Advanced Company fully embraces Saudi Vision 2030, embodying its commitment as a forward-looking ICT firm

Mohamed Mahfouz - *CEO, Advanced Company*

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Contents

20

36

16

Interviews

Events

31

News & Reports

Satellite

...and much more

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the latest edition of Teletimes International.

This edition features an exclusive interview with Mohamed Mahfouz - CEO, Advanced Company. Mohamed talks about the vision behind the company and it's current role in the regional ICT landscape. Recognizing the imperative of diversifying the Saudi economy away from oil, the company has undergone a strategic transformation to cater to the evolving needs of the nation.

You will also find an exclusive interview with Sohail Qadir, the CEO of Zain Omantel International, the Middle East's premier wholesale powerhouse serving regional operators, international carriers, global Hyperscalers, and cloud providers seeking services within the region and beyond. Sohail talks about the value proposition behind ZOI and the unique advantages that come along with the the collective strength of Omantel and Zain Group.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight our participation in some key events over the next two months. We have IBC Amsterdam (15-18 September), Capacity Europe London (17-19 October) and GITEX Global Dubai (16-20 October) coming up and Teletimes will be participating in all three events. To book meetings or interviews, please reach out to me directly on khalidathar@teletimesinternational.com.

As always, you will also find the latest news and updates from all over the regional and global industry. Your feedback is welcome on info@teletimesinternational.com.

Enjoy Reading!

Khalid Athar
Chief Editor

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How can we bridge the digital divide?

Fairer digital opportunities for economically Less Developed Countries (LDCs)

According to figures published by the UN Specialized Agency for ICTs, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the share of the economically Less Developed Countries (LDCs) population in using the internet has increased by almost ten-fold since 2011. Despite increased usage, access is still an issue in LDCs. How can telecoms ensure all communities reap the benefits of its technologies? Here, Hamish White, Founder and CEO of BSS telecoms software developer Mobilise, investigates.

Today, around 36 per cent of the population use the internet. Getting connected has become increasingly simpler and broadband access in LDCs has gone from being non-existent to ubiquitous. However, progress has been from a very low base and there's still a way to go in delivering universal connectivity. How can telcos connect the unconnected?

The connectivity challenge

The 64 per cent of people still offline in LDCs — that's 720 million people — account for

27 per cent of the global offline population, even though the LDCs population makes up just 14 per cent of the world's population. Of the 46 countries the UN currently determines as LDCs, 33 are in Africa, nine are in Asia, one is in the Caribbean and three are located in the Pacific.

But, to add another layer of complexity to the challenge, there are striking disparities between LDCs. For instance, the most recent data available shows penetration rates range from six per cent in Burundi to

86 per cent in Bhutan, which is on par with many advanced economies. There's also disparity between what connectivity looks like in the regions.

According to ITU data, 58 per cent of people in LDCs owned a mobile phone in 2022. That's pretty close to the global average, which sits at 73 per cent. Data for mobile cellular subscriptions paints a similar picture — the LDC average of 79 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants isn't too far from to the world average of 108. Where we really see a gap, however, is with mobile broadband with 42 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in the LDCs compared with 87 for the world. In part, this is because the necessary infrastructure to access a mobile broadband network is missing.

Closing the gap

But why hasn't the digital divide been fixed yet? Solving it is a complex, layered challenge as telcos work to expand coverage in a profitable way while navigating a challenging regulatory environment.

Areas with little coverage, such as those in rural areas, tend to lack the infrastructure required to build a network in the first place, making expansion difficult for mobile operators. Tough terrain, like areas with dense forest and vast mountain ranges, can add further implications. Additionally, when we consider the number of people living in their areas, it's easy to see why operators struggle to see a return on investment from such an expansion.

A big challenge lies in backhaul connectivity, which refers to the portion of the network that links a base station to the core network. Traditional backhaul connectivity is achieved through microwave technology or physical full fibre cables, but in rural areas, where there may just be a handful of people, the distance, terrain and cost of implementation make these strategies unviable.

Mobile operators also have the obstacles of hampering regulation. Many regulatory policies are actually negatively impacting the growth of the telecoms market, such as spectrum auctions where governments sell parts of the spectrum to the highest bidding operator.

Spectrum auctions hinder innovation. Since operators heavily invest in their spectrum, they are more likely to implement a protectionist strategy to safeguard profits, rather than opting for a riskier but more innovative strategy that could promote greater levels of rural connectivity.

But regulations don't have to act as blockades. In Ghana and Jordan we've seen network operators granted temporary access to spectrum and in Tunisia spectrum bands were made technology neutral in the pandemic to maintain 2G, 3G and 4G connectivity while also rolling out 5G.

Connecting with LEO

With regulatory and economic barriers in mind, operators must consider other ways of reaching LDCs and other areas without sufficient connectivity. Rather than relying on traditional backhaul connectivity

methods, the solution could lie in a low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite network.

Instead of connecting each individual small village with microwave or fibre, a LEO satellite network allows blanket global coverage for backhaul purposes. LEO satellites consist of many thousands of satellites orbiting at altitudes between 160 and 1,600 kilometres above Earth, which allows them to offer bandwidth and latency that can compete with existing fixed broadband technologies like fibreoptic cables, in certain environments.

In recent years, we've seen companies around the world compete in the LEO "space race". In fact, Space X's Starlink is already functional and offering internet

service. Amazon's Project Kuiper also plans to make connectivity possible for underserved communities in the next few years, with its first set of satellites planned to launch in 2024.

Enter eSIM

It's also worth considering how digital tools can in turn support rural connectivity with

LEO. Onboarding remote customers is not a simple task — going to a store to collect a device and SIM card, or even arranging delivery isn't always viable. However, an eSIM solution enables service providers to establish a remote onboarding process to connect their customers without the need for any physical interactions.

eSIMs are growing in popularity, particularly following the launch of the eSIM-only iPhone 14 in the US in 2022. Rumours are already swirling that the iPhone 15, due to launch in September, will be eSIM-only across the globe and, while the iPhone is a premium device, the shift will certainly set a precedent for more widely affordable handset manufacturers to produce eSIM-compatible devices.

Mobile connectivity is becoming available to more and more people every day. However, in a world increasingly dependent on digital technologies, enabling connectivity across LDCs has become a pressing issue. We are all responsible — network operators, regulators and software providers — for growing mobile penetration rates and to ensure the benefits of the internet are available to all, regardless of their location. **T**

Advanced Company is fully dedicated to supporting the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030, demonstrating its commitment as a forward-looking ICT company

Mohamed Mahfouz
CEO – Advanced Company
speaks with Teletimes International
in an exclusive interview

Gulraiz Khalid

Gulraiz Khalid: Please tell us about the vision behind Advanced Company?

Mohamed Mahfouz: The core concept driving Advanced Company is to utilize the potential of information and communication technology for the advancement of innovation, effectiveness, and sustainability across diverse sectors. The organization's goal is to forge pioneering solutions that empower enterprises and institutions to flourish in the digital era. By harnessing cutting-edge technologies and insights derived from data, Advanced Company aspires to provide its clients with the tools to make well-informed choices, enhance efficiency, and attain sustainable expansion in their operations. This vision revolves around harnessing the capabilities of ICT to revolutionize industries and pave the way for a more promising future for all.

At present, Advanced Company offers a range of ICT services and solutions, managed services, satellite connectivity offerings, and professional services to a diverse clientele in Saudi Arabia. Our current portfolio strikes a balance between established services and solutions that are currently in demand within the market. Simultaneously, we're also in the process of developing solutions and services that align with the ongoing advancements and changes projected for the next decade. For instance, we're working on introducing NOC and SOC services along with virtual and on-premise 24/7 support for managed services.

Our dedicated team comprises over a thousand skilled engineers, technicians, and consultants who are strategically positioned across 47 support centers throughout Saudi Arabia. These teams are reinforced by a centralized NOC, SOC, front office, and back office, all working in tandem to deliver round-the-clock service support to our esteemed clients.

GK: How does Advanced Company align with the Saudi Vision 2030? What will be the impact of the Saudi Vision 2030 on the telecom sector and how does Advanced Company plan on supporting this?

MM: Advanced Company is fully dedicated to supporting the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030, demonstrating its commitment as a forward-looking ICT company. Recognizing the imperative of diversifying the Saudi economy away from oil, the company has undergone a strategic transformation to cater to the evolving needs of the nation.

Saudi Vision 2030 places a significant emphasis on reducing reliance on oil-based GDP, instead focusing on initiatives such

Mohamed Mahfouz boasts an illustrious career spanning two decades in executive management positions across the Middle East and Africa. At present, he holds the esteemed role of CEO at Advanced Company for Operations and Maintenance, a preeminent ICT service provider in Saudi Arabia.

A versatile and accomplished leader, Mahfouz assumed the CEO mantle at Advanced Company in December 2020, charting an audacious course to elevate the company's offerings in ICT deployment, managed services, and satellite communication. His transformative vision has redefined the company from a conventional operations and maintenance entity into a comprehensive ICT service and solutions provider.

Under his guidance, the company underwent a remarkable metamorphosis, establishing new departments, shuttering unprofitable units, and streamlining costs, thereby fortifying the company's EBITDA performance. This strategic overhaul not only secured financial gains but also positioned the company as a key player in Saudi Arabia's ICT landscape, in alignment with the ambitious Vision 2030 initiative aimed at digitalizing the nation.

Prior to his tenure at Advanced Company, Mahfouz held the position of General Manager at TECH MAHINDRA for Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. With an extensive footprint across 31 countries in the Middle East and Africa, he has held pivotal roles at industry giants such as Huawei and Nokia.

His academic journey includes a master's degree in Telecommunication and Electronics Engineering, complemented by a bachelor's degree in Telecommunication Engineering from the Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport in Alexandria, Egypt.

Mahfouz's unwavering commitment to Advanced Company's values is evident, as he champions the company's Sustainable Impact strategy, harmonizing business objectives with societal and ecological imperatives. His proactive stewardship has been instrumental in propelling the company's eco-friendly initiatives and fostering positive change within global communities.

as creating new cities to attract tourism, developing the entertainment industry, and establishing an economic hub in the Middle East. In response, Advanced Company has restructured itself to align with these goals and become a catalyst for ICT advancement.

The influence of Saudi Vision 2030 on the ICT sector is substantial, highlighting the need for expanded digital infrastructure, improved connectivity, and the fostering of innovation. In seizing these opportunities, Advanced Company is poised to drive growth and transformation within the Saudi Arabian ICT landscape.

To effectively contribute to Saudi Vision 2030, Advanced Company has meticulously devised comprehensive plans. Investments have been channeled into crucial areas such

as network infrastructure implementation, satellite connectivity enhancement, and innovative telecom solutions. These endeavors are meticulously designed to cater to the evolving demands of businesses and consumers alike. A key aspect of this effort involves empowering individuals and organizations through digital literacy and skills development, ensuring they can harness the full potential of technology.

Over the past three years, Advanced Company has been resolutely aligned with its strategic plan, resulting in the successful execution of five significant projects. These projects encompass vital elements such as ICT infrastructure deployment, managed services for Optical Fibers and IT networks, and satellite connectivity provisions for government and enterprise sectors. This track record underscores the company's

commitment to driving tangible outcomes in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

Additionally, Advanced Company has adopted a collaborative approach, actively seeking partnerships with industry stakeholders on a global scale. By engaging with government bodies, regulators, and telecom vendors/providers, the company is collectively propelling digital transformation while advancing the realization of Saudi Vision 2030.

Advanced Company is acutely aware of the potential impact of Saudi Vision 2030 on the ICT sector. With unwavering dedication, the company is positioned to play a pivotal role in the growth and advancement of the industry in alignment with the vision's strategic goals

GK: Please tell us about the services Advanced Company is offering and which industries do its major customers belong to?

MM: Advanced Company offers a diverse array of services tailored to meet the unique needs of its clients. Its core service offerings encompass network infrastructure deployment, ICT managed services, satellite connectivity solutions, and professional services. However, the company's distinctive

> **"** *Recognizing the imperative of diversifying the Saudi economy away from oil, the company has undergone a strategic transformation to cater to the evolving needs of the nation* **"**

strength lies in its ability to provide comprehensive bundled services. These bundled services encompass complete network deployment, hardware provisioning, end-to-end project management, and ongoing managed services.

The company's client base spans a wide range of industries, reflecting its commitment to catering to various sectors. Noteworthy clientele include telecommunications companies, government and semi-government entities, enterprises, banking and finance institutions, as well as players in the oil & gas sector. Through its innovative and dependable solutions, Advanced Company contributes to the growth and advancement of these industries by offering tailored services that precisely align with their individual requirements.

GK: Can you tell us in more detail about your ICT Managed Services and the VSAT services?

MM: Certainly! Advanced Company offers a comprehensive suite of ICT Managed Services designed to streamline businesses' technology operations and ensure seamless functionality. Our services encompass end-to-end solutions with stringent Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). With an expansive network of 47 maintenance centers strategically placed across the kingdom, our team of expert engineers and technicians provide round-the-clock support to bolster our clients' networks. Our operation is further bolstered by a state-of-

the-art Network Operations Center (NOC), Security Operations Center (SOC), as well as proficient front and back-office teams.

Our specialized Managed Services portfolio includes a variety of offerings such as Managed FTTH network, Managed VSAT services, Wireless and Microwave managed services, and Managed IT network services. Through these offerings, we address a wide spectrum of networking needs tailored to different industries.

Moreover, our proficiency in VSAT satellite communication technology enables us to extend stable and reliable internet connectivity to remote or geographically challenging areas where traditional connectivity infrastructures are impractical. Based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, our Satellite Hub boasts cutting-edge features that set us apart from competitors, ensuring unparalleled service quality.

To supplement our capabilities, we leverage our wealth of experience, a proven track record, and a roster of satisfied clients across various sectors. We're dedicated to not only meeting technological requirements but also contributing to our clients' overarching business objectives. Our success stories and client testimonials underscore the tangible advantages of partnering with Advanced Company.

Advanced Company stands as a frontrunner in delivering advanced technology solutions while maintaining an unwavering commitment to exceptional customer support. Our comprehensive range of

services, combined with our focus on innovation and customer satisfaction, makes us the ideal ally for businesses seeking to optimize their technological infrastructure.

GK: How do you see the growing role of AI and cloud computing in the ICT space?

MM: The convergence of AI, cloud computing, and cutting-edge networking technologies holds immense promise within the realm of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). AI's prowess in automation, predictive analysis, and machine learning stands to revolutionize decision-making processes, rendering them more intelligent and efficient. Paired with cloud computing, this duo presents a transformative potential for businesses. Cloud technology offers a pliable and scalable infrastructure, eliminating the need for substantial investments in hardware and software. Consequently, AI's benefits can be harnessed without resource constraints, ushering in a new era of data-driven decisions, optimized operations, and heightened productivity.

The synergy extends to advanced networking technologies. The emergence of 5G, with its rapid data speeds, low latency, and expanded connectivity, dovetails seamlessly with AI's demands. Industries reliant on real-time data processing, such as autonomous vehicles and remote surgeries, stand to gain from this swift communication between devices and cloud servers. Furthermore, the bedrock of these advancements lies in a robust fiber optics infrastructure. With its high-speed data transmission capabilities, fiber optics underpin the seamless transfer of information between devices, data centers, and the cloud.

GK: Keeping in mind the recent energy crisis in Europe due to Russia Ukraine conflict and the opportunities it created for the Gulf market, what is the future of energy industry.

MM: The energy industry is on the brink

of substantial change and evolution, particularly in the aftermath of recent energy crises. These crises have had distinct impacts on the USA, Europe, and the Middle East, shaping their energy landscapes in unique ways.

In the USA, the energy crisis has had a relatively limited impact due to the nation's discovery of significant oil reserves. Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, the USA has achieved self-sufficiency in energy through robust oil extraction from its own reserves, particularly in the form of shell oil. This discovery has shielded the country from severe energy shortages, allowing it to meet its energy demands without relying heavily on external sources.

Contrastingly, Europe has found itself grappling with the challenges posed by the energy crisis. Multiple factors have converged to create a complex situation. Notably, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has resulted in decreased natural gas supplies, causing supply disruptions. The depletion of inventories, coupled with heightened energy demand due to colder weather conditions and industrial requirements, has exacerbated the issue. The consequence has been the reversion to older energy sources, including coal power plants, in a desperate attempt to address the energy shortfall. Unfortunately, this has contributed to elevated carbon emissions, exacerbating global warming and greenhouse effects on a global scale.

