**APrIGF Delhi 2014**

**Workshop Summary Report**

**Date/Time: 4 Aug 2014 Tues, 1330-1500 (90mins)**

**Workshop Title: Workshop #17, “Network Neutrality in Asia Pacific”**

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**Moderators: Lim May-Ann and Adam Peake**

**(A) Panelists:**

1. Ms. Lim May-Ann, Executive Director, Asia Cloud Computing Association, and
2. Mr. Adam Peake, Executive Research Fellow, GLOCOM, International University of Japan
3. Mr. Subramanian Chandrasekhar, Director Government Affairs, Microsoft India
4. Mr. Vikram Tiwathia, Associate Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India
5. Mr. Nikhil Pahwa, Editor & Publisher, MediaNama

**(B) A brief summary of presentations:**

**Welcome and Introductions**

*Ms. Lim May-Ann, Executive Director, Asia Cloud Computing Association, and*

*Adam Peake, Executive Research Fellow, GLOCOM, International University of Japan*

**Network Neutrality in Asia**

*Mr. Adam Peake, Executive Research Fellow, GLOCOM, International University of Japan*

Net neutrality debates have been dominated by the US and EU. Whether Asia’s opinion on this controversial issue? Reporting on research findings from a project supported by Microsoft Asia, the session reviewed some observations on network neutrality regulations and trends which have emerged from the Asia Pacific region.

**Business perspectives of network neutrality**

*Mr. Subramanian Chandrasekhar, Director Government Affairs, Microsoft India*

The recent NETmundial Stakeholder Statement is one of the first global statements around net neutrality which has been released. What are the factors impacting business investment choices, and where do they stand in terms of an equitable Internet for all?

**A Telco Perspective on Net Neutrality**

*Mr. Vikram Tiwathia, Associate Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India*

What constitutes “reasonable” traffic management for telcos and cloud providers? What other considerations around prioritised Internet access do data providers face today?

**User/Civil Society/NGO perspective on Net Neutrality**

*Mr. Nikhil Pahwa, Editor & Publisher, MediaNama*

What are consumer expectations around net neutrality? Beyond privacy issues, is there a fear that reasonable Internet access may soon be beyond the average consumer?

**Open discussion**

Moderated by: *Ms. Lim May-Ann, Executive Director, Asia Cloud Computing Association*

Wrap-up – discussion highlights review, and closing

**(C) A substantive summary and the main issues that were raised:**

**Network Neutrality in Asia**

*Mr. Adam Peake, Executive Research Fellow, GLOCOM, International University of Japan*

* Net neutrality is a discussion of the openness of the Internet, and involves concepts such as the freedom of expression. One argument for net neutrality is the creation of a virtuous cycle of open/”neutral” Internet creating the space for edge innovations such as content, apps, services, which grows the demand for broadband, thus stimulating broadband investment, which then leads back to the need for an open “neutral” Internet.
* The central question for APAC is – does this apply? Does this model have merit? In a region with diverse populations, cultural traditions, there has been muted responses.
* There has also been non-neutral behavior observed in APAC – blocking/throttling, deep packet inspections, prioritization of content. In JP, KR and VN, carriers/telcos and NVNOs/MVOs have partnerships which are not network neutral.

**Business perspectives of network neutrality**

*Mr. Subramanian Chandrasekhar, Director Government Affairs, Microsoft India*

* Net neutrality is impt for a company to understand, because Internet access is important in today’s multi-device world; the Internet should be looked upon as a basic human right
* What is most important is to have robust Internet availability, and at the least, a very basic level of access – e.g. for app developers, if an app developer was not sure how his app would be promoted/received on the platform, what incentive would he have to develop it further?
* Net neutrality could be violated in any number of ways – censorship, unfair practices – so what’s next? Telcos are charging different rates for different types of apps, and this leads to situations where development ecosystems (walled gardens) are created

**A Telco Perspective on Net Neutrality**

*Mr. Vikram Tiwathia, Associate Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India*

* There are different priorities for different stakeholders, and India is still at a “discoverers” stage of development – impt for APAC to remember different geographies are using different Internet adoption models, uses. For India – huge demand and use of data in India (COAI stats)
* For net neutrality and NETmundial, we must clarify the issues before moving ahead.
* Issues: the customer is king, they must have choice and transparency. We should also talk about freedom of expression, the concept of the open internet.
* New business models also have to be developed, but right now there are no constraints to innovation.
* Observation – new investments must come in; Indian telcos are USD40b in debt, and in 3yrs, they will need USD50b investment to keep pace.
* There is a need to answer HOW to get access to the Internet – cost-affordable Internet access to the country, esp as we move from wired to wireless – network management issues crop up.

**User/Civil Society/NGO perspective on Net Neutrality**

*Mr. Nikhil Pahwa, Editor & Publisher, MediaNama*

* There are three networks in India – slow, slower, or no Internet.
* To understand net neutrality in India, we have to go out to history. There was previously a lot of content control, but that resulted in extra services getting billed to consumers – e.g. AirTel content charges – the telcos wanted to create the walled gardens of yesteryear again
* Right now there is a false sense of security that the cost of access and the speed of that access can be given to developing countries – e.g. Facebook Zero or the Internet.org project – sounds good, but there is a catch – privacy, or the lack of neutrality in the network that is served up
* The crux of the issue is that the Internet was not built on these principles of network neutrality, but now companies built on Internet platforms are earning more than telcos (revenue recovery)

**Open discussion**

Moderated by: *Ms. Lim May-Ann, Executive Director, Asia Cloud Computing Association*

From the floor:

* What is the place for OTT services?
* Does net neutrality equate to equal use and equal access
* How would net neutrality be enforced or complied with
* How can one get innovation in business and government control in balance

**(D) Conclusion & Further Comments:**

* Net neutrality possibly not an “Asian” concept? However, many countries in the region have common carrier principles in their national telecommunication regulations, and this begs the question how or even will these traditional concepts be implemented?
* Existing anti-net neutral behavior exists all over the world and in Asia too – tiered services, access levels, censorship, different understanding and standards of freedom of speech
* Proposal: that Asia Pacific could create some principles around the idea of an “open Internet”, one which does not use the term “net neutrality”, but rather focuses on what all telcos, cloud service providers, government, civil society, and other stakeholders have in common: the dream of an Internet which (1) allows business innovation, (2) benefits consumers, and (3) gives APAC citizens a basic level of Internet access by which to enter the digital economy.