UAS SUMMARY

1. Introduction

This is the Universal Access and Service Policy (UAS Policy) of the Government of Papua New Guinea. It addresses the Government's objectives of achieving universal access to and utilization of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and related telecommunications services and applications by all citizens, households, businesses, public institutions, and civil service organizations throughout PNG.

This revised UAS policy is the first step needed to accelerate internet access worldwide and help the GoPNG meet its Sustainable Development Goals, grow the economy, and help all people realise their potential.

This UAS Policy builds upon and updates the provisions of the National Information and Communications Technology Act 2009 ("the Act") with respect to Universal Access and Service and provides a basis for any needed amendments to the Act in this area. It also guides the implementation actions of the Government, the Department of ICT, and NICTA with respect to national UAS objectives. UAS policies do not just cover connectivity, but also measures to ensure affordability and inclusion for all. UAS policies are the way governments have been effectively and collaboratively with the private sector, NGOs, the international community to achieve these goals and close access gaps. The UAS Policy is a key pillar to achieving the Government's digital transformation goals.

The goal of this revised Universal Service & Access Policy is to act as catalyst for action to drive down the price of Internet access, expand coverage to the millions that remain unconnected, and
build the inclusive foundation for a robust digital economy. This revised policy will modernise the UAS Policy and the Universal Access and Service Fund (UASF) mandate to build an inclusive and strong digital economy within PNG.

The GoPNG can meet these goals by adopting this revised universal access policy with a modern,
ambitious UASF criteria: commit adequate resources— financial, political, and human — to the USAF to deliver on its mandate; and ensure transparency, accountability, and partnering with the private sector, civil society organisations, and the technical community.

The main objective here is to set targets that are ambitious but also inspirational. We will accomplish these goals by catalysing and accelerating innovation across multiple sectors and actors in the economy and re-imagine a better future by organizing public and private investments to achieve that future.

2.0 Guiding Vision

The Vision of the Government of Papua New Guinea is to transform the nation to become a fully modern, prosperous, and integrated digital/information age economy and society. This will mean that all citizens will have the ability to access and utilize advanced, high quality information and communication technology (ICT) services, devices, applications, and resources. These capabilities will be robustly available and affordable throughout the

country, and will be adapted to the needs and goals of all groups in society, including women, persons with disabilities, and those living in remote areas. All citizens and businesses will enjoy opportunities to improve their digital literacy, along with the ability to take advantage of digital financial services, education and training, social networking, and e-entertainment, among many other benefits.

2.2 Key UAS Objectives

The key Objectives of UAS Policy in PNG, in keeping with the above Vision, include the following:

Accessibility: ICT networks, services, facilities, equipment, and applications should be as widely accessible as possible to all citizens, businesses, and organizations, in all locations throughout the country.

Availability: A wide range of ICT services should be available to all users at all times.

Affordability: All elements required for ICT connectivity and use must be affordable to citizens and businesses of all incomes and economic conditions regardless of where they live.

Utilization: Citizens, businesses, and organizations must be able utilize ICT facilities and services effectively and appropriately, and such utilization should be measurable and ensured across all geographic and demographic groups.

Meaningful Connectivity: measures connectivity according to four dimensions and sets the following minimum thresholds, which are:
- Regular Internet use
- An appropriate device, i.e., access to a smartphone
- Enough data, which is translated as an unlimited broadband connection
- A fast and reliable connection with the minimum threshold: 4G mobile connectivity

3.0   UAS Focus Areas

DICT/NICTA have identified five key Focus Areas for UAS development objectives, policy, financial support, programs, projects, and initiatives by the Government, toward the shared goals of universal access and service in ICTs. The primary requirement for Universal Access and Service is to ensure that advanced telecommunications services are accessible and available in all geographic areas and for all communities. The five identified focus areas are:
- Network and Service Coverage and Access
- Affordable Devices
- ICT Business Development, Applications, Content, Utilization
- Public Institutions, Government Services
- Gender and Social Inclusion

3.1 Network and Service Coverage and Access

The GoPNG understands that in many communities the lack of power is an issue and will work to ensure that the lack of power does not preclude the building or operation of networks in rural areas.
- Mobile broadband: Access to high quality, reliable mobile broadband signals represent a basic necessity for participation in the information society. Given the

evolution of this technology, the Government considers that the minimum quality of service that should be provided in all locations is the equivalent of "4G" mobile service. This standard may change as the industry evolves.

- <u>Fixed broadband</u>: The Government will promote and support the continued expansion of fixed broadband networks and services to locations without such networks. This expansion will not be limited to traditional ISPs or networks but also include community or local based cooperatives or networks.
- <u>Schools and Health Centers:</u> Access to high quality, reliable mobile broadband signals represent a basic necessity for participation in the information society. As such all efforts will be made to ensure that the schools and health facilities have access to the Internet for learning and for remote health services.
- <u>Public access facilities</u>: There are a range of potential options for such public connections, including libraries, post offices, local government offices, community centers, bus stations, airports, and commercial Internet cafés, among others.
- <u>Power Infrastructure:</u> The Government through DICT and NICTA will continue to take steps, including through UAS Fund Projects and other programs, to close gaps in the coverage in rural and remote areas that lack adequate power by focusing on alternative options such as Solar, mini grids, off-grids, and low-power networks and solutions.
- <u>Broadcasting</u>: Traditional radio and television broadcasting remain a key component of the overall national ICT infrastructure and communications delivery networks

3.2 Affordable Devices

The UAS Policy aims to ensure that appropriate and fully functional devices can be made affordable to all who need them, via a combination of programs, partnerships, incentives, and other mechanisms. In particular, the Government will seek to promote the following objectives and targets:

<u>Affordable smart phones, handsets</u>: The Government through DICT and NICTA and through the UAS Fund, will work to promote income-based discounts, bulk purchases, and targeted subsidies to ensure that high quality devices are affordable to all, particularly those living in remote and rural areas, and for persons with disabilities

<u>Devices for small businesses</u>: The Government through DICT and NICTA will explore programs to extend affordable device options to qualified enterprises, through financing, partnerships, and other support mechanisms.