The impact of soaring energy prices has been particularly pronounced in energy-intensive sectors like manufacturing and transportation in Europe. These industries have faced elevated production costs, diminished profit margins, and even business closures due to the unmanageable energy expenses. Moreover, the escalating energy prices have hindered the research and development initiatives crucial for the European Union's ambitious 2040 vision.

In response to these challenges, European countries have had to heavily rely on energy imports, particularly liquefied natural gas (LNG), to meet their energy needs. This heightened demand and limited supply have driven energy prices to unprecedented levels, casting a significant shadow over the European economy.

Conversely, Gulf countries, notably Saudi Arabia, have seized the energy crisis as an opportunity. They have capitalized on their own oil and gas resources while simultaneously consuming inexpensive energy from Russia. By exporting their own oil to Europe at elevated market prices, these Gulf nations have made substantial contributions to their economies and GDP.

As the energy industry navigates these intricate challenges, it's clear that a diverse set of strategies and policies will be required to ensure sustainable and reliable energy sources for the future. The choices made by different regions will significantly influence not only their economic well-being but also the global environmental landscape.

> " *In the battle against Global Warming, ICT companies possess a pivotal role to play. By embracing sustainable measures and advocating environmentally conscious initiatives, they can contribute effectively* "

> " *The future outlook for Advanced Company appears highly promising. Our strong emphasis on innovation and sustainability places us in an advantageous position to excel in a world that increasingly esteems eco-friendly practices* "

GK: What is your opinion on sustainability and energy efficiency in the ICT environment? Would you like to talk about some solutions that really caught your eye?

MM: Sustainability and energy efficiency are pivotal factors in today's digital landscape. The ICT sector significantly influences energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, prompting the exploration of solutions to address these concerns.

One solution gaining attention is the integration of renewable energy sources to power ICT infrastructure, including data centers. Many companies are investing in solar and wind energy to curtail their carbon footprint.

Another avenue is the adoption of energy-efficient hardware and software technologies. Employing virtualization and cloud computing optimizes resource utilization, resulting in reduced energy consumption. Additionally, efforts are underway to develop processors and networking equipment that consume less energy.

Innovative strides have also been made in data center cooling strategies. Innovations like liquid cooling and free cooling play a pivotal role in trimming energy consumption within data centers.

Moreover, the concept of a circular economy is finding traction within the ICT industry. This involves designing products for longevity, recyclability, and reusability. Responsible management of e-waste and robust recycling initiatives are also integral components.

Collectively, these measures foster a more sustainable and energy-efficient ICT environment. By embracing these practices, businesses can diminish their ecological impact while simultaneously reaping cost savings and operational efficiencies.

GK: How do you see the ever-increasing global warming issue? How can ICT companies play a role in addressing this issue?

MM: Global warming is a significant concern with profound implications for the environment and human well-being. The primary driver of this phenomenon is the release of greenhouse gases resulting from human activities, particularly the combustion of fossil fuels for energy generation.

In the battle against this challenge, ICT companies possess a pivotal role to play. By embracing sustainable measures and advocating environmentally conscious initiatives, they can contribute effectively. For instance, these companies can focus on enhancing the energy efficiency of their products and services. This entails making devices and data centers more energy-frugal, optimizing algorithms to minimize power consumption, and endorsing the adoption of renewable energy sources within their operational frameworks. Moreover, they have the potential to develop and promote technologies that directly diminish greenhouse gas emissions in various sectors. For instance, smart grid systems offer the promise of optimizing energy distribution and curbing wastage, while teleconferencing and remote work tools can curtail the necessity for extensive travel.

Another facet of their influence involves raising awareness about climate change and sustainability. By leveraging their reach, which extends to employees, customers, and the broader public, ICT companies can amplify the understanding of these critical issues. They can also supply educational resources and tools to empower individuals and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint.

In summary, the role of ICT companies in combating global warming is profound. Through their operational strategies, product offerings, and broader impact, they have the capacity to steer us towards a future characterized by sustainability and ecological responsibility. By adopting sustainable practices and championing green initiatives, they pave the way for a more environmentally harmonious future.

GK: In the near future, what will be some of the key drivers of the ICT market especially in the Middle East region?

MM: In the coming years, several key factors are anticipated to strongly influence the ICT market in the Middle East region. These factors encompass crucial elements like the integration of Digital Transformation, involving technologies such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and big data analytics. Additionally, the ascendancy of 5G Technology, Cybersecurity, E-commerce, and Digital Payments are poised to play pivotal roles.

These highlighted drivers are poised to wield significant impact on shaping the ICT market within the Middle East region in the foreseeable future.

GK: How do you see the future of Advanced Company?

MM: The future outlook for Advanced Company appears highly promising. Our strong emphasis on innovation and sustainability places us in an advantageous position to excel in a world that increasingly esteems eco-friendly practices. We possess the potential to emerge as frontrunners in the ICT industry by pioneering and implementing cutting-edge technologies, thereby assisting our clients in realizing their digital aspirations. Furthermore, our unwavering dedication to nurturing and empowering local talent positions us to cultivate the next generation of industry leaders.

Overall, I am content with the deliberate and stable growth of our business. Our incremental revenue enhancement of 35% in the first year, 59% in the second year, and an impressive 83% in the third year marks significant milestones. Our progress in Q2 reinforces our commitment to maintaining this momentum.

GK: As one of the vocal regional leaders with strong track record of leading multiple multinational organizations, where you will see the ICT industry in coming 10 years.

MM: Anticipated shifts in the ICT industry over the next decade are set to be profound, driven by technological advancements and evolving consumer demands. The core of these transformative technologies relies on vast data and Internet connectivity needs. This demand has spurred the necessity for cutting-edge infrastructure solutions, leading to a rapid overhaul of traditional systems. An illustrative example is the replacement of antiquated copper networks with advanced Fiber networks in Saudi Arabia, where telecom companies have made remarkable progress, outpacing even Europe and the rest of the world.

Analogously, the sunsetting of 2G and 3G networks in favor of 5G and more advanced technologies signifies the pivotal transformation from archaic to state-of-the-art networks. This progression is of utmost significance for Saudi Arabian Telecom service providers, as it enables them to meet the evolving requirements of individuals, businesses, and governmental entities.

A compelling forecast in the industry pertains to the shift from hardware to software-based infrastructure. This transition promises a harmonious integration of diverse technologies on a single platform, allowing seamless compatibility with products from various vendors. This evolution not only enhances flexibility but also addresses a significant challenge faced by telcos—the high capital investment (CAPEX) required for traditional infrastructure. A consequential consequence is the rise of infrastructure firms and tech giants, ushering in a potential shift in ownership, which raises important questions about the security and resilience of these critical assets.

On this trajectory, a pertinent proposition for telecom operators arises. Given that technologies like 5G and Fiber serve as the bedrock for advanced innovations like AI, blockchain, and IoT, the notion of regulatory measures granting operators a share in the sales of these technologies merits consideration. This supplementary revenue stream, alongside standard internet fees, could be linked to application usage, leveling the playing field between individual and commercial users. Drawing parallels with utility pricing discrepancies for residential and commercial usage further strengthens this suggestion.

It is imperative to recognize that these changes extend beyond a singular jurisdiction; they are part of a global evolution that will impact various sectors, economies, and societies. In navigating this evolution, collaboration among stakeholders, including operators, regulators, and technology providers, will be paramount. Striking a harmonious balance between innovation, competition, security, and accessibility will remain a central challenge as the industry propels forward, and your insights pave a thoughtful path in this dynamic landscape. **T**

Zero Trust is top cloud security priority for the next year, Middle East Cloud Security Research finds

Middle East cloud security professionals have identified Zero Trust as the number one cloud security priority for the next year, according to a recent survey. The 'Future of Cloud Security in the Middle East' report found that 56% of regional cloud security experts would prioritize Zero Trust strategies, followed by Data and Privacy best practices at 43%. Regulatory Compliance was a close third at 42%.

The white paper surveyed 584 cloud security professionals across the region. It was launched by His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Al-Kuwaiti, Head of Cybersecurity for the UAE Government, at the Cybersecurity Innovation Series (CSIS) 2023 in Dubai. Compiled by Cyber Magazine, the report is endorsed by the UAE Cybersecurity Council and OIC-CERT and sponsored by Huawei.

The research highlighted the Middle East unanimously adopting a Cloud-First strategy, with "non-cloud" environments almost non-existent today. Cloud is viewed as the quintessential baseline platform for adopting other deep technologies, such as AI, Blockchain and IoT. More importantly, the report also highlighted the flexibility of cloud solutions with the ability to adapt cloud on a case-by-case basis, where we are seeing a trend for both sovereign and hybrid clouds to be weaved together into national or regional multi-cloud strategies to unleash the potential of the digital economy.

While cloud is a core part of any digital strategy, the report also uncovered key trends in cybersecurity and privacy protection technical controls. 43% of respondents mentioned that security is the most important factor in their decision-making when choosing a cloud provider. As for their plans to implement more to

Cloud security whitepaper launch powered by Huawei

H.E. Dr. Mohamed Al-Kuwaiti
Head of Cybersecurity
UAE Government

protect their data on the cloud, respondents overwhelmingly picked multi-factor authentication as a key objective (45%), followed by encryption and staff training, both at 32%. The report also revealed the declining relevance of passwords as a cybersecurity strategy, with only 16% of respondents saying they would aggressively pursue a password strategy.

Speaking during the launch, Dr. Al Kuwaiti, also the OIC-CERT Cloudsecurity Working Group's Co-Chair, emphasized that cybersecurity is critical to national security and called for a proactive approach to safeguarding digital infrastructure and protecting sensitive data. He highlighted various policies the UAE has adopted to protect data, including a cloud-first model that first mandates all sensitive data be routed through the cloud to guard against

DDOS attacks.

Dr. Al Kuwaiti's speech emphasized the significance of public-private partnerships in combating cyber threats, stressing the importance of collaboration between government institutions. "I would like to say a special thanks to Huawei for working with us on many of our initiatives, including on the release of the white paper," he added.

Moreover, Dr. Al Kuwaiti underscored the role of individuals in promoting cybersecurity. He encouraged responsible online behavior, stressing the need for bilateral and multilateral collaboration. Additionally, H.E. highlighted the importance of cybersecurity education and awareness campaigns to empower individuals with the knowledge to protect themselves, contribute to a secure digital environment, and reduce

outbreaks of cybercrime.

"We need to build a cybersecurity culture, identifying what information to share and what not to share. The white paper identifies various measures that need to be taken and implemented to elevate cybersecurity posture," he added.

Echoing the report, Dr. Al Kuwaiti concluded that cybersecurity is cloud security, paving the way for the coming era of the Metaverse.

Huawei CLOUD has established a cybersecurity and privacy protection management system based on multiple mainstream international security standards and developed cybersecurity and compliance standards applicable to the cloud field based on Huawei's more than 30 years of experience and practices in security governance. Today, Huawei CLOUD has been certified by more than 120 authoritative organizations.

Dr. Aloysius Cheang, Chief Security Officer, Huawei Middle East & Central Asia, said, "Cloud is the foundation for the digital economy and pivotal to realizing the national visions of Middle East countries. However, the threat of cyber-attacks

remains a clear and present danger. But through the efforts of stakeholders working together, we can demonstrate that a safe cyberspace is possible. We appreciate the collaborative efforts of the UAE government in releasing this white paper and look forward to even more successful partnerships."

Huawei believes that cyber security is a shared responsibility. Cybersecurity challenges must be addressed through technological innovation, knowledge sharing, standards development, verification, and other internationally credited measures. Working with partners, Huawei has a proven track record in cyber security globally. Huawei's collaborative approach to cybersecurity is demonstrated by its membership and contribution to regional and global cybersecurity organizations.

Huawei was the first global ICT player to join the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation – Computer Emergency Response Team (OIC-CERT), currently the third-largest CERT organization in the world. The 2022 OIC-CERT Annual Conference saw the launch of the OIC-CERT Cloud Security Working Group, co-chaired by UAE aeCERT and Egypt egCERT, where Huawei is an

active contributing member. This working group aims to provide the basis for establishing, implementing, maintaining and continually improving a cloud security framework. The proposed framework addresses end-to-end security requirements based on business interests, needs and objectives. The UAE will contribute its UAE Cloud Security Framework towards this effort to encourage the development of cloud-security-as-a-service.

Additionally, Huawei and the ITU Arab Regional Cyber Security Center (ITU-ARCC) signed an agreement to jointly promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) in cybersecurity earlier this year. The cooperation agreement marks a new era of cooperation to promote Arab world cybersecurity knowledge transfer, sharing of best practices and capacity building. Specifically, the agreement seeks to strengthen the collaboration among Arab cybersecurity experts to address threats and incident response in cyberspace effectively. It also aims to nurture an open, mutually beneficial and collaborative cybersecurity ecosystem through inclusive public and private partnerships. Further, both entities seek to jointly support efforts to establish a trusted, prosperous and sustainable Arab digital economic ecosystem. **T**

Sohail Qadir
CEO of Zain Omantel International (ZOI)

Interview: Khalid Athar

Zain Omantel International (ZOI)

Revolutionizing the Middle East's Wholesale Telecommunications Sector

Zain Omantel International (ZOI) is the Middle East's premier wholesale powerhouse serving regional operators, international carriers, global Hyperscalers, and cloud providers seeking services within the region and beyond. The first-of-its-kind joint venture signifies a substantial advancement in the telecommunications industry and is poised to become a global powerhouse due to Zain's extensive regional presence and success in the retail and digital arenas, combined with Omantel's exceptional wholesale capabilities and comprehensive international subsea and terrestrial networks. ZOI manages all international wholesale requirements of Zain and Omantel operations in eight countries, serving over 55 million customers. Below is a Q&A session with Sohail Qadir, CEO of ZOI.

Khalid Athar: Please tell us about the vision behind Zain Oman International? What kind of synergies are you hoping to achieve?

Sohail Qadir: At ZOI, our vision is to revolutionize the telecommunications landscape by becoming the Middle East's premier international wholesale powerhouse. Our strategic partnership between Zain and Omantel aims to create unique synergies, leveraging Zain's extensive regional success in retail and digital services and Omantel's exceptional wholesale capabilities.

By delivering unparalleled service and support to customers worldwide, ZOI seeks to drive innovation, connectivity, and growth in the wholesale telecommunications sector. We envision ZOI as a catalyst for transformative change, empowering industries and individuals across the Middle East and beyond with cutting-edge technological solutions.

KA: Can you tell us a little bit about the scope of operations and which markets ZOI will initially cover?

SQ: ZOI's comprehensive operations are designed to cater to regional and global carriers, data centers, Hyperscalers, telecom operators, content providers and cloud providers. As we embark on our journey, ZOI will manage all international wholesale requirements of Zain and Omantel operations in eight countries, serving over 55 million customers. These markets include Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and South Sudan. With our strategic hub, ZOI serves as a bridge connecting these markets to the rest of the world, offering seamless connectivity and facilitating digital transformation.

KA: What industry segments are expected to benefit most from ZOI?

SQ: ZOI's services hold immense value for various industry segments within the telecommunications domain.

> " *As we embark on our journey, ZOI will manage all international wholesale requirements of Zain and Omantel operations in eight countries* "

Operators in the Middle East seeking end-to-end telecommunications solutions will experience a seamless and comprehensive offering that enhances their capabilities. Additionally, regional and global carriers, data centers, hyperscalers, telecom operators, content providers, and cloud providers will benefit significantly from our state-of-the-art services. Our commitment to partnerships drives us to prioritize each collaboration, ensuring we deliver unparalleled value and support to all our stakeholders.

KA: Do you expect any hurdles or difficult competition in your initial period? What will be the strongest challenges?

SQ: As a joint venture between Omantel

and Zain Group, both of whom have had a successful running business well before ZOI was established and built upon a solid foundation of industry experience and success. We understand that competition is a natural aspect of the industry, and we embrace it as a partnership approach, understanding that healthy competition leads to continuous improvement. At ZOI, we firmly believe that sometimes we win the business, and at other times, other partners may succeed. This healthy competition fosters innovation and drives us to continuously improve our offerings.

