, increasing market competitiveness independence of regulators as the key propellants driving the sector reform. Their importance and impact are often illustrated in these reports supported by performance data of the telecom sector reform process. **Information of the impact of these sector reform outcomes on fulfilment of expectations of the consumer/end user – who should be the main focus/ beneficiary of the sector reform - are however rarely mentioned or in most instances completely ignored in these reports.**

The above is attributable to evaluation of sector performance of most countries without adequate sensitivity to the perspective of the consumer. Allowing the consumers to voice their opinion of the sector reform is a necessity avert veering the sector off its planned course/goals. A meeting of consumer bodies of the region was therefore organised to afford the opportunity to the consumer bodies of the region to voice their views of the outcome of the telecom sector reform. The prevailing market scenario with a general absence of, and/or recognition of, consumer associations/ groups, deserved by the liberalised markets in the region, was also reflected in the responses received from such consumer bodies of the region and in their observations on access to and affordability of service.

The objective of the meeting was to pay heed to the views of consumer bodies of the region to strengthen the regulatory process to meet their expectations of the quality of service (QoS) - as markets move from ones dominated by a single supplier to more open and competitive ones. The meeting in particular highlighted disparities / distortions arising from inadequacies in transparency/disclosure, accessibility to information and accountability/ cost effectiveness as applicable to all stake holders of the sector. They also proposed pragmatic measures to strengthen aforesaid attributes commensurate with the needs of the sector reform.

This situation is aggravated as recently formed regulatory entities in many developing economies are either unknown or, uncertain of constructively involving consumer and user groups to strengthen the regulatory process for the well being of the nation. Instances where the regulatory process is not conveniently accessible to the public are numerous. The shortcomings are most pronounced in remote areas where the consumer often has no means of redress - creating further imbalances in the driving forces of the sector to the disadvantage of the latter. These imbalances in the interests, driving the sector are more likely one of the causes not yielding results fair to all consumers in several countries of the region.

The telecom technology is relatively less sensitive to inflationary trends that plague most other sectors. Yet significant segments of the regional market - unlike those of sectors such as the computers, electronics etc. - is deprived of the benefits of new network features and the declining costs of the technology due to the absence of effective government policy development, implementation and/or the absence of effective regulation in cases where market competition is insufficient. This is seen from escalation of prices of several privatised telecom operations of the region and elsewhere.

The summary and findings given in the report indicates that the absence of the participatory role of the consumer is a prominent missing link that could effectively overcome inefficiencies of the sector aforementioned and above all strengthen the regulatory process for the economic and social well being of the nation.

Internationally right to communicate has been accepted as a fundamental right as a result of the efforts made by the ITU. Affording due recognition to consumer participation is crucial to accomplishing fruitful results from sector reform. The information provided in this report and the summary recommendations is invaluable to all Regulatory entities and others endeavouring -such as the ITU study groups- to speedily evolve solutions to overcome obstacles impeding realisation of our common goal. The consumer need to be not only heard but also be effectively represented in our activities and programs.

I wish to thank the distinguished representatives of the consumer bodies, the Center of Policy Alternatives of Sri Lanka, my colleague Mr. Bill Withers, the ITU consultants Mr. R. Chuoinard, Mrs. Daly Todd for their unswerving support and their active participation in the event.

K.K.Gunawardana

Inaugural Address

Mr. K.K.Gunawardana, ITU Regional Office, opened the proceeding, welcomed the participants and outlined the objective of the regional meeting.

The objective of the meeting was to listen to the representations of the consumer societies in the region. The representatives were invited to formulate proposals to ensure that the perspective of the consumer was taken into account in the recognition and the monitoring of all aspects of the Quality of Service in the telecommunications sector.

To that end, the participants were invited to present their views on strengthening their participation in the regulatory process in order to accomplish the "Right to Communicate" goal as expressed by the ITU.

