

MACRA gives out dual licences to operators

 By [Gregory Gondwe](#)

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The Malawi Communication Regulatory Authority (MACRA) has formally announced the awarding of dual operating licences to telecommunication players, following proposals that those operating mobile phone services will be allowed to operate fixed telephone services, and vice versa.

With the amendment of the individual licences, Airtel Malawi and Telekom Networks Malawi Limited (TNM), currently operating mobile phone services, will now operate both fixed voice and mobile telephony services. The same will apply to Malawi Telecommunication Limited (MTL) and Access Communication Limited (ACL) that are currently operating fixed voice telephones services.

Licences are already effective

Although MACRA issued notices on the changes in the media last week, the body's communication manager Zadziko Mankhambo said the licences are already effective considering that they have already been gazetted.

"The telecommunication companies are gearing up for that," said Mankhambo, describing it as an end to an era where there was demarcation in the provision of telecommunication services.

At the time when locally owned telecommunication company, CELCOM was being awarded, the board also announced that it will be changing the nature of licences for telecommunication operators.

Amendments made to the licence

"The proposed amendments have been made to comply with the new converged licensing framework that the authority has embarked on," said MACRA director general Charles Nsaliwa.

Neutral licence framework

Nsaliwa explained that under such a converged regime, the authority will ensure a technology neutral licence framework thereby enabling the current telecommunication operators to provide any public telecommunication services.

Nsaliwa said MACRA had agreed with all the operators for the amendment of the licence to provide both fixed and mobile public telecommunications services.

What has also been amended in the licences are the set up parameters which have been set up to ensure quality service delivery.

"The licence shall be amended to include new quality of service standards including penalties for the provision of ...services," said Nsaliwa, who also added that an incentive will give room to operators to engage in a health competition.

"The authority shall provide incentives to the licensee in the event of...[their] surpassing the quality of service benchmarks and parameters set out...during any of the period or phases." He revealed that such incentives might include a review of the penalties.

When it was announced when MACRA first announced of its dual licence intentions, all the operators said they would not hesitate to invest towards the other services provisions.

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE

Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He holds a Diploma and an Intermediate Certificate in Journalism among other media-related certificates. He can be contacted on gregorygondwe@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter at @Kalipochi.

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