Throughout our journey, we have been humbled by the tremendous support received from the industry, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has backed us in our endeavor. Overcoming challenges is in our DNA, and with the collective strength of Omantel and Zain Group, we are well-equipped to thrive in the face of any hurdles that come our way.

KA: How do you see the growth in the Middle East telecom market over the past few years? (Especially in the wholesale business)

SQ: The Middle East telecom market has experienced significant growth over the past few years, especially in the wholesale business. ZOI is poised to capitalize on this growth by providing state-of-the-art services and contributing to the continued development of the wholesale telecommunications sector.

Our high-capacity, diversified international subsea network has contributed to making the footprint of ZOI operations a true global hub for

> **"**
> *Overcoming challenges is in our DNA, and with the collective strength of Omantel and Zain Group, we are well-equipped to thrive in the face of any hurdles that come our way*
> **"**

telecom traffic, connecting more than 120 cities worldwide.

Moreover, ZOI's strategic partnerships with around 700 operators worldwide enable seamless connectivity in over 210 countries, eliminating barriers and building bridges. We are also leading the 5G roaming deployment in our region, with 160+ networks enabled for 5G international roaming. These achievements demonstrate our commitment to driving innovation and propelling growth in the wholesale telecommunications sector.

KA: Are you looking to expand into any new markets or verticals in the near future?

SQ: As an ambitious pan-Middle East operator, ZOI is currently operating in 9 markets, and we are actively exploring additional options for further expansion.

Our growth strategy encompasses both organic expansion and potential mergers and acquisitions, aiming to broaden our reach and capabilities. In addition to our geographical expansion, ZOI is dedicated to embracing new verticals that push the boundaries of connectivity and transformation.

Specifically, we are spearheading the acceleration of transformative technologies like Machine-to-Machine (M2M), Internet of Vehicles (IoV), and Internet of Things (IoT) across the Middle East region. By venturing into these cutting-edge technologies, we aim to reshape the future of telecommunications and deliver unparalleled services to our partners and customers alike.

KA: What are you set out to achieve before the end of 2023? How is the future outlook beyond 2023 for ZOI?

SQ: By the end of 2023, ZOI is committed to becoming a significant international player on the wholesale telecommunications scene, benefiting both Zain and Omantel on financial, commercial, and operational levels.

Looking beyond 2023, our future outlook is optimistic, with a focus on continuous growth, expansion, and providing innovative solutions to meet the evolving needs of the telecommunications industry. We are dedicated to advancing subsea cable technology, expanding network reach, and addressing the evolving needs of the wholesale marketplace. Our substantial investments, technological advancements, and strategic milestones have already started to bear fruit, yielding quicker returns on investments due to the high demand for our projects. This progress underscores our unwavering commitment to innovation, resilience, and shaping the future of global connectivity. **T**

> **"**
> *We are also leading the 5G roaming deployment in our region, with 160+ networks enabled for 5G international roaming*
> **"**

UAE Ministry of Economy and Huawei Cloud launch Startup Program under The Entrepreneurial Nation initiative

The Entrepreneurial Nation, an initiative of the UAE Ministry of Economy has announced its partnership with Huawei Cloud to launch the Huawei Cloud Startup Program in the country. The Program seeks to accelerate the UAE's startup ecosystem, providing up to $150,000 in vouchers and access to Huawei Cloud ecosystem resources for eligible businesses.

According to the Ministry of Economy, 94% of the total number of companies operating in the country are in the small and medium-sized SMEs or startup sector. SMEs provide jobs for more than 86% of the private sector's workforce. In Dubai, 95% of the Emirate's firms are of SMEs, employing 42% of its workers and accounting for more than 40% of its GDP. The Huawei Cloud Startup Program will leverage Huawei's three decades of ICT and digitalization expertise to support this crucial sector while helping unleash innovation in the UAE and further boosting the country's digitization goals.

In October 2022, the Ministry of Economy launched the second phase of The Entrepreneurial Nation, the comprehensive and one-of-a-kind national project for the development of the UAE's SMEs and the overall national entrepreneurial landscape. This phase of the project is based on the largest public-private sector partnerships of their kind and aims to develop the tools to foster the culture and practices of entrepreneurship in the UAE. The Huawei Cloud Startup Program is a global support program to help accelerate technology startups' business growth. Through the Huawei Cloud Startup Program, Huawei will leverage its global expertise and cloud innovations and help startups address challenges associated with funding, technical and commercial resources and connections they need to expand, contributing to the emergence of innovative businesses that can lead the region's digital transformation powered by Huawei Cloud.

Jiawei Liu - CEO, Huawei UAE

Jiawei Liu, CEO of Huawei UAE, said, "Startups and small businesses play a pivotal role in the continuous development of UAE's economy. We are proud to partner with The Entrepreneurial Nation Initiative by the Ministry of Economy, which provides a perfect platform for entities like Huawei to support the growth and development of the SME sector. As a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices, Huawei will be continuously committed to acting as the foundation for the digitalization and development of the UAE."

With Huawei Cloud, startups can scale their business effortlessly by eliminating high infrastructure costs and limited computing capacity associated with on-premise data centers. Businesses can also gain access to cutting-edge technologies and resources at a fraction of the cost.

Further, participating entrepreneurs can tap into Huawei's extensive ecosystem, with access to its vast innovations, technical support, mentorship, and market development opportunities. Huawei also provides go-to-market assistance, ensuring small business owners can reach their target audience effectively. Recognizing that collaboration is crucial to growth, Huawei Cloud also

helps connect founders with like-minded entrepreneurs, industry experts, and thought leaders worldwide.

Huawei Cloud Startup Program is a global success story. Intella is a two-year-old Egyptian startup that has developed a highly accurate Arabic voice-to-text transcription engine, encompassing all the 25 Arab dialects and whose model was trained and optimized on Huawei Cloud ModelArts. Through the Huawei Cloud Startup Program, Intella received cloud credits worth tens of thousands of US dollars for AI model training in addition to co-marketing and co-selling with Huawei Cloud's Egypt team to scale up its solution commercially.

Bright, a leading Thai-based digital school management platform, is another successful story facilitated by Huawei Cloud Startup Program. After joining the Program, it took advantage of Huawei Cloud ecosystem resources, leveraging Huawei's multi-industry resources, opening new opportunities through joint innovation with large enterprises, and has since grown rapidly in terms of investment, client base and team. Today, Bright is Thailand's largest education tech startup with over 400,000 students and 20,000 teachers and available in over 500 Schools. It plans an IPO in the next three years.

Huawei Cloud is the fastest-growing cloud services provider in the world with an expanding list of services, including Elastic Cloud Server (ECS), cloud database, cloud security, software development services, and scenario-based solutions. By 2022, Huawei Cloud had launched more than 200 products and 200 solutions, established more than 2,800 nodes worldwide, covering more than 170 countries and regions and had more than 9000 technical partners, with more than 100 global certifications and over 3,000,000 customers globally. ∎

Huawei returns to business as usual in 2023, announcing its H1 Business Results with a 3.1% year-on-year increase

Sabrina Meng - Rotating Chairwoman and CFO, Huawei

Huawei has announced its business results for the first half of 2023. The company said its overall performance was in line with the forecast.

In 2023 H1, Huawei generated around USD 42.9 billion in revenue, with a year-on-year increase of 3.1% and a net profit margin of 15.0%. The company's ICT infrastructure business contributed USD 23.05 billion, its consumer business USD 14.3 billion, its cloud business USD 3.3 billion, its digital power business USD 3.3 billion, and its intelligent automotive solution (IAS) business USD 137.8 million.

Sabrina Meng, Huawei's Rotating Chairwoman, said: "Huawei has been investing heavily in foundational technologies to harness trends in digitalization, intelligence, and decarbonization, focusing on creating value for our customers and partners. In the first half of 2023, our ICT infrastructure business remained solid and our consumer business achieved growth. Our digital power and cloud businesses both experienced strong growth, and our new components for intelligent connected vehicles continue to gain competitiveness."

2023 is the first year that Huawei returns to business as usual, with external restrictions still in place. The company experienced year-on-year growth both inside and outside of China. Huawei said that moving forward, the company will implement five strategic initiatives. First, the company will help industries go digital, intelligent, and green to unlock new growth opportunities.

 Second, it will optimize its business portfolio to enhance resilience. Third, it will strengthen the synergy between chips, software, hardware, devices, networks, and clouds to hone its unique competitive edge. Fourth, the company will succeed through quality and make Huawei synonymous with high quality in the ICT industry. Fifth, it will invest heavily in R&D to ensure a high level of business continuity and enhance product competitiveness.

Regarding chip supplies, Huawei has established a robust and effective business continuity management system over more than a decade. With this system in place, Huawei says it is able to keep supplying customers with its products.

In the computing industry, Huawei sticks to its strategy of "open hardware, open source software, partner enablement, and talent cultivation", and works with its partners to drive the industry forward and foster a vibrant ecosystem.

Since 5G solutions became commercially available four years ago, more than 17,000 private network projects around the world have utilized 5G. Private 5G network revenue and 5G-enabled industrial connections have tripled. In addition, 5GtoB private networks have generated 10 billion dollars in revenue, which, in turn, has led to 100 billion dollars of revenue growth from data, information, and communications technologies (DICT) for carriers. This includes revenue from the cloud, storage, and platform domains. 5GtoB has seen wide adoption in both China and other parts of the world, such as Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. It helps industry customers cut costs and boost productivity and empowers digital and intelligent transformation in dozens of industries, including manufacturing, ports, coal mining, oilfields, and healthcare.

In 2024, Huawei will launch a full lineup of commercial 5.5G network equipment to help its customers prepare for commercial 5.5G deployment. Huawei has been working with multiple players across the industry in R&D and verification of key 5.5G technologies. Significant progress has been made in this verification process, specifically in extremely large antenna arrays (ELAA), which underpin 10-gigabit downlink, flexible spectrum access that helps realize gigabit uplink, and passive IoT that can enable 100 billion IoT connections.

50G PON is a key technology that can enable 10-gigabit speeds for F5.5G ultra-broadband networks and is expected to be extensively used in homes, campuses, and production facilities in the future. Huawei has worked with over 30 carriers around the world on the verification and pilots of these technologies.

In addition to the development of key technologies for 5.5G wireless and optical access networks, Huawei has been working on applying AI-native technologies to 5.5G core networks to deliver AI capabilities to the very ends of networks, so that they can better serve numerous industries. Net5.5G promises 10-gigabit access, ultra-broadband transport, and microsecond-level latency

over AI networks, allowing it to serve as a next-generation network foundation for industrial digitalization by providing high-quality network access.

Huawei Cloud has adhered to the strategy of "Everything as a Service" in its mission to become the cloud foundation and enabler of industry digitalization. Currently, Huawei Cloud covers 83 availability zones (AZs) across 29 geographical Regions, providing services for customers in more than 170 countries and regions around the world. Huawei Cloud has gradually become the preferred partner for many customers looking to migrate to the cloud in industries like finance and manufacturing.

Huawei Cloud also has always adhered to the notion of "AI for Industries". Huawei Pangu models are large models that tackle larger challenges. Since their launch in 2021, Pangu models have been taking on the most pressing challenges in the high-value scenarios of industries. The company focuses on using AI to address its customers' top concerns in product R&D, production, supply, marketing, and sales, and to unlock even greater value in sectors such as finance, manufacturing, e-government,

coal mining, and railway. Huawei Cloud has been used in more than 1,000 projects in the field of AI, 30% of which are applied to core production systems, improving profitability by 18% on average.

Building on 4Ts (Bit, Watt, Heat, and Battery technologies), Huawei Digital Power focuses on key technologies and products and continues to innovate in clean power generation, mobility electrification, green ICT power infrastructure, and many other domains. The company is working alongside its partners to provide customers worldwide with all-scenario, low-carbon products and solutions that will help achieve carbon neutrality faster.

In the consumer business, Huawei returned to China's top-five smartphone vendor ranking in the second quarter of this year. The company says the smartphone market is highly competitive, and to gain a foothold in this market, it must rely primarily on R&D and strong investment in new technologies. It will constantly increase investment in innovation and R&D in order to develop more competitive products and services that can deliver consumers even better experiences. **T**

5.5G

will reach 1.5 billion subscribers by 2030, revealed Huawei at MWC Shanghai

At the recently concluded Mobile World Congress (MWC) Shanghai, the global tech giant Huawei will launch a complete set of commercial 5.5G network equipment in 2024. Senior executives at the company believe that its launch will mark the beginning of the 5.5G era for the ICT industry. Huawei also stated that 5.5G will reach 1.5 billion subscribers by 2030.

In the future, Huawei expects that individuals, homes, and industries will pose higher demand on ICT infrastructure. As demand for immersive services grows exponentially, carriers will need to provide users with 10 Gbit/s connection experiences. In addition, carriers need to offer highly-reliable, low-latency networks in order to meet industry requirements for digital and intelligent transformation.

5.5G industry vision and reached a consensus on the characteristics of 5.5G networks. Huawei proposed the concept of a "5.5G Era", based on an end-to-end solution that integrates comprehensive evolved technologies, including 5.5G, F5.5G, and Net5.5G. This solution would protect operators' previous investment in 5G, while also improving network performance by 10 times. This 5.5G Era would feature 10-gigabit peak downlink speeds and gigabit peak uplink speeds to meet increasingly diverse service requirements. It would also refresh the industry vision by using new technologies like passive IoT to unlock a market of 100 billion IoT connections.

Yang Chaobin, Director & President of ICT Products & Solutions, Huawei, said: "With a clearly defined standardization schedule, the 5.5G Era is already poised for technological and commercial verification. In 2024, Huawei will launch a complete set of commercial 5.5G network equipment to be prepared for the commercial deployment of 5.5G. We look forward to working with all industry players to embark on the new journey towards the 5.5G era."

Commercial 5G services hit the market four years ago, and have since been introduced to more than 17,000 private-network projects around the world. Both revenues from 5G private networks and the number of industrial connections have tripled. Huawei, which was at the helm of the first wave of 5G implementation, is now on track to usher in the next

generation evolution for telecom networks with 5.5G. Huawei believes the 5.5G era will bring 100 times more business opportunities for operators, including toC immersive experience, industry digitalization, and full-time IoT.

In terms of bandwidth, 5.5G uses new spectrum and ELAA technologies to increase the peak downstream rate from 1 Gbit/s in the early stage of 5G to 10 Gbit/s and from 100 Mbit/s in the upstream direction to 1 Gbit/s.

From the perspective of cellular IoT, 5.5G will support passive IoT technology for the first time, increasing the number of cellular IoT connections from 10 billion to 100 billion. When it comes to network certainty, 5.5 Gbit/s supports millisecond-level latency. (compared with the 20 ms typical latency in the ToB scenario at the early stage of 5G). centimeter-level positioning precision (compared with meter-level positioning precision in the early stage of 5G), and network reliability for to-B applications will be improved from four nines to five nines or even six nines.

5.5G also introduces the communication sensing integration function for the first time, providing sensing functions on wireless and optical network, and expanding the commercial space. 5.5G further upgrades the immersive experience, increasing the number of online users from 10 million to 1 billion. Specific applications are further upgraded, from immersive to interactive and collaborative, from 2D HD video to new videos such as holographic, naked eye 3D, XR Pro, and more.

Currently, the technical bottlenecks of naked-eye 3D screens and content have been broken through. Multiple terminals have been released for commercial use, and the industry has begun to put them into commercial use. Terminal manufacturers, such as Apple, released XR terminal products to further enhance user experience the interactive.

5.5G will help us move from "connection" to "sensing". With the help of 5.5G technology, sensing can become a consensus in the industry. Perception capabilities can be effectively verified in scenarios such as smart transportation and low-altitude economies, making urban infrastructure more efficient and smart, and meeting the needs of

people's livelihood and industries. It can be used for ranging and speed measurement and can provide all-weather and full-view sensing services. Synaesthesia also provides smart transportation services, reducing traffic accidents by 80% and improving traffic efficiency by 30%.

In July 2022, in a bid to drive the continuous evolution of ICT infrastructure, Huawei launched the "Lighting up the 5.5G Era" initiative, joining hands with industries to move from the 5G era to an even more thriving 5.5G era. The ICT network infrastructure of the 5.5G era includes 5.5G, 5.5G Core, F5.5G, and Net5.5G. There is no doubt that 5.5G is the path towards the intelligent world of 2030.

