

**Workshop on the future of ICT Regulations organised by ICTA on
Thursday 14 September 2023 at 09:00 hrs at Caudan Arts Centre**

Hon. Deepak Balgobin, Minister of Information Technology, Communication
and Innovation

Mr. Dick Ng Sui Wa, Chairperson ICTA

Mr. Jerome Louis, Officer in Charge ICTA

Board Members of ICTA

All protocols observed

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

As emerging technologies drive new business and service models, governments must rapidly create, modify, and enforce regulations. The pre-eminent issue is how to protect citizens and ensure fair markets while letting innovation and businesses flourish.

I therefore welcome this workshop on the Future of ICT Regulations to celebrate the 21st anniversary of ICTA. Thank you for the invitation.

In the early days of what was once known simply as ‘**telecoms regulation**’, policy-makers and regulators dealt largely with the separation of operation and regulation, and the opening up of monopolistic markets. Infrastructure deployment and development were the main focus, including how to roll networks out to unserved and underserved areas.

That traditional approach to regulation began to change fundamentally in the late 1990s, in the wake of a surge of new players interested in investing in ICTs,

and major shifts in information and communication technology (ICT) such as mobile telephony and the dawn of the Internet.

Today, the environment in which ICT regulators work is dramatically different from that almost 20 years ago.

Rapid convergence of technologies, bundling of services, and completely new kinds of services and service providers have transformed the ICT landscape almost beyond recognition.

Even more importantly, ICTs have moved far beyond the realm of simple ‘communications’ to become the crucial foundation for every economic sector and a sine qua non of business performance and national growth.

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, big data analytics, and the Internet of Things (IoT) are creating new ways for consumers to interact—and disrupting traditional business models.

All these new technologies have led regulators in the telecommunication industry to a crossroads in an era of transition.

In the wake of these developments, regulatory leaders are faced with a key challenge: **how to best protect citizens, ensure fair markets, and enforce regulations, while allowing these new technologies and businesses to flourish?**

Regulation has thus entered a new age. ICT being so critical to economic growth, getting the right regulatory frameworks in place has become vitally important to every country’s future.

Ladies and gentlemen

Regulation is a key factor to promote sustainable, inclusive economic growth, social welfare, and environmental protection. Regulatory policy touches every sector of the economy and affects the day-to-day activities of businesses and citizens.

However, regulatory affairs are a dynamic field, and practices have evolved over the past few decades. For this reason, ensuring that regulatory practice is transparent, accountable, efficient, and effective is a top priority for any government.

The key principles for the independent economic regulator as outlined by the World Bank are: **independence, accountability, Transparency and Public Participation**. The entire regulatory process must be fair and impartial and open to extensive and meaningful opportunity for public participation.

The regulatory system, through laws and agency rules, should provide all stakeholders with clear and complete timely advance notice of the principles, guidelines, expectations, and responsibilities, consequences of misbehavior, and objectives that will be pursued in carrying out regulatory activities.

It is not enough, however, to place ICTs onto the development agenda without also addressing other critical elements of the development equation. A nation's regulatory environment in particular can have a profound impact on ICT utilisation and ICT industry growth. A nation's regulatory policies can also have a profound influence on ICT investment and use.

We must be conscious that legal rules create a complex web of incentives and disincentives to private-sector action, some of which will impact a society's desire and ability to develop, acquire, or utilize ICTs.

Where a nation's legal framework offers strong incentives for people to develop and acquire ICTs, governments will have greater success in leveraging the power of ICTs and ICT industrial growth to advance social and economic development goals.

Ladies and gentlemen

Regulators must be aware that Public and Private partnerships are essential to shape the pathway for digital transformation. During the past, ICTA, in its capacity as regulator, has developed the necessary synergies between the policymaker, the regulator and industry in the era of the Fourth Industrial revolution.

I commend ICTA for playing a leading role in the future of ICT in Mauritius, contributing to an efficient, competitive and optimally regulated ICT sector.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has been advocating in the past years the need to implement a new approach to ICT regulation, labelled **fifth generation collaborative regulation**.

The underlying premise of such an approach is the need for countries to migrate to a regulatory and policy framework based on the collaboration among multiple sectors and cross-sector regulators within a scope that expands beyond the ICT space into that of the digital economy.

As I conclude, ladies and gentlemen, I urge you all to take advantage of this workshop and have insightful deliberations and exchange of useful experiences.

Let us all focus attention in identifying opportunities for collaboration and best practices for how policy making and regulatory practice can meet an ever-changing ICT future.

With those few remarks, I wish you all fruitful deliberations

Thank you for your attention