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GSMA Press Release 2008

Voice Messages to Cross Networks in Pakistan

Mobile phone users can send voice messages instead of SMS

14th February 2008, London, UK: Telenor Pakistan and Ufone Pakistan are set to launch the world's first interoperable voice messaging, or voice SMS, services in 2008 following successful voice messaging trials towards the end of last year. The trials were based on the technical specification developed by the GSMA, the global trade association for the mobile phone industry.

Voice messaging, an alternative to SMS, offers a simple and unobtrusive way to send a message to another mobile phone user. The service is of great value worldwide, especially in countries with lower literacy rates and character-based languages, which makes texting with a standard alphanumeric keypad time-consuming and inefficient. To send a voice message, the caller simply dials a code (usually the star button) before the recipient's number and records a message lasting up to 30 seconds. The recipient is notified by a text message, which often has a one-touch link to a recording of the message.

Telenor Pakistan and Ufone, with support from voice messaging vendors Mobile Arts and Kirusa, successfully trialed interoperable voice messaging between October and December 2007 - the first successful multi-operator and multi-vendor voice messaging trial anywhere in the world.

"Mobile operators have launched voice messaging services commercially in Pakistan, India, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, giving their customers a fast and simple way to communicate when a conventional two-way voice call isn't necessary," said Alex Sinclair, Chief Technology Officer of the GSMA. "We hope our work on interoperability will significantly enhance the usefulness of voice messaging by enabling users to reach friends and contacts on other mobile networks."

"Telenor Pakistan, in setting new standards of technical innovation in the Pakistani market, is proud to have taken yet another first step with inter-operator voice messaging. We are very pleased to be a part of GSMA's process for developing new operator inter-working specifications", said Chief Technical Officer of Telenor Pakistan, Peter Anthony Dindial. "We would like to thank the GSMA for taking the leadership role in this initiative, and we are proud to be involved in this activity as GSMA members. Telenor Pakistan will continue to promote innovative and creative solutions so that we provide the best possible experience to our customers in Pakistan, and set standards for global markets."

"Ufone has always led the way in service innovation which has led our recognition of being the operator of choice for millions. The successful inter-operator trial is testimony to the commitment and direction shown by Ufone in bringing new technology and services to Pakistani consumers. We are extremely proud to be part of this ground breaking exercise which will no doubt have a positive impact on the lives of our subscribers", said Mr Ali Ikram, Marketing Manager VAS of Ufone Pakistan. "Ufone is proud to be the leaders in validating the GSMA standards for voice messaging inter-operability solutions."

The GSMA project to develop the specification for interoperable voice messaging services and to manage the voice messaging trials has been led by Telenor of Norway, with support from Telenor Pakistan, Ufone and Warid Telecom, all from Pakistan, Grameenphone from Bangladesh, VimpelCom from Russia and Digi Telecom from Malaysia. The project has also been supported by several vendors of voice messaging technology, such as Kirusa, Mobile Arts and Bubblemotion.

About the GSMA:

The GSM Association (GSMA) is the global trade association representing more than 700 GSM mobile phone operators across 218 countries and territories of the world. In addition, more than 200 manufacturers and suppliers support the Association's initiatives as key partners. The primary goals of the GSMA are to ensure mobile phones and wireless services work globally and are easily accessible, enhancing their value to individual customers and national economies, while creating new business opportunities for operators and their suppliers. The Association's members serve more than 2.5 billion customers - 85% of the world's mobile phone users.

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