Huawei has already started helping a number of operators around the world begin commercial verification of 5.5G. The company believes the 5.5G industry will continue growing quickly as the first release of 5.5G standards is expected to be confirmed in the first half of 2024, and related technologies have already been extensively verified.

Advances in standardization, spectrum, industry chain, and ecosystem development will turn 5.5G from an agreed idea into a true reality. Together with its industry partners, Huawei aims to contribute to a mature 5.5G industry and lay the groundwork for 5.5G commercialization, thus paving the way for an intelligent world.∎

UNIDO & Huawei launch Global alliance on AI for industry and manufacturing (AIM Global) at World AI Conference in Shanghai

At the sixth World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC) recently concluded in Shanghai, UNIDO, Huawei, and other partners officially launched the "Global Alliance on Artificial Intelligence for Industry and Manufacturing" (AIM Global). Led by UNIDO, AIM Global will integrate public and private partners to foster the use of and innovation around AI in industry and manufacturing.

Addressing the WAIC audience during the opening ceremony, Gerd Müller, UNIDO Director General, said: "It is our shared responsibility to ensure that advancements in the field of AI are made in a manner that is safe, ethical, sustainable and inclusive. AIM Global recognizes the importance of bridging the digital divide between nations and industries, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the AI revolution. AIM Global will be at the forefront of shaping the AI landscape. Let us work collaboratively to build a future where AI is a force for good, where its benefits are accessible to all, and where innovation thrives in harmony with our shared values."

"We are proud to be a strategic partner of AIM Global. Working closely with UNIDO and other Alliance partners, Huawei will use AI to bring new momentum to industry development," said Vicky Zhang, Vice President, Corporate Communications at Huawei. She added: "Huawei is building a strong foundation

in computing capabilities and is launching multiple large models designed for specific industries. Our goal is to develop AI solutions that more effectively serve all industries – and that better support scientific research."

The Alliance will benefit from the local networks and insights of UNIDO's investment and technology promotion offices which offer support to SMEs globally. The resulting deep understanding of actual SME challenges across sectors will inform the strategy of AIM Global in order to maximize its impact. UNIDO is committed to supporting pioneering efforts to enhance industrial competitiveness and sustainable development through AI.

AIM Global will serve as a platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of best practices. It will focus on four key areas. First, AIM Global will

facilitate the research and development of AI technologies specific to industry and manufacturing. Second, the Alliance and its partners will engage to develop and promote ethical guidelines for the use of AI in industry and manufacturing. Those will include environmental as well as societal criteria. Third, with the help of the Alliance UNIDO seeks to convey policy recommendations to governments and international organizations on the use of AI in industry and manufacturing. This will drive the development of national AI strategies. Finally, AIM Global will promote the adoption of best practices for the use of AI in industry and manufacturing.

Huawei will actively support AIM Global with case studies on industrial AI implementation, insights from its intensive research and development, as well as making its global network of experts available. ∎

At Mobile World Congress Shanghai 2023:

Huawei launches four Intelligent OptiX Innovative Practices of F5.5G

Accelerating 10Gbps Take-off and releases Innovative Practices of IntelligentCore, Fast-Tracking 5G Business Success

At the Huawei Product & Solution Innovation and Practice launch event held during the 2023 MWC in Shanghai, Huawei took the opportunity to launch four Intelligent OptiX innovative practices of F5.5G, in scenarios of smart home, small and micro enterprises, smart manufacturing and metro network.

Richard Jin, President of Huawei Optical Business Product Line, stated that 1Gbps has been everywhere, and 10Gbps is taking off. "In the past year, Huawei's F5.5G innovations, such as FTTR F30/B30, 50G PON, Alps-WDM, and 400G/800G, have been widely adopted in Asia, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. It deeply changed people's lives and work. We hope more carriers and partners join the F5.5G innovation and practice and work together to embrace 10Gbps Everywhere," Jin said.

-In terms of smart homes, over 4.6 million household users are using Huawei FTTR to create 1Gbps home Wi-Fi connection. In Brazil, Oi and Huawei took the initiative to put FTTR into commercial use in Latin America. They leveraged the ultra-high bandwidth, ultra-wide coverage, ultra-high concurrency, and 5A-level services to build smart homes featuring whole-house ultra-gigabit and whole-house intelligence for users, thereby improving efficiency, consumer satisfaction and ARPU for Oi.

-In terms of small and micro enterprises, tens of thousands of enterprises have adopted the Huawei FTTR solution.

Richard Jin - President, Optical Business Product Line Huawei

Leveraging B30's advantages, such as ultra-gigabit Wi-Fi, 300 concurrent terminals, and app-based intelligent O&M, China Unicom Henan released the FTTR B30 fusion package applicable to various scenarios, including offices, supermarkets, convenience stores and security protection. Over the past six months, China Unicom Henan has attracted nearly 10,000 enterprise users, and increased consumer satisfaction by 20%, enabling the digital transformation of small and micro enterprises.

-In terms of smart manufacturing, China Telecom Research Institute worked with Huawei to complete the world's first 50G PON–based industrial Internet pilot. Huawei's 50G PON provides 10Gbps bandwidth for campuses, provides

reliable and flexible access for industrial Automated Optical Inspection (AOI), and achieves a 10-fold improvement in inspection efficiency, realizing positive benefits for smart manufacturing. At present, Huawei has been conducting the innovation verification for its 50G PON solution together with over 30 partners around the world.

-Using Huawei's Alps-WDM, China Unicom Chongqing has built metro networks with the optimal TCO. Huawei's Alps-WDM increased the single-wavelength rate from 10G to 100G at the integrated access site and created a bandwidth resource pool shared by multiple areas for on-demand usage. It also helped create an ultra-low latency circle with 1ms coverage of the main city,

2.5ms coverage of the entire city, and 3ms coverage of Chengdu- Chongqing dual cities. Till now, Huawei's Alps-WDM has dozens of commercial applications worldwide.

The 10Gbps era is just around the corner. Huawei calls on all parties in the industry to innovate and enrich F5.5G application scenarios together and apply F5.5G to all aspects of the digital economy. In doing so, the company believes we can embrace "10Gbps Everywhere".

Huawei releases Innovative Practices of IntelligentCore, Fast-Tracking 5G Business Success:

Huawei released its innovative practices of IntelligentCore. In doing so, Huawei aims to provide references for operators to build intelligent, simplified, flexible networks, stimulate service innovation, enable experience monetization, and fast-track 5G business success.

George Gao, President of Huawei Cloud Core Network Product Line, noted at the conference, "Operators have shifted their focus on 5G networks from construction to operations. However, at this juncture, they are facing the challenges of inadequate network flexibility, homogenous user experiences, and stale applications." He continued, "To help operators navigate through these challenges, Huawei creatively introduced intelligence into core networks, and on top of this, carried out an array of innovative practices together with operators. These practices empowered almost every aspect of core networks, from voice and video services to experience differentiation and intelligent O&M. In doing so, Huawei helped operators effectively improve user experiences and better monetize services."

Huawei's IntelligentCore practices have upgraded the 5G core networks from four aspects:

From voice-only operations to content

George Gao sharing Huawei's IntelligentCore practices

operations: Huawei adopts an intelligent media engine to empower the New Calling solution. The engine leverages a plug-in media architecture and integrates the intelligent New Calling model as well as graphic and video processing algorithms in order to realize network-native intelligence for in-depth media processing. With this, Huawei helped China Mobile develop a batch of New Calling services, which deliver 20% to 30% higher performance than the industry average and reduce the artifact and frame freezing rate to less than 0.5%. One of the key benefits of this is that users can obtain richer content during calling and enjoy an exceptional communication experience.

From homogeneous 2D to distinctive 3D: Powered by an intelligent 2D-to-3D conversion engine, Huawei's Vivision solution significantly reduces the costs of producing 3D videos. Zhejiang Mobile was the first to adopt this solution and has successfully utilized it to automatically convert over one hundred 2D movies into 3D, allowing users to obtain an immersive video experience on different types of terminals. This helped Zhejiang Mobile grow both its user base and ARPU.

From traffic monetization to experience monetization: With intelligent network pipes, Huawei's ITE solution implements intelligent service awareness, intelligent

experience analysis, and intelligent scheduling acceleration to help operators deliver and monetize differentiated user experiences. This solution has been piloted at Zhejiang Mobile, with results demonstrating that the solution not only doubles the bandwidth for live TV services but also reduces the latency by 25% to 45%.

From passive response to proactive prevention: Huawei's Core Network ADN solution introduces cutting-edge technologies such as digital twin, intelligent model learning, intelligent surge simulation, and intelligent flow control parameter optimization in order to identify network risks before they become an issue. Driven by these technologies, Huawei's DR switchover simulation and evaluation solution has facilitated more than 10 cross-DC DR drills for millions of China Mobile's subscribers.

This is just the beginning of the benefits intelligent core networks will deliver to operators and users. Huawei will continue to work with industry partners to make networks more intelligent, to make the intelligence more network-oriented, and to further embrace the intelligent world. Together, let's build an intelligent, future-proof core network, accelerating the growth of 5G networks, boosting service innovation, maximizing 5G value for the industry, and creating better 5G business success. ∎

11th Edition of MEET ICT and BITEX held in Bahrain

"Achieving Sustainable Development through Digital

The 11th Edition of Bahrain's leading ICT event, The MEET ICT and BITEX, concluded with the theme "Achieving Sustainable Development through Digital Transformation." The event was inaugurated under the patronage of Abdullah bin Adel Fakhro, Minister of Industry and Commerce and Eman Ahmed Al Doseri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The Undersecretary affirmed the Ministry's commitment to supporting the technology sector, stressing the pivotal role played by the ICT sector in creating job opportunities, supporting GDP, and accelerating the economic development process.

Eman highlighted that the Government of Bahrain actively supports local companies and projects that present advanced technological ideas and solutions. Additionally, Bahrain's robust digital infrastructure, adoption of cloud technologies, and the presence of qualified and trained human resources play pivotal roles in attracting partnerships with global technology leaders. These efforts aim to strengthen Bahrain's technology ecosystem and position it as an attractive destination for innovative projects.

Industry experts emphasized the critical role of ICT in advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and showcased success stories of organizations integrating digital technologies for operational optimization and enhanced customer experiences. The event provided a platform for networking and collaboration, reaffirming digital transformation's significance in catalyzing sustainable development. Participants were encouraged to drive positive change in their sectors and contribute to Bahrain's positioning as a regional hub for ICT innovation, fostering progress in the digital age.

Speaking at the opening ceremony Tareq

Fakhroo, Chairman, Bahrain Technology Companies Society said, "I believe MEET ICT and BITEX is a golden opportunity for all the industry including ICT and non-ICT sector. Everybody should have a look at this kind of opportunity that we are providing during the event, see what's going on and try to adapt it in order to be efficient and successful with their businesses".

Mohammed Alsuhaim, CEO, Saudi Digital Academy & Assistant Deputy Minister for Future Skills & Digital Knowledge of Saudi Arabia commented, "We are working on building the right local digital talents through interventions in education & training at all levels, university and vocational – in order to ensure that all aspects of society are ready to engage with the digital future".

Transformation"

ThinkSmart signed an MoU with Checksum and Bizhub to facilitate the professional growth of young Bahraini talents within the digital transformation market. This collaboration centers on providing fresh graduates with comprehensive training, mentorship, and abundant career opportunities. Through tailored training programs, graduates gain the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in various digital disciplines, such as AI, data analytics, cybersecurity, and more. Experienced professionals from both organizations serve as mentors, offering guidance and insights to help graduates make informed career decisions. By fostering inclusivity and diversity, the collaboration ensures that talents from all backgrounds have equal access to opportunities, enriching the talent pool and driving innovation in Bahrain's digital landscape.

Eight Bahraini Innovators were awarded Digital Content Awards at the MEET ICT Conference and BITEX Exhibition. This recognition signifies the remarkable creativity and outstanding achievements of both companies and individuals within Bahrain's digital content industry. It also serves as a testament to BTECH's dedication to fostering and supporting this sector. As the digital content industry plays a vital role in the knowledge economy, the widespread availability of advanced digital tools allows for innovative user experiences and necessitates continuous development in this field.

In today's landscape, incorporating digital content into the operations of any company or project has become indispensable. It presents a challenge for organizations to comprehend the rapid changes brought about by the digital age and to adapt their activities and strategies accordingly. However, by embracing this challenge, companies and institutions can transform it into an opportunity for excellence and innovation in the competitive business market.

Investing in the digital content industry holds tremendous potential for young individuals and innovators in Bahrain, offering them remarkable opportunities to attain significant achievements and successes within their respective fields of expertise and work.

Mirza Asrar Baig, CEO & Founder of CTM360®, had the pleasure to speak and moderate the panel at the Meet

ICT & Bitex Conference Bahrain, on the topic of "Enabling Your Organization's Digital Transformation Journey" where he shared how it is a strategic imperative

for businesses seeking to thrive in today's dynamic and tech-driven world. To embark on this transformational path, organizations must begin with a

thorough assessment of their current state, understanding existing processes, and identifying areas of improvement. By setting clear and well-defined objectives aligned with the overall business strategy, leaders can rally the workforce around a common vision.

A successful digital transformation journey involves more than just implementing new technologies; it requires a cultural shift that promotes innovation, collaboration, and adaptability. By prioritizing customer experience and leveraging data-driven insights, organizations can create personalized and efficient solutions. Embracing an agile approach to implementation, staying updated with emerging technologies, and investing in digital skills and cybersecurity are vital components of this transformative journey. Continuous monitoring of progress and a commitment to adaptability will enable organizations to navigate the digital landscape and seize opportunities for growth.

The key to enabling a successful digital transformation journey lies in the unwavering commitment of organizational leadership. Leaders must champion the cause, articulate the vision, and allocate resources to drive change across the entire organization. By fostering a culture of openness to change and cultivating a learning mindset, employees become catalysts for innovation and seamless technology adoption. A well-structured roadmap, supported by smaller, agile projects, enables iterative progress and continuous feedback. Collaborating with external partners and technology providers brings fresh insights and expertise to the table, enhancing the organization's capabilities. As the digital transformation journey unfolds, organizations must remain vigilant about cybersecurity and risk management to protect valuable data and systems. Ultimately, a successful digital transformation journey positions organizations at the forefront of their industries, equipped to respond to evolving customer needs and market dynamics with agility and resilience.

The event brought together key players from the ICT industry to explore how digital transformation can drive sustainable development and economic growth in the region. Participants engaged in discussions, workshops, and technology demonstrations focused on leveraging digital technologies to address global challenges while promoting environmental, social, and economic sustainability. **T**

e& wins 2 awards at the Carrier Community Global Awards 2023

e& won the 'Middle East Operator of the Year' and the 'Best Regional SMS Service Provider' at the 7th Carrier Community Global Awards ceremony in Berlin, reaffirming its steadfast commitment to driving transformation and delivering exceptional performance in the industry.

This outstanding accomplishment illustrates e&'s unwavering dedication to innovation and excellence in the techco sector and the capacity to adjust to changing market demands while providing outstanding results for clients and partners.

Nabil Baccouche, Group Chief Carrier & Wholesale Officer at e&, said: "These prestigious awards serve as a recognition to the team's dedication, innovation, and unwavering commitment to excellence. Winning the title of 'Middle East Operator of the Year' is a great honour, which further solidifies e&'s position as one of the world's leading technology and investment groups.

"With its innovative infrastructure and solutions, e& has demonstrated significant strides in the industry over the last year. The

recognition of e&'s exceptional messaging solutions further fuels its mission to deliver cutting-edge services and unparalleled customer satisfaction."

With the 'Middle East Operator of the Year' award, the jury recognised e&'s successful initiatives to improve access to communications in the region, along with its customer and revenue growth, market disrupting innovations, first-to-market technology implementations, and industry

collaboration efforts.

e& C&W's recognition in the regional category as a SMS service provider demonstrates its capabilities and extraordinary performance in supporting Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and the entire messaging ecosystem. Its extensive global reach enables a seamless delivery of SMS traffic to more than 800 terminating MNOs using win-win partnership models.

e&'s recognition at the Carrier Community awards forum is a testimony to e&'s global reach and ability to deliver superior services on a wholesale scale. By leveraging effective partnership models and innovative solutions, e& has become a trusted provider of global services.

