

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY NOTIFICATION

RE: FORBEARANCE IN RELATION TO THE PROVISION OF INTERNET SERVICES BY WORLD FOOD PROGRAM

2024 AUGUST 16

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) received a request from the Office of Disaster Preparedness & Emergency Management (ODPEM) in which the entity indicated that the World Food Program (WFP) has offered to provide internet connectivity services to ODPEM, humanitarian responders, and affected populations in the wake of Hurricane Beryl. ODPEM also requested the OUR's non-objection to the proposed initiative.

Based on the description of the services to be provided, WFP would normally require a carrier and/or service provider licence from the responsible Minister. Notwithstanding, the OUR seized with the importance of communication services and connectivity to support the emergency response and restoration efforts being led by the ODPEM and aware that the restoration efforts of the major telecommunication providers in some of the most severely impacted parts of the country would not align with the immediate needs of ODPEM, advised ODPEM that it would exercise forbearance in relation to the licensing requirements in respect of the provision of internet services by or through WFP.

The exercise of forbearance is on the grounds of the public interest, in keeping with the OUR's powers under section 71A of the Telecommunications Act. The OUR also advised the Minister of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport (the Minister) of its intent to forbear in the circumstances, and the Minister indicated that he has no objection to the OUR exercising forbearance regarding the provision of connectivity support by or through the WFP.

The OUR exercised its forbearance conditional on the following:

1. The provision of service is limited to the areas of need, that is, in areas where the existing licensed telecommunications providers have no or limited service;
2. The provision of service should continue in these areas for only as long as the need exists, and
3. The ODPEM and the OUR agreeing on protocols for the orderly deployment of the services by or through the WFP and their withdrawal upon restoration of service by licensed telecommunication providers.

In light of the foregoing, the OUR will require licensees to advise the OUR once they have resumed normal service in areas that currently have no or limited service. The OUR, therefore, requests that Licensees provide:

- (a) A report listing the areas for which it currently has no or limited service as a result of the impact and aftermath of Hurricane Beryl on 2024 August 19.
- (b) Subsequent to 2024 August 19, weekly status reports indicating the areas to which service has been restored until normal service delivery has resumed to all places shown in the report at item (a) above.

Please be guided accordingly.

OFFICE OF UTILITIES REGULATION



**Peta-Gaye Locke Rankin (Mrs)
Secretary to the Office (Acting)**