The following issues were suggested:

- support institutional/legal/expertise funding requirements of consumer societies
- timely access to reliable information of interest to the consumer
- recognition of consumer entities as means of enhancing public access to the national regulatory entity
- recognition of consumer entities as means of easing the regulatory cost burden
- recognition of QOS from the perspective of the users
- the right to participate in related ITU activities
- any other needs of vital interest to consumers

Mr. Gunawardana then described the role of the ITU and its various governing bodies and outlined some of the ITU activities that are relevant to the objective of the meeting. In particular, he outlined the WTDC Valetta Action Program and pointed out the opportunities for participation by consumer societies/user groups members in the relevant questions of study groups and in particular Q 8/1 ITU D SG1.

Opening of the Meeting

Mr. Gunawardana pre conduct of the meeting. This was followed by the election of the officers:

Chairman:

– Sri Lanka

Vice Chairman:

Mr. Alan Horsley of the Australian Telecommunications User Group

Mr. Wanasinghe greeted the participants and opened the meeting by inviting the

- Strengthening the Consumer Society in Telecommunications An Australian Perspective

Mr. Allan Horsley, Managing Director, Australian Telecommunications Users Group

Mr. Horsley provided an overview of the evolution of the telecommunications regulatory -80s and the effective parti

Australian Telecommunications Users Group (ATUG) In the process to ensure the acceptance of the end user perspective.

He described the ATUG and its functions, as well as some of its major activities and submissions to support the passage of legislation that reflects the viewpoint of users, participation in the public process to strengthen the -side inputs, and participation in the policy and chieve effective interconnection of competitive networks, etc.

He noted that some of the generic principles used by the ATUG in developing its that the government wanted. For example, the telecommunication sector in Australia is function.

Based upon the experience of the ATUG, Mr. Horsley recommended the need for a mentor and the us

to other countries in the region, the lack of compulsion for regulatory authorities to provide

Presentation 2 - Telephone Users Associations – A Countervailing Power to Service Providers

Dr. T.H. Chowdary, India

Dr. Chowdary, presented a detailed critique of the current telecom regime in India and concluded that customers must forge a countervailing power to improve the situation.

He discussed the following areas:

Chronic service impairments.

The limited results from the actions of the Telephone Advisory Committees and the Telephone courts (ADALATS).

The limited achievements under of Consumer Protection Act and the lack of any consequential large scale improvement.

The limited success of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) established in 1994 due to the lack of organised and informed consumer interventions.

The encouraging outlook arising from the activities of the Telecom Users' Group of India (TUGI) although it currently suffers from a lack of adequate funding.

Other possible avenues of high-level intervention are to present comments on any amendment to the TRAI Act, 1997 and make presentations to the Parliamentary Committee for Communications.

In conclusion, Dr. Chowdary observed that much effort is needed to institutionalise the scattered and sporadic efforts of individuals and user bodies to gain friendly relations with the PTOs, government and the TRAI.

After the presentation, questions dealt with the following areas of interest:

Positive impact expected from new government in India.

Dr. Chowdary's three areas of priority: re-structuring, no more licensing without due process and improved access to information.

The de-regulation of non-government business activities.

The need for funding

Presentation 3 – Information Needs of the Consumer Societies and Users Groups in the Telecommunications Sector.

Mr. Robert Chouinard, Canada - ITU

Mr. Chouinard described some of the most significant information needed by consumer societies and end user groups in order to strengthen the effectiveness of their organisations. His views were based on his experience as a telecommunications consultant.

He identified the major sources of information for the societies: governments, regulators, service providers and other consumer groups.

The societies require information about: The law, the regulatory process, funding service provider performance, rates, practices, technology and the results of marketing surveys and opinion polls.

Mr Chouinard then provided four detailed examples of information gleaned from Canadian sources:

- The Privacy rules for the subscribers of Bell Canada and the subscriber billing information provided by Bell Canada.
- The Code of Ethics used by the long distance service providers in Canada, including an overview of the responsibilities of the office of the Ombudsman.
- Bell Canada periodic report on its quality of service indicators of performance, it includes the descriptions of the measurements of performance.
- The CRTC rules used to award costs to interveners in public proceedings.

The question period dealt with the reliability of the information contained in the public monthly performance report provided by Bell Canada.

Presentation 4 - Liberalisation of Telecommunication Particularly on Cellular

Mr. Agus Pambagio, Indonesia

Mr. Pambagio described the process of liberalisation of telecommunications in Indonesia with a particular focus on cellular radio.