This recognition celebrated the achievements of top global telcos, highlighting the innovations and achievements among telecom wholesale operators and ecosystem partners around the globe and who were independently judged by a panel of telecom analysts and experts from the industry. ∎

e& reports consolidated revenues of AED 26.6 billion for H1 2023, up 1.1 per cent

e& has announced its consolidated financial results for H1 2023 and that it has signed a binding agreement with PPF Group ("PPF") to acquire a controlling stake (50% + 1 share economic stake) in PPF Telecom Group's ("PPF Telecom") assets in Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovakia. PPF Telecom is the telecommunications division of PPF.

e&'s consolidated revenues during the H1 2023 reached AED 26.6 billion a YoY increase of 1.1 per cent. Consolidated net profit recorded AED 4.7 billion while consolidated EBITDA reached AED 12.8 billion, resulting in an EBITDA margin of 48 per cent.

In the UAE, etisalat by e& recorded 13.9 million subscribers an increase of 5.1 per cent compared to the same period of last year, The Group's aggregate subscribers reached 165 million, a YoY increase of 3.1 per cent.

H.E. Jassem Mohamed Obaid Bu Ataba Alzaabi, Chairman, e&, said: "e&'s performance during the first half of the year reinforces the resilience of our business model despite the challenging global macroeconomic environment. This was also the result of our teams' relentless efforts to remain committed to our vision and drive sustainable growth, making a positive change in the societies we serve while adding value to our shareholders.

"We are also delighted to announce e&'s strategic expansion into the European market. With this move, we join forces with PPF to build and expand our international footprint in the attractive Central and Eastern Europe region and beyond. It is the next step of our

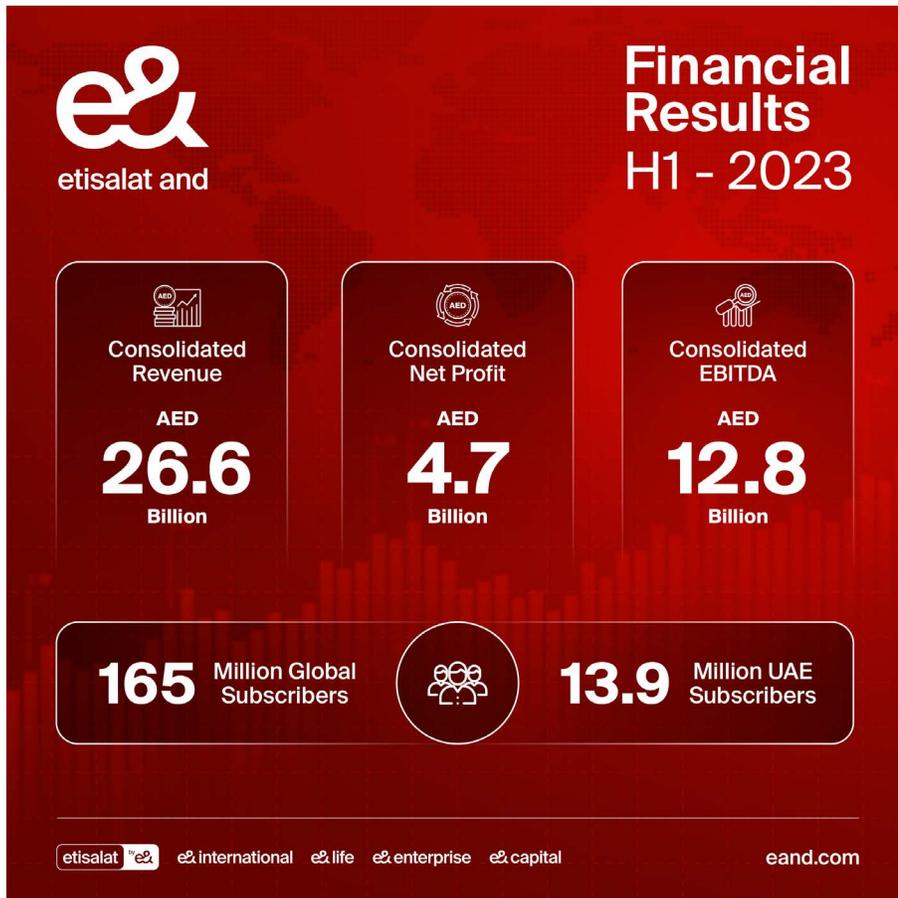*H.E. Jassem Mohamed Obaid Bu Ataba Alzaabi - Chairman, e&*

Hatem Dowidar
Group CEO, e&

transformation into a global technology group, offering e& multiple avenues to roll-out its leading suite of B2B and B2C digital products in the CEE with significant

synergies.

"The acquisition aligns with e&'s strategic ambition to accelerate international

Financial Results H1 – 2023

etisalat and

Consolidated Revenue AED **26.6** Billion

Consolidated Net Profit AED **4.7** Billion

Consolidated EBITDA AED **12.8** Billion

165 Million Global Subscribers

13.9 Million UAE Subscribers

etisalat by e& | e& international | e& life | e& enterprise | e& capital | eand.com

Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO, e&, said: "Over the past six months, we have demonstrated a strong sense of resilience and adaptability. Our relentless focus on excellence and innovation has allowed us to thrive in the dynamic landscape of the telecommunications and technology sectors, maintaining our growth momentum.

"Our consolidated revenues during the first half of the year reached AED 26.6 billion, with a year-over-year increase of 1.1 per cent. Consolidated net profit recorded AED 4.7 billion while consolidated EBITDA reached AED 12.8 billion, resulting in an EBITDA margin of 48 per cent. This positive performance has been driven by our core businesses and our new business verticals, which have seen an increase in demand domestically and internationally.

"This growth was also fueled by harnessing the power of our technological prowess, leveraging our expertise to forge new paths, disrupt industries, and transform the way we do business on a global scale. Our commitment to pushing boundaries and embracing change has positioned us as a true trailblazer in the digital era.

growth and diversify geographically. This represents an unparalleled opportunity to establish a strong presence and foster development within the dynamic CEE region. The PPF Telecom portfolio, spanning four countries, exhibits a well-balanced structure, underpinned by robust macroeconomic fundamentals and stable currencies. The countries of its operations are characterized by regulatory stability, healthy competition, and highly attractive returns, positioning them among the most promising in Europe. e& will consolidate more than 10 million subscribers from this acquisition post-closing.

"We achieved remarkable progress in our strategic focus areas, supported by strong performance in our core telecom business, increased demand for our innovative digital services and solutions, and a commitment to deliver cutting-edge solutions that accelerate digital

transformation in the communities we serve. During the period, we also made strategic investments and fostered partnerships that will drive our growth in the coming years, pushing us to seize new opportunities in the fast-evolving digital landscape.

"In line with the UAE leadership's vision, we are committed to continuing progress and development and enhancing our confidence in the added value e& provides. We are resolute in our commitment to spare no effort in delivering cutting-edge technologies and world-class services that will not only shape the digital future but also turn the vision of sustainable socio-economic growth into a tangible reality. With the utmost dedication, we aim to play an instrumental role in fostering a knowledge-based economy, cementing our position as a driving force for innovation and progress."

"Our success has been driven by the combination of our innovative, customer-centric strategies and the unwavering dedication of our teams, along with our investment in world-leading infrastructure and cutting-edge technologies that consistently serve as the foundation of our achievements.

"I would like to express my gratitude to our dedicated employees, whose relentless efforts and innovative spirit remain the driving force behind our progression. Similarly, we thank our loyal customers and stakeholders for their continued faith in our vision. Looking ahead, I remain confident that our commitment to connecting people, businesses, and communities through technology will enable us to provide continuous growth and value for our customers and stakeholders in the years to come." ∎

From telcos to techcos

How telco aggregation is changing the industry

The telecommunications industry is experiencing a much-needed shift, driven by the aggregation of telcos. This aggregation, characterised by mergers and acquisitions, is reshaping the landscape of telecoms infrastructure, businesses and the market as a whole. Here, Sam Dunscombe, Head of Growth at BSS Telecoms Software Provider Mobilise, shares his predictions on how this could take shape.

Primarily, telcos are merging to gain a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving telecommunications landscape. The aggregation trend allows companies to leverage their respective strengths, resources and customer bases. Mergers enable telcos to expand their network coverage, enhance their service offerings and tap into new markets. One of the key elements driving this aggregation of network operators is convergence. This is the focus on offering customer benefits for taking both a fixed broadband type service, alongside a mobile service, with a single operator.

The recent announcement of Vodafone and Three's merger intentions has served as a stark reminder of how telecoms is changing. Convergence is becoming increasingly more commonplace as businesses strive to layer multiple service offerings together to diversify the way they engage consumers and, ultimately, generate revenue.

A FWA future

While the UK's most recent mergers — BT Openreach and EE, and Virgin Media and O2 — follow the traditional telecoms convergence proposition and include both a fixed and mobile network provider, the merge of Vodafone and Three, neither of which operate their own fixed network, signifies a shift towards a different model.

Sam Duncombe - Head of Growth
BSS Telecoms Software Provider Mobilise

Instead of following the traditional view of convergence, the Vodafone Three merger is a sure sign of a shift toward fixed wireless access (FWA). FWA provides high-speed broadband connectivity using wireless technologies, eliminating the need for traditional fixed-line infrastructure. Telcos are already adopting FWA to address the challenges of bridging the digital divide in remote and underserved areas, where laying physical cables can be expensive and time-consuming, and not commercially viable.

In the UK, BT Openreach and Virgin dominate the fixed network market so, realistically, more mergers like that of Vodafone and Three are likely to emerge. The aggregation of telcos that don't own a fixed network will mean more emphasis on FWA is inevitable. As a result, it will mean that FWA-focused networks will rely on their greater overall share of the mobile market and the network superiority this offers them, and will leverage this over fixed network service offerings.

Upscaling the tech side

Beyond the shift towards FWA, the aggregation of telcos is driving cross-industry consolidation, sparking their evolution into technology companies, or techcos. Many telcos are shifting their focus from traditional telecommunications services to the expansion of their presence in the tech sector.

The aggregation of telcos allows them to leverage their existing infrastructure, resources and technical expertise to introduce new services such as cloud computing, Internet of Things (IoT)

solutions and digital entertainment platforms. This shift positions telcos as techcos, bridging the gap between the telecommunications and technology industries.

The traditional telco segment, especially in the UK, has developed rapidly over the last few decades. But more recently, its ROI potential is plateauing, especially with the ongoing challenges around 5G monetisation, customer handset refresh cycles elongating and the crack down on the traditional subsidy model from the regulators. For telcos to remain profitable, and to ensure their activity remains valuable in the eyes of investors, a shift to techco is essential.

There are many examples of how this is already happening. Last year UAE-based telco Etisalat rebranded to e& to represent its shift in operating model and how changing consumer demands mean that telcos are expected to offer more than just telecoms services. Similarly, BT has taken a

back seat in the BT EE consumer branding — a decision made in order to appeal to more tech-savvy consumers, since EE is perceived as a more modern, mobile-focus brand.

Becoming digital-first

To navigate this changing landscape, successfully merge and shift into the techco space, a telco should adopt a digital-first business model. What does this mean?

A digital-first company aims to connect in every way possible — it has undergone a successful digital transformation and uses all channels to ensure that the customer is at the forefront of all business decisions. According to a report by McKinsey, digital-first telcos are growing revenue at an average rate of 20 per cent, compared to three per cent for telcos still focus on traditional telecoms services. So, this digital shift puts traditional telcos in a favourable position to evolve into techcos.

Understandably, embarking on such systemic change is a challenge, especially for smaller telcos that may not have the resources or knowledge to implement it with confidence. Mobilise's HERO is a flexible plug-and-play digital BSS platform that can be integrated into any system to offer a seamless, fully digital interface. Fully compliant with the TM Forum Open API Specifications, there are over 60 APIs that can be integrated into the front and back-end systems for functions including self-service and payments. Once in place, HERO ensure a telco is fully digital, ensuring the infrastructure is there to equip them for success.

The convergence of telcos is becoming more commonplace as companies strive to pool their resources in order to diversify their revenue channels. While we can already see how this is taking shape with the shift towards a FWA model but we're likely to see more of this as further consolidation makes way for technological shift. ∎

Zain Omantel International (ZOI) and du join forces to revolutionize Roaming Services in the Middle East and Africa

Zain Omantel International (ZOI) has recently formed a strategic wholesale international agreement with du. The partnership guarantees exceptional voice, messaging, and data roaming services powered by advanced 5G technology connectivity.

The collaboration will significantly improve the customer experience for ZOI and du end-users across two continents. The partnership aims to expand and enhance international roaming services across nine countries, including the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, and South Sudan.

Sohail Qadir, ZOI CEO said, "This agreement between two innovative entities further demonstrates our commitment to transforming the business and creating synergies while extending our reach and

capabilities to provide the highest quality services to our customers. By leveraging our combined expertise and resources, we are confident that we can deliver enhanced connectivity and convenience for customers in the UAE and across ZOI's operational countries."

Fahad Al Hassawi, du CEO commented, "The partnership between ZOI and du signifies a pivotal move in our joint pursuit of providing exceptional telecommunication services to our valued customers. With the substantial roaming traffic exchange in the UAE, our collaboration enables us to harness each other's unique strengths, positioning us at the forefront of shaping the future of roaming. This partnership is dedicated to delivering a seamless and effortless experience for travelers throughout the region, surpassing their

expectations and setting new industry standards."

The partnership with du marks a significant milestone in the consolidation of Zain and Omantel's wholesale business through ZOI, aimed at achieving Group synergies and creating value for partners.

ZOI is revolutionizing the wholesale telecommunications sector by offering a unique proposition that combines the strengths of both parties to deliver unparalleled service and support to customers worldwide. It further solidifies ZOI's position as the only truly pan-regional network connecting all countries in the Middle East to a vast international network and offering a comprehensive portfolio of services and solutions to meet the increasing demands of wholesale customers. ∎

"To thrive in this new world, a digital-first mindset is essential"

IDC Saudi Arabia CIO Summit will run under the theme 'Enabling the Digital Economy's Leaders'

Ranjit Rajan – *VP of Research at IDC (META)*

Teletimes: This year's IDC Saudi Arabia CIO Summit will run under the theme 'Enabling the Digital Economy's Leaders'. What's the current state of the digital economy in the Kingdom?

Ranjit Rajan: Saudi Arabia is on an accelerated digital journey, with the government digitalizing services and implementing national development plans that will generate benefits for both the country's public and private sectors.

While the digital world has become the norm for most industries and organizations, the process of digitalization is gathering pace in Saudi, and the digital economy will be a powerful engine for enabling industry transformation and facilitating high-quality economic.

The 13th annual edition of the IDC Saudi Arabia CIO Summit will provide a unique platform for ICT decision makers and industry experts from across the Kingdom to explore the current state of the digital economy, its impact on citizens, customers, employees, and operations, and the key challenges that must be addressed.

TT: What kind of topics will this year's agenda focus on?

RR: Featuring expert insights from the region's leading technology providers and foremost end-user ICT leaders, the agenda will address topics such as sustainability, cloud, AI, cybersecurity, Industry 4.0, and digital transformation. And since the role of the modern CIO is continually evolving, there will be a particular focus on what CIOs need to do now — and in the future — to create an environment for long-term sustainable innovation.

TT: What are the key trends that digital leaders should be aware of?

RR: CIOs and tech leaders across the Kingdom are doubling down on digitalization and increasingly embracing a digital-first approach as they look to accelerate their digital transformation initiatives. 52% of CIOs surveyed recently by IDC in Saudi Arabia said that they are now focused on changing or adapting their existing business

Teletimes Interview

> *"The agenda will address topics such as sustainability, cloud, AI, cybersecurity, Industry 4.0, and digital transformation"*

models into digital business models, reflecting the increasing adoption of a "digital-first" mindset.

TT: How can organizations in Saudi Arabia best position themselves to thrive in the new digital business environment?

RR: To thrive in this new world, a digital-first mindset is essential. Digital will continue to be a competitive requirement, and spending on digital technology by organizations worldwide will grow eight times the economy in 2023, establishing a foundation for operational excellence, competitive differentiation, and long-term growth.

