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October 15th, 2026

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Subject: Starlink Response to the ECTEL Public Consultation on the Review of Annual Spectrum Fees in ECTEL Member States

Reference: Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL), Review of Annual Spectrum Fees in ECTEL Member States: Public Consultation Document, published 17 August 2026 (closing date for responses: 16 October 2026).

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Starlink thanks ECTEL for the opportunity to participate in this public consultation on the Review of Annual Spectrum Fees in ECTEL Member States. We welcome ECTEL's open and transparent approach to this review seeking to modernize satellite regulation in the region, which allows stakeholders to contribute to the design of a fee regime that will shape the development of electronic communications in the region for years to come.

Starlink currently provides services in more than 170 countries and territories around the world. This experience has given us a broad perspective on the different approaches that regulators have adopted to set spectrum fees for satellite services, and on their impact on investment, service affordability and the expansion of connectivity. Based on this experience, we have seen that fee regimes based on the recovery of administrative costs, that are simple, predictable and reflect the shared and non-exclusive nature of satellite spectrum use, are the most effective in promoting the deployment of satellite services and bringing their benefits to end users. We are pleased to share this experience with ECTEL in the comments that follow.

Our response focuses on Section 8 of the consultation document, "Satellite and non-terrestrial network fees", which are the most relevant to Starlink, specifically on Questions 11 and 12. In accordance with the consultation guidelines, Starlink has no comment on Questions 1 to 10 and 13, which relate to services that Starlink does not currently provide.

A. **Question 1:** Do you agree that annual IMT spectrum fees should be differentiated by band group, at XCD0.14/MHz/Pop for sub-1 GHz spectrum, XCD0.10/MHz/Pop for lower-mid band spectrum, and XCD0.03/MHz/Pop for upper-mid band spectrum? Please provide reasons and any supporting evidence.

   Response: No comments.

B. **Question 2:** The five-state fee total can be allocated across Member States either in proportion to each state's population or in equal fifths, preserving a uniform fee per MHz in every state as now. Which basis do you favour, and why?

   Response: No comments.

C. **Question 3:** Do you agree that Fixed Wireless Access assignments in IMT-suitable bands should be charged under the IMT fee schedule rather than the fixed-links schedule?

   Response: No comments.

D. **Question 4:** Do you agree that the existing minimum annual IMT spectrum fee of XCD300,000 per licensee should be removed, so that each licensee's annual fee is determined solely by its assigned spectrum holdings? Please provide reasons and any supporting evidence

   Response: No comments.

E. **Question 5:** Do you agree that fixed-link fees should be set by the formula Base fee x Bandwidth (MHz) x Band factor, with fees scaling linearly in bandwidth?

   Response: No comments.

F. **Question 6:** Do you agree with the proposed base fee of XCD336 per MHz per link?

   Response: No comments.

G. **Question 7:** Do you agree with the proposed band factors in Table 13? Please give reasons and any supporting evidence.

Response: No comments.

H. **Question 8:** Do you agree that the distinctions between link types and service types (backhaul, inter-site, other microwave) should be removed, with one fee per link regardless of configuration?

Response: No comments.

I. **Question 9:** Do you agree with a 39% inflation adjustment to broadcasting channel fees, applied uniformly across Member States as the default schedule?

Response: No comments.

J. **Question 10:** Do you agree with the proposed targeted relief mechanism for qualifying public-interest broadcasters? What eligibility criteria, evidence requirements and review periods should apply?

Response: No comments.

K. **Question 11**: Do you agree that satellite earth station and VSAT fees should be charged per station rather than per frequency, at XCD20,000 per gateway earth station and XCD6,000 per VSAT earth station, uniform across frequency bands?

Response:

11.1 Starlink considers that ECTEL's proposal is well oriented, however the whole system of charging per earth station / VSAT is antiquated and should be overcome. The idea of charging per VSAT only makes sense in the case of individual VSAT licensing by the end-user (like in the case where a company buys and licenses its own antenna); however, in cases of the new Non Geostationary Satellite Systems (NGSOS), where a company like

Starlink has thousands, hundreds of thousands or even millions of VSATs in each country, the payment, registering or reporting per VSAT, makes it burdensome, expensive and becomes a barrier to the access and development of this type of connectivity services, provided particularly that satellite services use spectrum on a shared, non-exclusive basis. In non-geostationary satellite orbit (NGSO) systems, the frequencies used vary dynamically depending on orbital geometry and traffic demand, so a fee based on the frequencies used would be neither technically feasible nor consistent with the shared nature of the spectrum. In line with this recognition, Starlink agrees that fees should not be charged per frequency, but also payment should not be based on the VSAT or Earth Station number but this being shared spectrum, the payment should be a pre-established amount that doesn't penalize growth (more antennae) with regulatory fees, or if that is the purpose, then it should be based on a fixed revenue percentage, but never on a per frequency or per Kit basis.