He noted the high cost of developing the telecommunications infrastructure in Indonesia due to the geography of the archipelago. This high cost, coupled with the government's lack of sufficient funds has resulted in the need to liberalise telecommunications to attract the private sector. Consequently, the government has awarded cellular franchises and is privatising the state-owned companies.

Mr. Pambagio explained that the results of these efforts have not benefited the consumers because of the manner in which liberalisation and privatisation have occurred. Absent proper rules, regulations and procedures, the process has forced investors to take on privileged and costly local partners. The result is that low rates have not been forthcoming, there are now 28 cellular operators to serve a potential market of some 3 million customers in the next five years.

The situation has exacerbated by the introduction of pre-paid cellular calling cards. In the weak economy customers prefer to use those cards rather than pay a flat monthly subscriber fee. This has created a large demand for the cards and in the absence of competitive sources for the cards the few incumbent suppliers do produce enough cards. Consequently, a form of black market has emerged that further increases consumer costs.

Moreover, the use of the cards has reduced the revenues of the cellular operators who must nonetheless continue to remit a flat monthly fee per customer as part of their licence contract.

Mr. Pambagio concludes that privatisation and liberalisation must be redefined and the law (next year) must protect and empower consumers. As well an independent regulatory board must be established to deal with tariffs.

During the question period, Mr. Pambagio described his organisation, some of its activities and its funding.

Presentation 5 - Telecommunication Services: Improving Easy Reach and Affordability

Mr. Aruna Perera, The Open University of Sri Lanka

Mr. Perera addressed the current status of telecommunications services in Sri Lanka in terms of service access, access to information, fair pricing and transparency of the regulatory process.

He pointed out that, given that the right to communicate has been widely declared as a fundamental human right, it follows that the delivery of telecommunications services must necessarily become easily available and affordable.

Mr. Perera noted that in Sri Lanka, the end user is not allowed to participate effectively in the reform of the telecommunications sector. The required information is not accessible to the consumer, in particular, the public hearing process does not allow consumer participation.

Mr. Perera identified the need to study the development of telecommunications in Sri Lanka where the customer base is relatively small (less than 3%). As well, he raised questions as to the need to evolve alternative strategies to encourage development.

He pointed out that unlike many other countries in the region, affordable access to Internet service will not become a reality in Sri Lanka for the foreseeable future since charges are increasing.

In terms of the need for fair pricing, Mr. Perera raised a number of points regarding the determinants used to set prices. These points would typically form the basis for interventions in regulatory rate proceedings.

He also identified issues that must be addressed by a more transparent regulatory process.

He concludes that, in Sri Lanka, the failure to expand the network has resulted in higher prices in an industry where prices are declining. The required expansion from the very small base requires the collective and concerted actions on the part of government, operators, regulator and consumers. Only with the expansion will it be possible to reach the stated goal of delivery of affordable service nation-wide. The questions dealt with the possibility of using wireless for expansion rather than wireline and the possibility of introducing competition.

Presentation 6 - Strengthening of Consumer Societies Institutional Requirements

Mrs. Rosalie Daly-Todd, Canada – ITU

Mrs. Daly-Todd presented an overview of the issues facing residential consumers of telecommunications service and the advocates who represent their interests in the U.S. and Canada.

She described the Consumers' Association of Canada and briefly traced its history.

While noting that this consumer group is more market-oriented than that of some other North American consumer advocates, Mrs. Daly-Todd, highlighted some of the activities and successes of the Association, due in part to the funding available from the regulator.

She noted that the concerns of residential consumers in the new telecommunications environment fall into six broad categories: basic consumer protections; security/reliability of service; special concerns about vulnerable consumers; abuse of dominance and market power; and benefits to residential consumers.

Mrs. Daly-Todd concluded that residential consumers must have strong representation and advocacy on their behalf. Without representation/advocacy, their needs will not be factored into the equation.

To strengthen their organisations, consumer societies must continue to increase their visibility in the press, this will sustain public interest and could facilitate further funding.

Also, in order to become more pro-active, the societies must also establish a permanent staff function to monitor all the activities of the regulator and some of the activity in the industry.