Many organizations are rapidly transitioning from "digitally transforming" to "running a digital business". For the medium term, they should look to scale their digital business initiatives; automation will be critical in this regard, particularly IT automation, process automation, and value stream automation.

And for the long term, they need to anticipate and plan for an emerging new tech order that will be characterized by disruptive tech trends such as sustainability, electrification, digital currencies, extended reality (including the metaverse), generative AI, and voice-driven customer and employee engagement. ∎

IBC2023 unveils headline speakers and content pillars to spark industry discussion and transformation

IBC2023 has announced a world-class line-up of headline speakers from across the media, entertainment and technology sector, along with the underlying content pillars running through this year's show, which takes place in the RAI Amsterdam on 15th-18th September. The content at this year's event is underpinned by three fundamental pillars: Transformative Tech, Shifting Business Models and People and Purpose – themes that will fuel learning, discussion and collaboration in presentations, demonstrations and panel sessions across the IBC Conference, the show floor theatres, and the IBC Changemakers Programme.

Michael Crimp, IBC's Chief Executive Officer, says: "IBC continues to evolve and grow with the industry. We are actively listening to our community on what they want out of a modern trade show. Among the things they are telling us they want are new topics and new ways of learning – and our content pillars give us the scope to provide these. They form a compelling thread that runs through the talks, presentations and panels going on at the conference and at show-floor venues across the RAI. They create a clear focus for an exciting slate of visionary speakers to address the most pressing trends, issues, opportunities and challenges in media and entertainment today."

The 2023 IBC Conference (in the Forum at the RAI on the 15th and 16th of September) brings together some of the industry's most influential thought leaders to present talks, panel discussions and the IBC Technical Papers. The 2023 IBC Conference, which is a paid part of the event, will offer the usual standard Delegate Pass, which includes entrance to all the event's presentations, and a new Premium Pass that provides access to additional content plus exclusive networking in the Premium Lounge – where the IBC Innovations Awards will also take place.

The conference will explore core trends and technologies shaping the future of media and entertainment (M&E). It kicks off with an address by 'Media Universe Cartographer' Evan Shapiro, a renowned industry influencer who maps M&E trends and future developments. Shapiro will lead a session entitled 'Plotting the effects of disruption: Charting the new media ecosystem'.

Other confirmed headline IBC Conference speakers include:

•Aditi Pandey, Head of Vendor Management & Partnerships at NRK

•Allu Venkatesh (Allu Bobby), Actor, Film Producer and Entrepreneur at aha, Just Tickets

•Anthony Guarino, Executive Vice President, Global Production & Studio Technology at Paramount

•Bill Baggelaar, Chief Technology Officer and Executive Vice President, Technology Development at Sony Pictures Entertainment

•Kishore AK, President Technology and Chief Technology Officer at Zee

•Leah Hooper Rosa, Senior Vice President, EMEA Streaming and Global Integration Lead at Warner Bros. Discovery

•Michael Wise, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at Universal Pictures

•Natalya Tatarchuk, Distinguished Technical Fellow and Chief Architect, Vice President, Wētā Tools at Unity Technologies

•Phil Wiser, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at Paramount Global

•Richard Berger, Chief Executive Officer at MovieLabs

•Ralph Lee, Chief Executive Officer at BBC Studios Productions

Michael Crimp
Chief Executive Officer, IBC

Jaisica Lapsiwala
Head of Content, IBC

Akwasi Ansah
Founder and Creative Director, Omroep ZWART

•Valerio Motti, Vice President FAST Channels at Fremantle

Jaisica Lapsiwala, IBC's Head of Content, notes: "We are excited to have such a diverse and global range of thought leaders coming together for this year's IBC Conference, which sets the media and entertainment industry agenda. This part of IBC2023 really speaks to the first two content pillars of the event, Transformative Tech and Shifting Business Models."

In the show-floor venues – which include the Showcase Theatre in Hall 12, the Innovation Stage in Hall in Hall 3 and two theatres in the Content Everywhere area in Hall 5 – there will be an array of exhibitor and sponsor content that will include speeches, panels and demos, with many relating to the first two content pillars. Showcase Theatre sponsors include Accenture, AWS, Google, Microsoft, and Zixi, while LTN and Tencent are each sponsoring one of the Content Everywhere theatres. In addition to hosting thought leadership sessions, the Innovation Stage will showcase the results of the IBC Accelerator Media Innovation Programme, which brings together pioneering media companies and leading-edge technology partners as they collaborate to solve real-world challenges and drive advances across a range of areas.

Highlighting the People and Purpose content pillar in 2023 will be the free IBC Changemakers Programme, which returns to the Forum on the 17th and 18th of September after a highly

successful launch in 2022. These sessions bring together trailblazing organisations, individuals and initiatives that are changing the industry culture and pushing the boundaries of creativity and technology. They will address topics such as gender equality in broadcasting, advancing sustainability, and inclusive tech. Groups involved in Changemakers include RISE, Soho Media Club, Women in Immersive Tech, and Albert. The IBC Social Impact Awards will also be part of the Changemakers Programme.

Akwasi Ansah, Founder and Creative Director, Omroep ZWART – the first intrinsically inclusive TV broadcasting station in The Netherlands – will give the keynote for the Changemakers sessions, sharing his personal story and vision for a digital-first landscape that is equitable, inclusive and accessible. Other Changemakers speakers include:

•Alexandra Hussenot, Chief Executive Officer, Immersionn, and UK Lead at Women in Immersive Technologies

•Jabbar Sardar, Global HR Director at BBC Studios

•Paul Pastor, Chief Business Officer and Co-Founder at Quickplay

•Sasha Scott, Head of Transformation Services at EBU

In the run-up to the show, IBC will also offer the Changemakers Podcast series, focusing on media culture. Hosted by journalist Nadira

Tudor, the podcasts will consist of a series of interviews that initiate essential conversations and spread awareness about critical cultural developments in technology and M&E. Guests include:

•Asif Sadiq, Chief Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer at Warner Bros. Discovery

•Kamal Ahmed, Editor-in-Chief and Co-founder at The News Movement

•Lisa Kelly, Head of Content Innovation & Development at BBC Children in Need

•Victoria Murovana, Chief Editor/Kids Content Producer at UA:PBC Suspilne, Ukraine.

Lapsiwala says: "At IBC2023, we want to play our role in driving positive change across the media, entertainment and technology community. The Changemakers sessions enable the IBC community to learn from people who are pioneering best practice in these areas. Through all the content running across IBC 2023, we aim to deliver insights and energise the market – sparking conversations, shifting perceptions and changing expectations."

IBC is owned by six industry organizations, IABM, IEEE, IET, Royal Television Society, SCTE and SMPTE. The IBC Partnership Pavilion will provide visitors with an opportunity to find out more about the IBC owners, which will also take part in sessions on the show floor and in a conference room while the Changemaker sessions are taking place. **T**

Khomp and Cloud-Tribe announce strategic collaboration to improve Call Centre Services in Asia

Khomp, known for its cutting-edge Answering Machine Detection (AMD) solution, has partnered with Cloud-Tribe, the top public cloud service provider in Pakistan. This partnership represents a key turning point in Cloud-Tribe's expansion of its Call Centre as a Service offering, which offers complete solutions to outbound call centres focusing on the international and local markets.

With three "Rated-3" certified Data Centres strategically placed in Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, Cloud-Tribe has made a name for itself as a major participant in the public cloud space. Cloud-Tribe has been at the forefront of revolutionising the cloud service landscape in Pakistan with its unwavering dedication to excellence and track record of achievement.

As evidence of its unrelenting commitment to innovation, Cloud-Tribe recently unveiled its ground-breaking solution, Call Centre as a Service, which equips call centres with the infrastructure and tools required to provide agents with premium call quality. Cloud-Tribe has decided to work with Khomp, a known expert in the sector, in recognition of the importance of call classification and especially answering machine identification in the call centre ecosystem.

Manager One takes care of the routing, management, monitoring and is intelligent

Syed Zain Ul Abideen - CTO, Cloud-Tribe

solution for your telephony system.

The AI-based Answering Machine Detection (AMD) solution which is part of Manager One , offers contact centres using Cloud-Tribe's services a wide range of advantages. The AMD solution accurately recognises answering machines by utilising state-of-the-art artificial intelligence algorithms, enabling call centres to optimise their outbound campaigns and improve operational efficiency. Customers can anticipate the following thanks to Cloud-Tribe's smooth integration of Khomp's cutting-edge technology:

Improved Agent Productivity: The AMD

AI-based solution accurately recognizes answering machines, allowing call center operators to concentrate their time and effort on live calls, leading to enhanced productivity and better results.

Increased Campaign efficacy: Clients of Cloud-Tribe may optimise their outbound campaigns, reaching more live prospects and maximising campaign efficacy, by avoiding pointless exchanges with answering machines.

Improved Customer Experience: Customers have a seamless and personalised engagement with call centre workers with fewer instances of reaching an answering machine, increasing satisfaction and loyalty.

Syed Zain Ul Abideen, CTO at Cloud-Tribe stated, "We are delighted to embark on this strategic cooperation with Khomp. Our goal of offering the best call centre solutions is nicely complemented by Khomp's expertise in answering machine detection. Our clients can anticipate unmatched call quality and improved campaign performance thanks to the cutting-edge AI-based technology incorporated into our Call Centre as a Service offering. Using the service call centres will be able to reduce their voip service provider expense.

"This collaboration between Cloud-Tribe and Khomp goes far beyond Pakistan's borders. All of Asia is covered by the agreement that Cloud-Tribe and Khomp have signed, enabling companies there to take advantage of this ground-breaking partnership for their call centre requirements."

Zain continued, "We are enthusiastic about the opportunities that lay ahead. Cloud-Tribe and Khomp are teaming up to give exceptional value to our customers and are ready to change the future of call centre services in Asia. We anticipate more creative projects and partnerships with Khomp." ⊓
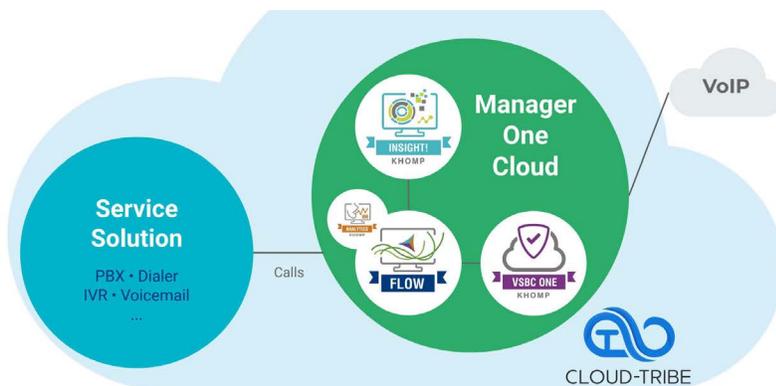
China Telecom Global (CTG) partners with Zain Omantel International (ZOI) to revolutionize global connectivity

China Telecom Global Limited has signed a strategic subsea capacity and connectivity agreement with Zain Omantel International (ZOI), the Middle East's premier global wholesale powerhouse, facilitating the global expansion of both parties' market presence in the Middle East and Asia Pacific regions.

Leveraging ZOI and CTG's exceptional expertise and network capabilities, this partnership allows the parties to take their service offerings to new heights, delivering high-capacity, low-latency data connectivity across China, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, and South Sudan.

Paving the way for seamless and reliable communication, the partnership marks a significant milestone in the telecommunication industry and is poised to bring about a new era of global connectivity and enhanced customer experiences, promoting economic growth, fostering innovation, and bringing people closer together.

Speaking on the agreement, Faming Lu, Vice President at CTG, said, "Aligned with our worldwide strategy to enhance CTG's foothold in the Middle East, we look forward to collaborating with ZOI to reinforce network assistance for clients and enable enterprises to venture into global markets and stay competitive. Especially for those aiming to expand into the Asia Pacific region, this partnership presents a valuable opportunity to benefit from rapid and dependable connectivity that effectively fuels their business growth. Furthermore, it will serve as a digital gateway for Chinese businesses seeking to establish their operations in the Middle East market, unlocking the vast potential for mutual success."

Sohail Qadir, ZOI CEO said, "As the gateway from the Middle East to the world, ZOI is proud to be CTG's partner of choice in the Middle East for international capacity and subsea streams. This partnership strengthens our position as the global wholesale powerhouse connecting all Middle Eastern countries to an extensive

international network. It also enables us to deliver unrivaled connectivity solutions and wholesale services to businesses across the region."

The strategic partnership between CTG and ZOI marks a significant milestone in the collaboration between the parties. It will revolutionize the way global connectivity is offered and pave the way to offer more innovative and advanced international telecom solutions.

ZOI, the only truly pan-regional network connecting all Middle Eastern countries to a vast international network, is set to be a game-changer in the telecommunications wholesale industry, offering a diverse portfolio of services and solutions to meet the increasing demands of wholesale customers. It will cater to the end-to-end telecommunications needs of telecom operators, as well as international carriers, data centers, hyperscalers, content, and cloud providers seeking services within the region and beyond. **T**

Hughes JUPITER 3 Satellite successfully launches, Heralds the Start of a new era of Connectivity

JUPITER 3 solar arrays, which unfolded in space to their full ten-story span.

"JUPITER 3 is the highest capacity, highest performing satellite we've ever launched. As the leading provider and inventor of satellite internet, we're proud to herald the start of a new era of connectivity and serve more customers where cable and fiber cannot," said Hamid Akhavan, CEO, EchoStar. "This purpose-built satellite is engineered uniquely to meet our customers' needs and target capacity where it's needed most, such as the most rural regions of the Americas, so they can stay connected to the applications and services they depend on every day."

Over the next several weeks, JUPITER 3 will travel into a geosynchronous orbit 22,236 miles (35,786 kilometers) above the Earth to its destination at the 95 degrees west orbital slot. It will then undergo extensive bus and payload testing before entering service and augmenting the Hughes JUPITER fleet with more than 500 Gbps of additional capacity.

"Whether helping a student in Mexico expand her horizons with access to technology, connecting a farmer in Idaho with the tools to monitor his crops, or connecting a senior in Montana to her doctor via a telehealth appointment, JUPITER 3 will connect our customers to what matters most," added Akhavan.

With JUPITER 3, Hughes will enhance its HughesNet® offerings for customers in the U.S. and Latin America with more broadband capacity overall and higher speed plans in many markets—some with download speeds up to 100 Mbps. The company will also offer higher speed HughesNet Fusion® plans, the innovative low-latency home internet that leverages multipath technology to blend satellite and wireless technologies seamlessly into a low-latency satellite internet experience.

With dense, high-throughput capacity across the Americas, JUPITER 3 will also support applications such as in-flight Wi-Fi, enterprise networking and cellular backhaul for mobile network operators (MNOs). **T**

Hughes Network Systems, has announced that its JUPITER™ 3 ultra high-density satellite has successfully launched on a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket from historic Kennedy Space Center Launch Pad 39A in Florida. Also known as EchoStar XXIV, JUPITER 3 was built by Maxar Technologies in Palo Alto, CA, and is engineered to deliver gigabytes of connectivity to customers across North and South America.

On July 29 three hours and twenty-eight minutes after lift-off, JUPITER 3 successfully deployed from the launch vehicle. The satellite began sending and receiving its first signals, and engineers deployed the

IBC2023 shines a light on transformative innovations and groundbreaking social projects in awards shortlists

IBC has unveiled the shortlists for this year's prestigious Innovation and Social Impact Awards, taking place during IBC2023 in the RAI Amsterdam on 15th-18th September. The IBC Innovation Awards honour collaborative efforts that lead to the development of fresh solutions that address real-world challenges, while the IBC Social Impact Awards acknowledge projects that address critical industry diversity, inclusivity and environmental challenges. The Innovation Awards will be announced in a ceremony in IBC's Premier Lounge at 18.00 CEST on Sunday, September 17th. The Social Impact Awards, part of the IBC2023 Changemakers Programme, will be held the same day at 17.00 CEST in The Forum.

