

MTC's Celtel expands world's first borderless mobile network into Central Africa

MTC subsidiary, Celtel International, the leading pan-African telecommunications company announced today that it was expanding its One Network, the world's first borderless mobile network, to include the Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Kuwait: Thursday, June 07 - 2007 at 11:40

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This comes nine months after the successful launch of One Network in East Africa.

In September 2006, Celtel made history by breaking boundaries and offering its customers in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda the opportunity to move freely across geographical borders without roaming call surcharges and without having to pay to receive incoming calls.

This initiative made news worldwide; as it was the first time a mobile company was able to completely remove traditional roaming charges and offer its customers the same services abroad that they could access in their home country such as airtime credit transfer (for prepaid customers) from friends and family; voicemail and customer service in their local languages.

Following the East Africa One Network launch a great proportion of customers in the region are now benefiting from the service. Speaking last September in Kampala, Nairobi, and Dar es Salaam during simultaneous press briefings Celtel told the public that this was only the beginning of their efforts to connect Africa as no other mobile phone operator has been able to do to date, and that their efforts would not stop within East Africa. Under a year later this promise has been realized by expanding the service to include three other countries within Central Africa.

Commenting on the expansion of One Network, Moez Daya, Chief Executive Officer of Celtel International said, 'We are delighted to bring 160 million people from East and Central Africa closer together through One Network. In a region historically dependent on freedom of movement across borders, we are now offering a communications solution that fits the needs of our customers, breaking down barriers and making life better for businesses, families and individuals from West to East. We have made the service easy to use and convenient by putting in place more than 140,000 places where our customers can buy airtime.'

Following the expansion of One Network the only change for users within East Africa will be the introduction of the three new Central African countries; Republic of Congo, Gabon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Following today's One Network extension into Central Africa, post-paid and pre-paid Celtel subscribers in all six countries will now be able to make calls at local rates, receive incoming calls free of charge and top-up their pre-paid phones with locally-bought airtime cards. Alternatively, Celtel's prepaid customers may top up their accounts with airtime prepaid cards they have brought from their home networks, whether in the Republic of Congo, Gabon, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania or Uganda. The One Network service is automatically activated upon crossing the geographic border into one of the six countries, with no prior registration required or sign-up fee charged.

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One Network map.

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Speaking about One Network, Tito Alai, Chief Commercial Officer for Celtel and the MTC Group commented, 'Nine months after the launch of One Network in East Africa, we have kept our promise of expanding this service to other countries and we shall continue in this direction. One Network showcases African innovation at its best and confirms Celtel's position as the most pioneering mobile phone network, in the fastest-growing mobile telecommunications market in the world.'

Commenting on the impact One Network will have on the economic development for Central and East Africa, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa said,

'We warmly welcome the extension of One Network, which will provide a significant boost to intra-African trade. By better linking markets across regions, by improving connectivity and lowering costs of cross border trade, we are giving domestic businesses new opportunities to grow and are encouraging larger multi-national producers to serve better-connected African markets from within the region.'

The extension of One Network to Central Africa has been welcomed by leaders from the region.

The President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, H.E. Joseph Kabila said, 'As several multinational initiatives are aimed at the political and economical integration of Africa, an innovation like Celtel's 'One Network' can only be welcomed. By merging its telecommunication systems across these six countries, Celtel will provide the infrastructural support needed to strengthen the economic ties between Central and East Africa. '

Gabon's President H.E. El Hadj Omar Bongo said, 'I'd like to congratulate Celtel for launching One Network, which will now enable millions of Africans - especially families living apart because of borders inherited from colonisation - to keep in touch and constantly communicate. This initiative will, without doubt, contribute towards promoting Unity and Peace in Africa in general, and particularly in Gabon.'

Kenya's President H.E. Mwai Kibaki said, 'Lack of adequate communication has been the weakest point in Africa's regional integration. The communication network being provided by Celtel covering East and Central Africa is therefore a major contribution towards improvement of communication in Africa. This is vital for economic, social and cultural co-operation in the wider region'

Tanzania's President, H.E. Jakaya Kikwete said, 'In Africa's profound past, there is a common heritage between the people. Our economies were complementary and our cultures multiethnic. Celtel's 'One Network' is a federative tool that will enable us to revive this heritage and incorporate it in our development dynamics.'

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Notes and media contacts

About One Network





•With One Network, Postpaid (contract) and Prepaid subscribers in Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, use one SIM card for all of their mobile telephone needs across the region. They do not need to change their current SIM card and keep their existing number.

•On crossing the border into another country in the region, the handset is automatically registered on the One Network.

•Prepaid subscribers can recharge their accounts by using local top-up cards and also by using top-up cards bought in their home East and Central African countries. Their balance can be checked in each country.

•The handset is automatically registered back on to the home network on arrival in the home country.

For media enquiries / interview requests please contact:

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About MTC Group & Celtel International

Celtel is the most successful pan-African mobile network, offering telecommunications services to more people in Africa than any other network. The company is one of the best-known branded businesses in Africa with mobile licenses covering more than 400 million people, close to half of Africa's population. Under the brand promise of 'Making Life Better', the company is committed to achieving sustainable development of telecommunications in Africa. Celtel has more than 20 million customers and operates mobile cellular operations in 14 countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. For more information please visit www.celtel.com

Celtel is owned by MTC, a leading provider of mobile telecommunications in the Middle East and Africa with 21 operations making it the 4th largest mobile company in the world in geographical footprint. MTC employs 13,000 people provides a comprehensive range of mobile voice and data services to over 29.7 million active individual and business customers. The company is in Kuwait and Bahrain as mtc-vodafone, in Jordan as Fastlink, in Iraq as mtc-atheer, in Lebanon as mtc-touch and in Sudan, under the brand name of 'Mobitel'. MTC will launch operations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in early 2008.

The Mobile Telecommunications Company KSC (the parent company) is a Kuwaiti shareholding company and its shares are traded on the Kuwait Stock Exchange. The company's market capitalisation at 1 June, 2007 exceeded US\$ 28 billion.

Posted by Medilyn Manibo, Assistant News Editor

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