Consumer societies must continue to develop access to experts in various areas to augment their own staff (academics, consulting firms and former employees of the regulator and the industry).

Lastly, consumer societies must expand their dialogue with similar organisations in their country and in other countries in the region the region, while continuing to research the information sources provided in the rest of the world.

The questions dealt with funding levels and sources.

Round Table Discussion - Day 1

The first round table discussion, chaired by Mr. Chouinard, identified a number of areas of common interest:

The need for increased openness, transparency and disclosure on the part of the authorities.

A search for strategies to overcome the above through:

- Lobbying for support through:
- The use of pressure groups,
- Using a positive approach to a value-added contribution that would be beneficial to all parties,
- Present and publish the result of surveys and investigations.
- All-around consultations

Use and disseminate information from recognised sources to strengthen local viewpoints,

Participate in Government white-paper approach,

Provide the opportunity for rural communities to set up and operate their own telecom network

Tuesday, October 12, 1999

Presentation 7 - Australian Rural Telecommunication Issues

Mr. Mark Needham, National Farmers' Federation, Australia

Mr. Needham described the National Farmers' Federation and referred to the background to its policy vis-a-vis the telecommunications sector. Essentially, the policy articulates that all Australians must have affordable and equitable access to quality telecommunications wherever they choose to live. This is crucial in regional because it underpins development.

He then outlined the NAF's inputs to the regulatory policy review at various levels: senate, government, regulator and its participation in process for the development of universal service plans.

Mr. Needham acknowledged the beneficial impact of the introduction of competition in Australia but noted that further additional rural and regional reform.

This was followed by statistical information about the comparative size of the Rural and regional telephone markets, internet penetration and access problems. This was followed by comments on the dichotomy in the service between the rural and regional areas that continues in spite of continuing upgrades in the fixed line and the radio networks.

Legislation has provided funding as a social bonus for a number of specific projects and initiatives, many of which will impact rural service.

Mr. Needham presented the FRAN project, initiated with Government subsidies, as a case study. The project extends Internet access to rural communities via satellites and advanced modems. Moreover, there are planned trials of ADSL modems. To date, these efforts have led to the provision of service at affordable prices, some prices as low as 1/14 of those of the competitor.

In conclusion, Mr. Needham stated that competitive rural and regional market places are the answer for the eventual delivery of affordable bandwidth to end users.

Governments, at all three levels must play a role in stimulating affordable bandwidth availability in all areas through the provision of government services.

During the question period, the discussion dealt with the role of the consumer in the process, the economics of remote service, the competitive bid process and the use of the subsidies. Reference was also made to a co-operative banking concept in use in some rural communities in Australia, the concept may have a possible application for the promotion of rural telecommunications services.

Presentation 8 –Towards Efficient Public Services

Dr. R. Shanbhogue, India

Dr. Shanbhogue observed that public services in India are unsatisfactory and deteriorating and the situation is worse in rural areas.

The Consumers Forum Basrur, a rural Public Charitable Trust operating in the South Kanara district, has guided more than 600 telephone consumers get their disputes redressed.

Its role is to educate consumers, raise awareness, defend consumers' rights and provide systematic feedback to public services agencies.

In India, the public service agencies are large government controlled operations that are generally not accountable and responsive to consumer inputs.

Dr. Shanbhogue explained that the use of public feedback has been used to improve the situation in the area.

This was achieved through an evaluation of public services based on the response to a standardised questionnaire from a sample of consumers. The questions were designed to gauge the level of satisfaction with the services and the success of the efforts to correct the problems. Customers were asked to use a rating scale.

The analysis revealed that, over the years the performance in the telephone sector has improved. Increased transparency has reduced the incidence of harassment and the number of complaints, Consequently, the district now has an outstanding communications and information facility. He also stated that the surveys reveal that corruption increases with inversely with efficiency and, the root driving forces for improvement of the latter are transparency, consumer awareness, and media reflection of public opinion. Strengthening these driving forces, as evidenced by the results of the surveys, will minimise corruption.

