

## **NCA CUSHIONS CONSUMERS AS PARLIAMENT OKAYS ICH REGULATIONS**

Parliament of Ghana has approved the regulations that cover the operations of an Interconnect Clearinghouse Services (ICH). The regulations known as the Electronic Communications (Interconnect Clearinghouse Services) Regulations, 2016 otherwise known as the LI 2234 is aimed at regulating the activities of the service providers who connect and route national and international traffic through an Interconnect Clearinghouse as well as operations of an Interconnect Clearinghouse licensed by the National Communications Authority (NCA).

From now until January, 2018, interconnect rates will remain the same, in spite of the operations of the ICH, cushioning consumers from interconnection hikes.

The existing interconnect regime does not include the cost of the ICH, consequently the licensing and operations of an ICH should have resulted in an additional cost component to operators who may have passed this on to consumers. However, the NCA has decided to absorb the cost component until the expiration of the existing interconnect regime on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017.

The Director General of the NCA, Mr. William Tevie, emphasized that all stakeholders must endeavour to make the ICH a success considering the many benefits associated with the ICH service, amongst which is the ease and transparency it will bring to debt collection and accounts reconciliation at the end of every month for all stakeholders.

Mr. Tevie who was present at Parliament said, “the Authority will continue to undertake its regulatory functions with integrity and transparency to ensure quality provision of ICT regulatory interventions for the benefit of Ghanaians. Through the ICH, we are able to increase focus on transparency at all levels of operations to ensure ethical functioning within the telecommunication industry”.

A Clearinghouse Operator is an entity that provides a common, independent mechanism (Interconnect Clearinghouse) for the billing and settlement of interconnect accounting traffic for all existing and future Operators in a particular country or region.

Interconnection is the linking of the networks of two or more service providers, thus enabling the subscribers on one network to access the subscribers of the other networks.

The Interconnect Clearinghouse operator would therefore offer the following benefits, among others, to the industry; efficient Billings Payment/Settlement process with verifiable call detail record, Reliable, efficient and scalable network, reduce billing disputes amongst Service Providers, thereby minimizing cases requiring mediation by the Regulator, pave the way for full interoperability of various technologies and classes of service by various Service Providers, operate the common platform for monitoring traffic volumes in Ghana, operate a Centralised Subscriber Identity Registry and operate the Centralised Equipment Identity Registry.