Fergal Ringrose, Chair of the 2023 IBC Innovation Awards Jury, said: "The standard of entries has been remarkably high across the three categories – Content Creation, Content Distribution and Content Everywhere. On behalf of the Awards Jury, I would like to thank all of the projects for submitting their entry this year. It is clear that the global pandemic has acted as a major catalyst for innovation in the content and technology industry, with

this year's finalists demonstrating many of the transformative new paths forward. All aspects of remote and sustainable operations have been accelerated, bringing an emphatic shift in emphasis from products and hardware to software and services. This shift is allied to the compelling requirement for media companies to continuously anticipate and align with modern consumption habits."

This year's shortlist of the most prestigious projects in Content Creation includes:

•FOX Sports live multi-camera extended reality (XR) set, replacing the existing NFL on FOX set in Los Angeles

•RTVE Spain for Hiperia, its first audiovisual content created 100% by artificial intelligence

•The BBC and partners for the world's largest pop-up 5G standalone non-public network for live broadcast contributions using shared spectrum, deployed for the Coronation of HM King Charles III

•Riot Games for its Remote Broadcast Centre, Project Stryker, powered by AWS,

a groundbreaking approach to esports content production and broadcasting

•Formula E for its onboard in-car broadcasting technology with Timeline Television and Domo Broadcast Systems.

In the Content Distribution category, the finalists are:

•ITV UK for introducing AI-led automation of segmentation and QC workflows with Prime Focus Technologies

•Cellcom Israel, which joined forces with Viaccess-Orca and Broadpeak to stream live sports with super-low latency

•TelevisaUnivision, harnessing LTN live event versioning technology to deliver language-tailored live sports coverage on ViX, its streaming platform for global Spanish-speaking audiences

•Sky Group cloud-native software playout platform for the origination of linear content TV channels across European territories.

The organisations on the Content

Everywhere shortlist are:

•SPORT TV APP, which captured a whole new level of audience engagement for the Portuguese sports broadcaster

•Sky Sports for the first time delivered full access to Formula 1 onboard cameras and launched new Battle Channel

•KAN, which changed the way Israel watches World Cup Qatar 2022 and Eurovision 2023 with Sport BUFF real-time interactive engagement

•TNT Sports (formerly BT Sport), which looked to the cloud to create a significant broadcasting milestone for UEFA Youth League.

The Social Impact Awards, introduced in 2019, have since emerged as an IBC mainstay and, in 2023, became part of the Changemakers programme – which focuses on initiatives aimed at making the industry more equitable, inclusive, accessible and green.

Ade Rawcliffe, Group Director of Diversity and Inclusion at ITV and Chair of the Social Impact Awards Jury, said: "We were blown away by the range and ambition of this year's entries – congratulations and thank you to everyone who entered. The quality of the finalists from around the globe illustrates just how important making a social impact is to an increasing number of businesses and creative companies. It has rightly become embedded into the strategy of many companies on a level with any other KPI. As a sector, we are privileged to be in a position to help drive positive societal change, create more equitable and inclusive workplaces, and encourage sustainable behaviours."

There are three categories in the 2023 IBC Social Impact Awards, which will also include a Special Award. The Social Impact category itself is the first, with the shortlist including:

•Afghanistan International Radio, a platform that has amplified the voices of

Afghan women, sharing their stories

•RTVE, which used AI to provide local election news coverage of nearly 5,000 small Spanish municipalities

•Stellenbosch University and Intelsat, which are leveraging satellite technology to expand the reach and richness of higher education

•BBC Research & Development's Human Values project, which provides tools to understand how content affects the wellbeing and values of the user.

The Environment and Sustainability finalists are:

•Iron Mountain Data Centers, which are on the path to using 100% locally sourced clean electricity 100% of the time to make their operations carbon free

•Seagate, which extended the life of over one million hard disk drives and solid state drives through its refurbishment and circularity programme in 2022

•4MOD's Life Cycle Assessment process, which integrates LCA data-driven decisions into its operations, ensuring continual improvement in the environmental impacts of products and services

•Love Island's partnership with eBay, which inspired sustainable shopping among a huge audience.

The finalists for Diversity and Inclusion projects are:

•The MAMA Youth Project, which supports motivated and under-represented young adults into sustained employment in the Media.

•SWI swissinfo.ch, which has introduced a data-driven process to evaluate the use of inclusive language in its multi-lingual digital newsroom.

•ScreenCraft Works, a global community for under-represented film and TV professionals with cross-border mentorship at its heart.

The IBC Innovation Awards ceremony will also include recognition of the Best Technical Paper from the 2023 IBC Conference, as well as presentation of a Special Award. In addition, the IBC International Honour for Excellence, which goes to an individual or organisation which has made an outstanding impact over an extended period of time, will also be awarded at the ceremony. Previous winners of the International Honour for Excellence include Sir David Attenborough, movie directors Ang Lee and Peter Jackson, and the creator of Sesame Street, Joan Ganz Cooney. ∎

Yahsat reaffirms position as UAE's leading satellite tech provider with award from TDRA
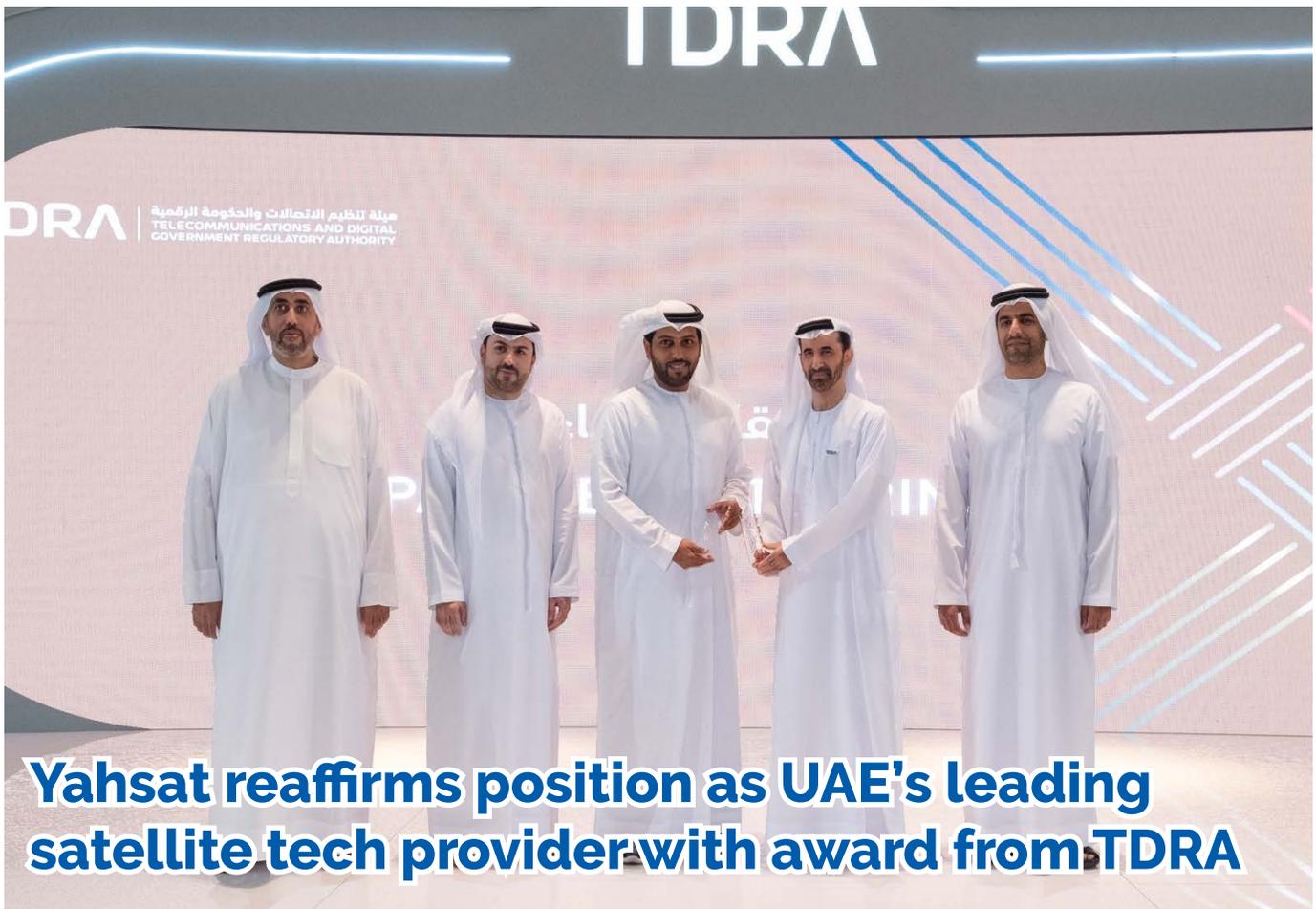
YAHSAT, has been honoured for its longstanding relationship with the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) with its Partner Recognition Award.

The award recognises Yahsat's pivotal role in establishing a cutting-edge satellite telecommunications infrastructure within the UAE, which has given the country a leading position in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. As the UAE's first and only publicly listed space tech company, Yahsat has been a pioneer in the field of satellite-enabled connectivity and technology. The company is the leading space and satellite entity in the Middle East, posting a record revenue of AED 369 million in Q1 2023.

As one of the top ten global satellite operators, Yahsat is proud of its UAE heritage and committed to developing

further the skills and knowledge base of its people with 52.5% of its full-time workforce made up of UAE nationals, making it among the top 4 publicly listed companies in the UAE in terms of Emiratization.

Ali Al Hashemi, Group Chief Executive Officer of Yahsat, said: "We at Yahsat are very proud to have been presented with the TDRA's Partner Recognition Award. This is a testament to our long and close relationship with the Authority, which has not only been mutually beneficial to both parties but has also helped develop a robust satellite technology base in the UAE. As the country's leading satellite solutions provider and a key player in the realization of the UAE space strategy 2030, we celebrate our ongoing partnership with the TDRA and look forward to even more success working together in the future."

The award was presented to Khalid Al Kaf,

Yahsat's Chief Operations Officer during the TDRA's Annual Partners Gathering held in Abu Dhabi in May during which the regulator hosted and honoured its strategic partners across the public and private sectors. The event covered various activities, including a presentation of the pillars of "We the UAE 2031" Vision, which highlighted the TDRA's role and mission in regulating the telecommunications sector and enabling digital transformation.

Yahsat and its mobility arm, Thuraya, hold TDRA licenses allowing them to deliver satellite services across the UAE. Together, they constitute a key component of the UAE's telecom ecosystem. Yahsat continues to be the preferred satellite communications partner of the UAE government, enabling critical connectivity across the country and beyond when terrestrial telecom networks require support. ∎

SK Telecom, Deutsche Telekom, e& and Singtel form Global Telco AI Alliance for collaboration and innovation in AI

SK Telecom Deutsche Telekom, e& and Singtel have formed the Global Telco AI Alliance to create a new customer experience and make a difference in the lives of global citizens using AI technology.

The four members of the Global Telco AI Alliance agreed to make joint efforts to accelerate AI transformation of the existing telco business, and develop new growth drivers through new AI-powered business models.

They signed a Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the AI business. The Multilateral MoU signing ceremony took place in Seoul, Korea with the presence of key executives of the four telcos who attended online and in-person, including Claudia Nemat, Board Member Technology and Innovation at Deutsche Telekom; Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO of e&; Khalifa Al Shamsi, CEO of e& life; Yuen Kuan Moon, Group CEO of Singtel; Chey Tae-won, Chairman of SK Group, and Ryu Young-sang, CEO of SKT.

The four telcos will jointly develop the Telco AI Platform by combining their respective technologies and capabilities. The Telco AI Platform is expected to serve as the core foundation for new AI services, including those designed to improve the existing telco services, digital assistants, and super apps that offer a wide range of services.

To facilitate the cooperation, they will form the Global Telco AI Alliance Joint Working Group, which will have detailed discussions on issues such as co-investment opportunities and the co-development of the Telco AI Platform to reach a definitive agreement. The issue of designating a C-level officer from each company to coordinate the overall collaboration will be discussed.

The four telcos also plan to support each other in operating AI services and apps in their respective markets and cooperate to build an ecosystem.

"The launch of the Global Telco AI Alliance is meaningful in that it marks the beginning of a new journey to innovate our business models while growing together with our global partners," said Ryu Young-sang, CEO of SKT. "Through collaborative efforts, we will accelerate AI transformation of all industries, provide new value and experience to our customers, and lead the growth of the global AI ecosystem."

"In order to make the most of the possibilities of generative AI for our customers and our industry, we want to develop industry-specific applications in the Telco AI Alliance. I am particularly pleased that this alliance also stands for bridging the gap between Europe and Asia and that we are jointly pursuing an open-vendor approach. Depending on the application, we can use the best technology. The founding of this alliance is an important milestone for our industry," said Claudia Nemat, Board Member Technology and Innovation at Deutsche Telekom.

"We recognize AI's immense potential in reshaping the telecommunications landscape and beyond and are excited to embark on this transformative journey with the formation of the Global Telco AI Alliance. The alliance signifies a strategic commitment to driving innovation and fostering collaborative efforts. Our shared goal is to redefine industry paradigms, establish new growth drivers through AI-powered business models, and pave the way for a new era of strategic cooperation, guiding our industry towards an exciting and prosperous future," said Khalifa Al Shamsi, CEO of e& life.

"This alliance will enable us and our ecosystem of partners to significantly expedite the development of new and innovative AI services that can bring tremendous benefits to both businesses and consumers. With our advanced 5G network, we are well-placed to leverage AI to ideate and co-create and are already using it to enhance our own customer service and employee experience, increase productivity and drive learning," said Yuen Kuan Moon, Group Chief Executive Officer of Singtel. ∎

stc Group's Subsidiary center3 collaborates with Oracle to expand cloud services in Saudi Arabia

center3 by stc, a regional data center and data services provider, has announced a strategic collaboration with Oracle to provide hosting and data services for the planned Oracle Cloud Riyadh Region as well as support the expansion of the existing Oracle Cloud Jeddah Region. This will help accelerate the rollout of Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) services to support the increasing cloud computing demands of private and public sector organizations in Saudi Arabia.

The planned Oracle Cloud Riyadh Region is part of a US $1.5 billion investment from Oracle to expand cloud infrastructure capabilities in the Kingdom. The Oracle Cloud Riyadh Region will be the sixth Oracle Cloud region operating in the Middle East, joining another planned cloud region to be located in the futuristic city of NEOM. Oracle currently operates four cloud regions in the Middle East and is currently one of the few major cloud providers to offer a cloud region in the Kingdom with the existing Oracle Cloud Jeddah Region.

This collaboration represents a significant milestone for center3, aligning with the company's commitment to the Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision and the digital transformation of the region connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe. The initiative is expected to bring significant economic benefits to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.

Fahad A. Alhajeri, CEO of center3, stated, "This strategic collaboration will allow us to grow our business and support the digital economy of the region. We are confident that this long-term partnership will empower both center3 and Oracle to achieve new heights of success."

Nick Redshaw, senior vice president, Middle East and Africa, Cloud Tech Oracle, said, "Oracle is driving one of the fastest expansions of cloud services offered by any major cloud vendor in Saudi Arabia to help boost cloud computing capacity in the Kingdom. We are delivering unmatched innovation in the cloud with comprehensive AI and machine learning capabilities already embedded into our infrastructure and applications for HR, finance, supply chain and sales teams. We are well positioned to deliver powerful generative AI services planned that will help organizations solve today's most complex challenges. These unique capabilities and our collaboration with center3 will further support the growth of the country's digital economy."

As part of stc Group's broader focus on digital enablement, center3 is rapidly establishing itself as a leading player in the regional and global digital ecosystem. With its comprehensive portfolio of data center and data services, center3 positions itself as a one-stop-shop for digital services in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and Africa.

