

SCED and DG-Com speak on public consultation on assignment arrangements of spectrum in 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, and the Director-General of Communications, Miss Agnes Wong, on assignment arrangements of spectrum in the 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands for the provision of public mobile services including fifth generation (5G) mobile services at a media session in the Central Government Offices today (July 26):

Reporter: Why is there suddenly extra spectrum for mobile services? Does it mean that in future mobile service users can actually have more choices when they select their service providers? Secondly, about the possible assignment of the spectrum in 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands, are you saying that so long as there are few demands in the market, you will just basically give out all these spectrums free of charge?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: This is part of our plan to roll out telecommunication frequency spectrums. In our plan which was announced earlier this year, we will take steps to proceed with the public consultation and later on assignment of these spectrums. What we are talking about today is that we have identified spectrums in the 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands for 5G development. For these spectrums, we are talking about a major volume of 4 100 MHz of spectrum to be made available for 5G. This will form the bulk of the entire 5G. At the same time, the Communications Authority also identified 200 MHz of spectrum from a lower band, the 3.3 GHz band and also the 4.9 GHz band, to supplement this. Together with the spectrum in the 3.5 GHz band that we have announced a few months ago, this is a totality and the broader picture of all the spectrum that can be made available to the operators in preparation for 5G's coming.

The reason of why these spectrums in the 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands are so important is that, first, it is a high-frequency band which could cater for high intensity of usage. We all know that 5G is not just for communication. It is also for Internet of Things, smart city and lots of technology applications. The spectrum in the 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands is the candidate or designated spectrum that International Telecommunication Union earmarked for (5G), so this is a major step forward.

In addition to rolling out this very wide spectrum for 5G, we are also taking administrative assignment measures to roll this out. That means, instead of doing it through an auction, because of the abundant supply of the spectrum, we are using administrative measure to assign it to the possible operators. If the demand falls within the supply that we are talking about,

these spectrums will be given to the operators for 5G. That means it will greatly reduce the cost and also shorten the time involved.

Coming back to our plan released earlier this year, we are taking steps to roll out these spectrums one by one. Hopefully by early next year, we will be able to give all these spectrums to possible operators so that they can start preparations for planning and making ways to make available services to the market.

Reporter: Why is there now apparently a double amount of mobile spectrum?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I have answered your question right in the beginning that this is our plan to roll out the 5G (in high frequency bands). The 5G spectrum covers various bands, from the 3.5 GHz band we rolled out earlier this year to the 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands that we are now talking about, and in addition to the 3.3 GHz band and 4.9 GHz band available, so this is part of the plan. Of course, as I have explained, different spectrums may serve different purposes. It also depends on in what way we roll them out. That is part of the plan I have explained.

Reporter: The Director-General of Communications just now talked about another round of consultation for spectrum in the 3.3 GHz band and 4.9 GHz band. What is the timetable for that to be opened to the market? Are you saying that after the consultation, there will be another round of bidding? Do you have a timetable for those 200 MHz of spectrum?

Director-General of Communications: For the 3.3 GHz band and 4.9 GHz band, we will start another round of public consultation. It is because this is a new spectrum and according to our practice and policy, we should conduct a public consultation first. We will shortly issue another public consultation paper on these two bands. Our target is, hopefully, by the middle of next year, we will be able to assign the relevant spectrums. This is our working timetable.

Reporter: Also by assignment? Not by bidding?

Director-General of Communications: That will depend on the outcome of the public consultation.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)