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ITU allocates code for Universal Personal Telecommunications Number
Geneva, 10 December 2001 — The International Telecommunication Union has allocated the country code +878 and associated digits 10 to VISIONng Association. VisionNG will be the first organization to offer its members a unique Universal Personal Telecommunications Number (UPTN). The UPTN will allow global number portability regardless of geography or telecommunications carrier including those using new IP-based technologies. VisionNG is an international non-profit association that includes ITU-T sector member organizations. Its goal is to promote an open and harmonized architecture for IP based applications.

"ITU's standards for UPT will greatly enable companies' ability to operate across international markets, and will benefit consumers by allowing them reach anywhere in the world on any communication device," says Roy Blane, Chairman, ITU-T Study Group 2.

The market potential for the new UPT service is significant. Companies will be able to place and receive calls regardless of the technology used or geographic location. "They will no doubt benefit from being able to advertise a single personal number to potential customers all over the world," adds Blane. Calls to the new global number can also be routed to different destinations, allowing incoming calls to be directed to the most appropriate location for efficient handling.

The UPT Service is available to place and receive calls on conventional telephone terminals and mobile and IP based networks. UPT users will be able to participate in a user-defined set of subscribed services and for the first time UPT will make it possible to allocate an E.164 telephony number to IP Terminals.

Until now Service Providers could only provide services that required a portable personal number nationally. Those organizations wishing to communicate with personal numbers on an international basis have had no choice but to register a separate number in each country. This has proven to be unwieldy and often inefficient. "The agreement we’ve reached on UPT pays tribute to the open discussion and development work of the ITU-T," says Blane.

In order to ensure quality of service between different domains, the VISIONng backbone is used to connect all VISIONng operators worldwide under a given Service Level Agreement (SLA). Blane states, "the next step is to deploy the UPT number so that it can be used as the unique Key of the Universal Communication Identifier." UCI merges technologies like Email, Messaging and Chatting into one single service profile per subscriber.

In developing the UPT numbering system, the ITU followed the principal objectives:

Portability of the UPTN, allowing customers to retain their global number if they change carriers.
A flexible structure (a UPTN is composed of a three digit country code for global service application, 878, and an 12-digit Global Subscriber Number [GSN] starting with 10) that allows subscribers to choose the digits they wish and embed existing E.164 numbers into the available number space1.
A format which allows for efficient routing of calls between service providers
An impartial system of allocation and handling of numbers, via an international registrar.
The provision of the international telephone service on international interconnected IP networks is based primarily on ETSI TIPHON specifications (which are based on ITU-T as well as on Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) standards). VISIONng has already begun to work on the development of the new UPTN database and will allocate numbers on a first-come, first-served basis on a commercial basis.