OCI's multiple cloud regions in the Middle East are a component of its distributed cloud strategy, which offers multiple deployment options to address differing customer needs in regulatory requirements, data residency, or latency reduction. For example, OCI customers can also address demanding data residency, security and sovereignty requirements by running their applications in a self-contained OCI Dedicated Region where all hosted data remains local and private with a customer-controlled data center. ∎

iot squared cements its position as national IoT champion through acquisition of Machinestalk

iot squared, a joint venture between the Public Investment Fund (PIF) and stc group, is completing a highly successful first year since its establishment with signing a binding agreement to acquire 100% of Machinestalk, a pioneer provider of IoT solutions and applications in Saudi Arabia. The acquisition will accelerate iot squared's growth and solidify its position as the leading provider of IoT solutions in the region.

iot squared delivers industry-leading IoT solutions , which provides real-time insights into Saudi Arabia. Since its establishment in 2022, iot squared has played a significant role in the adoption of IoT technologies in various sectors and has collaborated with industry leaders to advance the IoT eco-system in the Middle East to revolutionise multiple sectors and advance the local digital transformation plans. iot squared supports businesses operating across three key verticals, including smart cities, Industry 4.0, and smart mobility and logistics, by supplying IoT technologies, such as IoT sensors , platforms, and applications to improve and develop the performance and productivity of industrial processes with the power of real-time insights.

The acquisition represents an important milestone in the collaboration between PIF and stc as this reflects the major investment strategy in the products and services in ICT industry, including investments in digital Clouds, Cybersecurity, Fintech and digital entertainment. These investments contribute to driving digital transformation

Othman Al Dahash - CEO, iot squared

and contribute to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2023 in leading digitisation in the region.

Machinestalk is one of the largest Saudi companies in the IoT domain, founded in 2015 as a subsidiary of NOMD Holding. It has actively contributed to the Kingdom's telematics domain over the past years, delivering diversified solutions focused on Smart Mobility, with additional capabilities in Smart Buildings & Facilities, Smart Cities, and Industrial IoT. It is active across the IoT stack, with core capabilities in IoT platforms and Applications, and additional capabilities in IoT sensors, IoT Network, and Services.

Othman Al Dahash, CEO of iot squared, said: "We are pleased to announce signing a binding agreement to acquire 100% of Machinestalk, which steers to an exciting new chapter in our growth story. As we continue to strengthen our position as the national IoT champion, in line with

our BOLD strategy, we are eager to play a pivotal role in supporting Saudi Arabia's ambitions to lead the region's digital transformation and adoption of emerging technologies. Furthermore, by fully realizing the potential of IoT and unlocking the value of connected things, we are committed to enabling a 'connected Kingdom' and turning the knowledge-based economy from a concept into reality."

The acquisition will augment iot squared's capabilities across the IoT value chain. Machinestalk's applications complement iot squared's three key verticals: smart cities, Industry 4.0, and smart mobility and logistics, through which the Company supports governments, enterprises, and SMEs across the MENA region to advance the adoption of smart solutions and IoT technologies, positioning stc Group and Saudi Arabia as a regional hub for IoT in MENA.

Furthermore, the acquisition will unlock value for iot squared through Machinestalk's strong field services capabilities, technology, and delivery teams, Proprietary IoT platforms, internal development capabilities, local and international partner and customer relationships, inc. large government entities and a wide range of product offerings. With these capabilities and comprehensive solutions, iot squared will be the local IoT leader in KSA covering a wide range of focus use cases aligned with its commitment to accelerate the adoption of IoT in the region whilst enabling the public and private sectors to unlock value. ∎

The ultimate pioneering event on AI-Powered Creativity is here:

AI Creative Summit

NAB Show and Future Media Conferences (FMC), with sponsorship by Dell Technologies, has proudly announced the AI Creative Summit. This series of training events is set to teach and empower the creative industry by demonstrating how artificial intelligence (AI) tools can amplify and streamline creative workflows.

No longer just a fascination, AI is now a key player that can revolutionize your workflow. AI tools are enhancing efficiency, sparking creativity and transforming how we handle video, photo, sound and design. Maintaining an up-to-date understanding of these innovations is crucial for individuals aspiring to excel in the creative sectors and the need for cutting-edge information and training has never been more evident.

"With AI continuing to revolutionize workflows, it is clear there is a need for a focused program to help creators sort out what is really happening," said Chris Brown, EVP and Managing Director, NAB Global Connections and Events. "This summit offers a unique opportunity to explore the cutting-edge applications of AI in video, photo, sound and design, empowering attendees to unleash their creative potential."

The inaugural event, happening virtually September 14-15 is an online conference that offers an exclusive opportunity to engage with some of the industry's leading trainers and experts from the comfort of your home or office for just $25. It is followed, in October, by an in-person, two-day immersive experience that will take place in conjunction with NAB Show New York, October 24-25 at the Javits Center.

This trailblazing conference, offering the most current information on AI, is tailor-made for creative professionals, innovators and enthusiasts striving to stay

at the forefront of their respective fields. It equips attendees with insider knowledge and up-to-the-minute AI developments, empowering them to stay ahead in the fast-paced world of video, photography and sound editing.

Offering three carefully-curated session tracks—AI for Video & Audio Production, The Business & Future of AI and AI for Color Correction, Grading and VFX—this conference ensures a targeted and meaningful learning experience for all attendees.

But the AI Creative Summit offers more than just technical insights. Participants will also have the opportunity to engage in thought-provoking discussions around AI's ethical and business implications in content creation. These sessions aim to provide a well-rounded understanding of AI's impact on society and guidance in navigating this rapidly evolving landscape.

"In a rapidly advancing technological world, it's no longer a question of 'if' AI

will be a part of our creative processes, but 'how'. This conference will provide professionals with the tools and understanding they need to harness AI's full potential," said Ben Kozuch, Co-Founder and President of FMC.

Budding creatives and professionals, take this opportunity to step forward. This is an invitation to join a unique community of innovative minds utilizing the power of AI to expand creative boundaries. The AI Creative Summit isn't just about learning—it's an opportunity to contribute to the evolution of the creative industry.

Registration for the virtual event held September 14-15 is now open. Secure a spot by visiting www.aicreativesummit.com. Registration for in-person event will be opening soon through FMC and NAB Show New York registration. Note the virtual and in-person events are separate and each requires registration. Don't miss out on these remarkable opportunities, and stay tuned for future in-person events at the 2024 NAB Show in Las Vegas. ◨

IBC appoints Mark Smith as Council Chair

IBC has appointed Mark Smith as Chair of the IBC Council. The Council is a long-established advisory group drawn from senior media and entertainment (M&E) executives. Its role is to advise IBC on key strategic issues. Smith will chair his first Council meeting during IBC2023, which takes place in the RAI Amsterdam from 15th-18th September.

"It is a great honour to have been appointed Chair of the IBC Council," Smith said. "I will be striving to ensure we have a strong balance of Council members to reflect IBC's traditional and evolving stakeholders – including opinion formers, visitors, and exhibitors. This balance will be key to informing the development of compelling IBC events for the future, ensuring we continue to evolve and deliver as the essential global business and technology communications platform and marketplace for the media and entertainment industry."

Smith has spent more than 30 years

in the technology and events sector, focused on industry-level technology evolution, innovation programmes and M&E initiatives. As Communications and Marketing Director for the GSMA, the industry organisation that represents the interests of mobile network operators worldwide, he was a key part of the team that acquired and grew Mobile World

Congress (MWC) as it became one of the biggest technology shows in the world.

Over the last decade, he has focused on the intersection between the communications and M&E sectors. His experience has helped him launch and develop the now-established IBC Accelerator Media Innovation Programme, which brings together pioneering media companies and leading-edge technology partners to collaborate on solutions that address real-world challenges and drive advances across a range of areas.

Outgoing Chair John Honeycutt said: "It has been a great honour to serve as IBC Council Chair. I have enjoyed the challenge, but now my term has ended. IBC is not only a media industry leader but also a leader for the global conference industry as it returns to a new normal. With great leadership and compelling proposition, IBC is well positioned to thrive and innovate for years to come." ∎

NTV selects AsiaSat to broadcast five Nepali HD channels on AsiaSat 7

AsiaSat has announced that Nepal Television (NTV), Nepal's state broadcaster has selected AsiaSat 7 to distribute a bouquet of five High Definition (HD) Nepali channels to serve audiences both nationally and across Asia and Oceania.

This collaboration marks a major milestone in AsiaSat's extension of broadcast services in Nepal. The high-powered coverage of AsiaSat 7 will support NTV's service expansion in the remote mountainous regions, demonstrating the power of satellite in connecting the unconnected with a variety of top-watched entertainment programmes, timely news and

information. NTV can also leverage AsiaSat 7's strongest South Asian channel

neighbourhood and exceptional audience access to reach out to overseas audience including millions of Nepali people working and residing across the region.

"We are proud to be a partner of choice for Nepal Television to support their service expansion to a broader Nepali community across the country and abroad. We look forward to working closely together with NTV to deliver high-quality programming that will contribute to enhancing the social wellbeing of their people through free access to entertainment and news, and to achieving unprecedented growth and success on the international stage," said Roger Tong, Chief Executive Officer of AsiaSat. ∎

Intelsat to sustainably extend life of four satellites by 2027

Intelsat has ordered its second Mission Extension Pod (MEP) from Northrop Grumman Corporation's SpaceLogistics, which will add life to an Intelsat satellite, providing uninterrupted services to many customers. The new contract represents the fourth deal with SpaceLogistics, following an order for a single MEP in April 2023 and two Mission Extension Vehicles (MEVs) already in service with Intelsat satellites.

"Intelsat is the industry leader in space sustainability and SpaceLogistics is a vital part of that," said Intelsat Chief Technology Officer, Bruno Fromont. "We continue to look for ways to provide the best services to our customers as well as remain good stewards of the space environment. This commitment continues to build our unique self-insurance capabilities in space and is another step towards unlocking
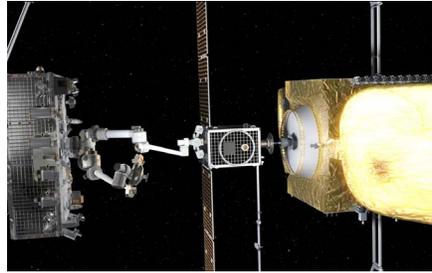
the potential of future in-orbit service applications."

The MEP "jet pack" will be installed by SpaceLogistics' mission robotic vehicle (MRV) on an unidentified Intelsat satellite operating in geosynchronous orbit, ensuring continuity of satellite service for at least six years beginning as early as 2026. Both MEP and MRV have completed critical design reviews, are in assembly and testing, and

are proceeding toward launch.

This recent purchase is the second this year, continuing Intelsat's legacy of space sustainability first instituted in 2020 when SpaceLogistics' Mission Extension Vehicle (MEV-1) performed the first-ever in-orbit commercial spacecraft docking with Intelsat 901 (IS-901). That mission extended the life of IS-901 for another five years. In 2021, a second Mission Extension Vehicle (MEV-2) began providing similar life-extension services for Intelsat 10-02.

"With the sale to Intelsat of a second MEP, we continue to build on our long-standing relationship that includes over five years of in-space servicing provided by our two Mission Extension Vehicles," said SpaceLogistics President, Rob Hauge. ◘

manifold CLOUD set to make its mark on the European Stage at IBC

manifold technologies, provider of service-oriented software solutions for Tier-1 live productions, is introducing manifold CLOUD to the European market at IBC 2023. manifold CLOUD, initially presented at NAB 2023, provides users with access to an on-demand pool of configurable live production functionality through a single-sign-on web UI. manifold CLOUD can handle the most demanding live sports, entertainment and news productions while providing the benefits of scalability, resiliency, quick deployment, and unified control. manifold CLOUD will be demonstrated at IBC in stand 9.C01 (arkona technologies).

Designed to run on COTS FPGA acceleration cards from multiple manufacturers, manifold CLOUD services include compression, multi-viewing, routing, up/down/cross conversion, audio/video mixing, color correction, color space conversion, and more. Services are quickly created and configured on-demand within a private cloud environment and

Erling Hedkvist - Sales & Business Development at manifold technologies

automatically assigned to an accelerator card. Services are grouped in clusters that can operate simultaneously - each supporting an individual cluster, such as a sports event or news show. In the event of a hardware or link failure, services are automatically restored on another accelerator card for maximum resiliency.

manifold CLOUD offers all the benefits of cloud while retaining the performance of Tier 1 live productions – such as scalability, commodity hardware, automatic provisioning, resiliency, and efficiency, while supporting large, live uncompressed workflows with subframe latency and with 90% less power consumption than CPU solutions.

"Visitors at NAB got a sneak peek at manifold CLOUD, and it was an incredible success," explained Erling Hedkvist, Sales & Business Development at manifold technologies. "The most frequently asked question was 'How soon can I get it?' We are now delighted to bring it to the extremely important European market at IBC. This solution has the potential, and capability to change the way we work in this industry. It takes the complexity out of developing a cloud-based infrastructure for demanding Tier-1 live productions, while maximizing sustainability, resiliency, and reliability." ◘

Successful entry into service of the multi-mission EUTELSAT 10B satellite

Eutelsat Communications has announced the successful entry into service of the multi-mission high-capacity EUTELSAT 10B satellite at the 10°East orbital position. Responding to strong growth in demand for mobile connectivity, EUTELSAT 10B is carrying two multi-beam High-Throughput Satellite (HTS) Ku-band payloads: a payload covering the North Atlantic corridor, Europe, the Mediterranean basin, and the ME, offering significant throughput in the busiest air and sea traffic zones, and a second payload to extend coverage across the Atlantic Ocean, Africa, and the Indian Ocean.

Firm multi-year capacity commitments are secured with several leading maritime and in-flight connectivity service providers, - and discussions are well advanced with others. These partners, such as Panasonic and Intelsat, will rely on EUTELSAT 10B to provide ships and airlines with mobile connectivity services, in air and at sea, for passengers and crews.

EUTELSAT 10B will also cater Eutelsat ADVANCE services, a global network of

unparalleled coverage providing high-end connectivity to users beyond the range of terrestrial networks, through an innovative satellite network-as-a-service experience.

EUTELSAT 10B is also carrying two widebeam payloads in C-band and in Ku-band to ensure continuity of the video services on the EUTELSAT 10A satellite, whose operational life is scheduled to end

later this year.

The 10° East location that EUTELSAT 10B occupies has been operated by Eutelsat since 1987 and provides unrivalled coverage of Europe, the Middle East and Africa for video services. Historic clients such as Arqiva and Eurovision will be able to benefit from the newest resources and enhanced services at 10° East. ▪

Orbit to integrate airborne terminals across Viasat's expanded Ka-band network

Orbit will integrate its airborne terminals with the extensive Viasat Ka-band network, which includes the Global Xpress (GX) network now operated by Viasat following its acquisition of Inmarsat on May 30th. The new cooperation agreement includes the Orbit MPT-30 (12") and MPT-46 (18") Ka-band product lines.

The newly integrated system will create a multi-constellation-capable set of terminals, which will operate over the Viasat Ka-band networks and the Global Xpress network, as well as other MEO constellation networks. This integrated solution will provide military and commercial end-users with ubiquitous access to the Ka-band capacity, global coverage, and increased resiliency from

both the Viasat and Global Xpress networks, delivering many of the advantages the newly combined company plans to bring to customers with broader network integration.

The Multi-Purpose Terminals (MPT) terminals fulfil the 'everywhere, all-the-time' coverage requirements of both military and commercial airborne users. They also allow government users to roam between commercial Ka-band and Mil-Ka services. These low size, low-weight and low-power (SWaP) user terminals can deliver up to 126 Mbps forward link and up to 29 Mbps return link on Mil-Ka HCX service while maintaining uninterrupted connectivity during all flight phases.

They comply with industry standards, including MIL-STD-188-164C, RTCA DO-160G, FCC and European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI). They are compatible with military satellite systems, making them an ideal choice for government airborne Intelligence, Reconnaissance, and Surveillance (ISR) applications. ▪

GLOBAL ICT, TELECOM & SATCOM EVENTS 2023-24

04-05 — September 2023

Riyadh KSA

06-09 — November 2023

London, UK

26-29 — Feburary 2024

Barcelona, Spain

15-18 — September 2023

Amsterdam, Netherlands

14-16 — November 2023

Cape Town, SA

23-25 — April 2024

Dubai, UAE

10-12 — October 2023

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

15-16 — November 2023

Bangkok, Thailand

14-15 — May 2024

Dubai, UAE

16-20 — October 2023

Dubai, UAE

21-22 — November 2023

Amsterdam, Netherlands

21-23 — May 2024

Dubai, UAE

17-19 — October 2023

London, UK

06-08 — December 2023

Baku, Azerbaijan

22-24 — May 2024

Marrakesh

24-26 — October 2023

Paris, France

06-08 — December 2023

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