3.3 ICT Business Development, Applications, Content, Utilization

The benefits of Universal Access to ICTs depend also upon development of ICT-based businesses and entrepreneurship in PNG. The Government will take a lead in developing and promoting e-business opportunities in PNG, including establishment of ICT Business Incubation Centers, which will offer direct support to entrepreneurs, and will support partnerships and investments in innovative technology business models. These initiatives will address, among others, the following priority issues:
- Support for ICT Business Incubation and Support:
- Robust, public information content and applications:
- Digital finance and payments:
- ICTs for Farmers:
- ICT awareness, Digital skills and Digital Literacy

3.4 Public Institutions, Government Services

- Education: The Government will endeavor to supply all public educational institutions with fully functional, advanced ICT resources. This includes support for developing on-line and digital curriculum, and training for educators in development and use of ICT-based resources.
- Health care: The Government will promote the availability and adoption of advanced, specialized ICT-based equipment, services, and applications throughout the public health system in PNG.
- Local government offices: As part of its Universal Access and Service strategies, the Government through DICT and NICTA will support bringing connectivity, equipment, applications, and skills development projects to local government administrations wherever they are needed.
- Disaster and Emergency Services: The Government will devote priority resources toward establishing and reinforcing emergency communications networks and facilities, with emphasis on remote regions.

3.5 Gender and Social Inclusion

Women and persons with disabilities tend to be significantly less likely to own phone, access the Internet and on-line services, and integrate ICT functions in their daily lives. People with disabilities also generally face significant barriers to ICT access and use. The Government will increase the focus on ensuring equitable access and promoting inclusive technology awareness and use throughout all of the components of this Policy.

- Data collection and monitoring: NICTA   in cooperation with the Government Statistician shall be responsible to collect data and report on gender, Persons with Disabilities (PWD), and other significant disparities in subscribership and utilization of ICTs on an annual basis.

- Consultations and engagement: GoPNG will initiate ongoing public consultations with representatives of women's organizations, of people with disabilities, and of other identified disadvantaged groups, to provide information and perspective regarding these groups' needs, and input to various GoPNG programs and decisions.

- UAS Fund Projects: All UAS Fund Projects must include provisions requiring operators and contractors to provide plans for reducing access disparities among target groups within the covered geographic areas, including clear methods for measuring and defining such disparities, as part of their project implementation agreements.

- Licensed operators: Any new licenses or amendments to existing licenses shall include provision requiring licensees to develop and implement plans, including data collection and measurement methods, to reduce access disparities among target groups.

- Programs and initiatives: The Government will develop, and support programs and initiatives specifically designed to increase awareness, skills, opportunity, and capabilities with respect to ICT utilization by women, girls, PWDs and other disadvantaged groups.

4.1 UAS Fund Structure and Management

In its current form under the Act, the UAS Fund consists of a separate Board, and a Secretariat jointly run by DICT and NICTA, with financial and operational management under the responsibility of NICTA, subject to approvals and oversight by both the UAS Board and the Minister. Under the present structure, there continue to be inefficiencies, delays, improper incentives, issues with performance metrics and/or other challenges which inhibit the effective operation of the Fund and achievement of its goals. This new policy changes the governance of the UAS Management, Board, and Secretariat from being a section/bureau to becoming a semi-autonomous Division within NICTA, with separate management, personnel, and operating budget.

4.2 Financing of the UAS Fund

- Mandatory UAS Levy contributions from Licensees: As indicated in Section 107 of the Act, NICTA is empowered to levy charges on licensed operators for contributions to the Fund, and operators are required to cooperate with NICTA by providing relevant information and paying the designated amounts.

- Determination of Levy amount: Under the current Act, NICTA shall determine the amount of the Levy on an annual basis as a percentage of operator net revenues. According to the Act, NICTA and the UAS Board are **not** required to prepare a *pro forma* budget or operating plan for a given Fund fiscal year in order to determine the "desired level of funding." Moreover the Act and this policy has stated that any UAS Fund Levy that the UAS or NICTA has determined in the amount of 2% of net revenues or below shall be considered **presumptively reasonable** for purposes of financing any given year's UAS Fund Projects. Only amounts higher than 2% require a budget, demonstrating the need for such an amount, and approval by the UAS Fund Board.

- Collection and enforcement of contributions: As stated in section 107, operators **are obligated** to make the designated Levy contribution payments, and these may be recovered via the courts, and/or from other moneys owed. In addition, NICTA shall be authorized to impose appropriate penalties and sanctions upon operators for non-payment or late payment of required UAS Fund Levies, including, *inter alia*: fines and surcharges; withholding of authorizations, license renewals, or approvals for other NICTA requirements; disqualification from competing for UAS Projects; surrender or modification of existing UAS Project contracts and payments; and such other sanctions as NICTA may prescribe in the Regulations. NICTA may also publicize the fact that operators have failed to pay their obligations.

- Pay or Play option: NICTA may introduce and exercise a "Pay or Play" option for licensed operators to undertake approved UAS Projects in lieu of, and for the same value as, their required financial contribution to the UAS Fund