To overcome consumer apathy psychological barriers have to be overcome. This is achieved in part by discussions and the wide distribution of information through:

- Agencies & Consumers on a Common Platform
- Seminars, Lectures by Lawyers/activists
- Increase Legal Competence of Consumers
- Legal Battles: expensive, last resort - Negotiation NOT confrontation

Dr. Shanbhogue concluded that civic groups can play a significant role, organisation is necessary and public opinion must be mobilised.

This is necessary because public agencies are not consumer oriented and must be reformed. One tool remains the power of public feedback.

After the presentation the question dealt with funding and the absence of recognition.

Presentation 9 - Consumer Protection

Dr. Rohan Edrisinha, Center for Policy Alternatives

Dr. Edrisinha's presentation first addressed the right to communication as enunciated in the 1996 People's Communication Charter, the international covenant of standards and rights. He noted that in Sri Lanka there is a general lack of public awareness of the right to communication due to problems of empowerment. The recognition of that right in the proposed constitution or by the judiciary is necessary to insure the availability of redress.

He then noted that the right to access to government information has been limited due to the lack of clear-cut legislation. Possibly, the 1997 Proposed Draft Constitution could guarantee access but that remains to be seen.

Dr. Edrisinha also commented, with examples, on the real crisis arising from the decision-making process by the authorities in the existing culture of secrecy.

He also commented on the lack of independence of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka due to the existing appointment procedure. Dr. Edrisinha contrasted the procedure with that contained in the South Africa statute mandating an arms-length appointment procedure.

The question period dealt with the expectations arising from new legislation.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) who hosted the meeting had requested permission to hear two brief presentations from the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL).

While the TRCSL had not submitted papers in advance, Dr. Edrisinha of the CPA had agreed to cut short his presentation and yield some of his time to allow for the presentations of the TRCSL.

Presentation 10 – Consumers' Role in Telecom regulation: A Sri Lankan Perspective-

Mr. Plait S. Gunawardene, Director of Economic Affairs - Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka was in attendance only for his presentation.

Mr. Gunawardene's paper contained his views on the role of consumer groups in telecommunications regulation.

In his introduction, Mr. Gunawardene noted that in the broad context of the marketplace, coherent groups of consumers have a powerful voice, particularly in areas where competition exists. He pointed out that consumers have both duties and rights. On the one hand, consumer groups have the power to bring any supplier literally to its knees through concerted action. On the other hand, consumers can themselves protect their rights such as the right to receive the product or service for which they pay in the correct quality and quantity.

He noted that regulation means to bring order method and uniformity, including the facilitation of fair competition where indicated. Regulatory judgement is of paramount importance, particularly where intervention is needed to maintain a balance of interests.

Mr. Gunawardene then reviewed some of the history of liberalisation of telecommunications in Sri Lanka that included partial privatisation of the former monopoly and the award of two wireless franchises. He quantified the substantial growth in the size of the wireline network and in the wireless sector in recent years and noted that the growth potential remains high because current telephone density is still quite low. In addition Mr. Gunawardene noted the dilemma of telecommunications as an imperative tool for socio-economic development in rural areas given the fact that most of the fixed telephone are in the densely populated areas.

In Sri Lanka, the legislation enshrines public interest in its objectives and provides for public input in the regulatory process. This input is achieved primarily through public hearings and through the complaint process at the ombudsman and at the Commission levels.

Mr. Gunawardene provided examples of the types of consumer issues that have been, and are being addressed and he also referred to the consumer workshop used to assist the operators to improve their operations and create greater customer awareness. Lastly he referred to the Commission's use of regular press conferences to announce important regulatory decisions to the mass media

In terms of consumer protection, the Commission has imposed financial penalties against operators that have not delivered paid-for service as promised. On the broader quality of service issues, Mr. Gunawardene points out that public opinion and consumer action is a force as great or greater than the regulator. He outlined some of the activities related to the development of draft rules for quality of service in telecommunications: a major telephone user survey to assess the quality of service and a round of discussion with operators and consumers before finalisation.

Consumer protection is also aided by tariff approvals and licensing procedures.

Mr. Gunawardene concluded that public awareness and participation in regulation is a key contributory factor towards success of market -based policies that should be actively encouraged in developing countries.

Presentation 11 – The Role of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission with respect to the Protection of the Consumers and Users.

Mrs. Pushpa R. Amarasiri, Director of Legal Affairs - Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka

Mrs. Amarasini stated that the “vision” of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission is “To be at the forefront of Telecommunications Regulation”. The “mission” is to create the optimum conditions for the Telecommunications Industry in Sri Lanka by serving:

- The public interest in terms of quality, choice and value for money,
- The service providers with equitable access to spectrum and other common resources,
- The nation in its drive for socio-economic advancement through a skilled and ethical work force.

Mrs. Amarasini proceeded to describe some of the initiatives of the TRCS including:

- Commencement of a regulatory process
- Public hearing held last year on the “Improvement of Subscriber Bills”
- Public Hearing on “calling party pays” is now in progress.
- Appointment of an Internal Committee for Resolution of Customer Complaints” Last year, this has resulted in compensation paid to the public for licence violation by the operator.

A permit for fixed access operators and a Code of Conduct for re-sellers has been finalised and a public awareness programme will be initiated by the Commission.

In conclusion, Mrs. Amarasini stated that under the Act, the Commission will have to pay due regard to the public interest and the convenience and wishes of the public as regard to the telecommunications services provided by the operator. One pro-active step in that direction will set up a public documents room on the premises of the Commission for access by consumers and members of the public. The information will include documents regarding the activities of the Commission and development and trends in other parts of the world.

Round Table Discussion – Day 2

Mr. Robert Chouinard chaired the round table discussion.

The findings and recommendations were discussed and agreement was reached on the following summary:

SUMMARY – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Advise from some countries regarding problems/impediments arising from legacy policy and legislative processes in respect of lack/absence of :
 - 1.1. Disclosure,
 - 1.2. Transparency
 - 1.3. Accessibility
 - 1.4. Accountability
 - 1.5. Independence and autonomy of the regulator
2. The discussion moved on to the search for strategies to overcome the problems and impediments arising from the above.
 - 2.1. Lobbying of parliaments, government, regulators and authorities by consumer groups.
 - 2.2. Positive approaches in representations to add and to deliver value and benefits to all: consumers, regulator, operators and government.
 - 2.3. Results of investigations and surveys to be used in representations.
 - 2.4. Consultation with all stakeholders.
 - 2.5. The use of information from recognized sources to strengthen local view points
 - 2.6. Government regulator use of the "public discussion paper" approach encouraging consumer input.
 - 2.7. Provide opportunity for consumer societies/rural communities to set up and operate telecom networks.
3. Actions
 - 3.1. Recognise that international principles and approaches aid national developments
 - 3.2. Submission of proposals to appropriate authorities to support participation of consumer societies in the policy and regulatory process.
 - 3.3. Promote the autonomy of national regulatory entities.
 - 3.4. Regulatory costs to be disclosed, efficient operation to be emphasised, explicit and adequate means of funding to be identified.
 - 3.5. Enabling measures for participation in ITUD activities (India, Australia)
Application by consumer societies for sector membership of the ITU.
 - 3.6. Encourage consumer societies participation in:
 - The development of QOS standards and the monitoring of carrier performance against standards.
 - The regulated pricing processes
 - The development of national telecommunications policy and regulatory processes
 - The sharing of information and experiences regarding regulatory matters, national information and national reports

4. Funding Sources and Expert assistance to consumer societies to be promoted.

Closing of the Meeting

A discussion followed to relate the findings and recommendations with the meeting objective as outlined by Mr. Gunawardana at the start of the meeting. There was general agreement the objective had been met.

Mr. Horsley, as Vice-Chairman of the meeting moved for the adoption of the draft findings and recommendations. The motion carried.

It was agreed that the draft would be sent to the participants for final review.

It was also agreed that each participant would e-mail a list of useful resources, including Internet web sites, to initiate a formal information exchange between the consumer societies/user groups.

Mr. Horsley thanked the participants for their contributions and the Centre for Policy Alternatives of Sri Lanka for their excellent hosting and support work. He then moved the meeting to a close.

Mr. Gunawardana, on behalf of the ITU thanked the host and the participants and reiterated his invitation for participation in the activities of the ITU as sector members.

List of participants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Designation/Title</u>	<u>E-mail</u>	<u>Country</u>
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