11.2 For the purposes of these comments, Starlink also believes that there should be a difference between two types of equipment that are fundamentally different in nature: gateways, which are earth stations that connect the satellite network to the terrestrial Internet, and user terminals, which are the small antennas installed at customers' premises to receive the service.

11.3 Gateways. Starlink respectfully requests that ECTEL clarify that the gateway fee applies per gateway facility, regardless of the number of dishes installed at the site. Modern NGSO gateways typically consist of several dishes installed at a single location,

all of which constitute a single Gateway site and operates jointly as one facility. Applying the fee to each dish would multiply the cost of a single gateway several times over.

11.4 Starlink also notes that the proposed gateway fee of XCD20,000 has been deliberately set well above the benchmark median of XCD8,027, on the grounds that large gateway installations may encumber scarce land in the Member States. However, land-use considerations are not directly related to the management of spectrum, and are generally addressed through planning and land-use regulations rather than through spectrum fees. Starlink therefore respectfully suggests that the gateway fee be set as an administrative fee reflecting the cost of managing the spectrum used by gateways, rather than as a means of recovering other costs or raising revenue, and that it be brought closer to the benchmark median. Instead of penalizing investment with regulatory fees, countries in which NGSOS decide to establish gateway infrastructure should incentivize such investments as it improves network connectivity and local technology development as a whole.

11.5 Based on its experience in more than 170 countries, Starlink considers that gateway fees should follow three principles. First, a low fixed fee should apply by default to one or several gateways, reflecting the administrative cost of managing the spectrum they use. Second, additional fees should only apply where local spectrum overuse is a genuine concern. Third, complex fee structures that require operators to provide detailed technical parameters should be avoided, as they increase the administrative burden and fee

unpredictability for both operators and regulators without providing corresponding regulatory benefits.

11.6 User terminals. NGSO user terminals (also called Kits) are not VSATs or Earth Stations, but end-user-equipment owned by end user instead of Starlink (more similar to a cellphone than to a satellite antenna over a cell tower). User terminals should therefore not be subject to any fee per unit. Starlink welcomes ECTEL's proposal not to introduce a fee per user terminal and, to ensure legal certainty, requests that ECTEL expressly clarify that the VSAT fee of XCD6,000 does not apply to the user terminals used to provide NGSO broadband services to end users. These terminals are small, standardized, self-installed consumer devices that are deployed in large numbers, and are fundamentally different from traditional VSAT earth stations. Applying the VSAT fee to each of them would, in practice, amount to a per-terminal fee, which ECTEL has rightly decided not to introduce.

11.7 Starlink agrees with ECTEL that per-terminal fees slow the adoption of technology. In addition, such fees would have several adverse effects:

(a) They would penalize users, specifically rural users. The purpose of satellite broadband is to close the digital divide in remote and underserved areas. A per-terminal fee would increase the cost of service precisely where it is most needed, discouraging expansion into low-income communities.

(b) They would discourage growth. A model in which more users means higher regulatory costs penalizes commercial success and could create incentives to under-report the number of active terminals.

(c) They would create a disproportionate administrative burden. Monitoring and auditing the terminal inventory of a global satellite operator would generate administrative costs for ECTEL and the NTRCs that would likely exceed the revenue collected.

11.8 This approach is consistent with international practice. Starlink's experience in more than 170 countries, show that most regulators do not charge fees per user terminal, and instead authorize all terminals of the same type through a single license or authorization:

(a) United States. The FCC authorizes all user terminals with identical technical specifications under a single blanket license. Its annual regulatory fees are set per system or license, based on the staff time required to regulate each category of operator, and do not vary with the number of terminals or active links. As ECTEL notes in Section 8.4.9, there is no evidence of per-terminal fees in the United States.

(b) Australia. ACMA charges a single nationwide spectrum license fee, rather than fees per terminal or per individual station.

(c) Europe. Most EU countries exempt the use of the Ku band from spectrum fees, as it is considered a highly available band that can easily be shared.

(d) Uruguay. URSEC does not charge any recurring spectrum fee, and only requires a one-time payment for the granting of the license and the authorization of the NGSO system.

(e) Mexico. There is no per UT fee payment or registration of any kind. Spectrum is allocated and paid for in block on a national basis.

(f) The Bahamas. URCA has recently revised its spectrum fee methodology to reduce the regulatory burden on satellite operators. The revenue-based fee proposed for satellite operators was reduced from 5% to 3% and applies only to revenue above BSD500,000 per year, in addition to a fixed hybrid FSS spectrum license fee of BSD40,000 per year. ESIM service providers are subject to a flat annual general authorization fee of BSD3,000.

(g) Ecuador. Ecuador has recently passed amendments to its organic law to expressly prohibit on charging fees per terminal. Under the Organic Law for the Strengthening of Cybersecurity (Official Registry No. 290, 22 May 2026), the fee formula for satellite services may not use telecommunications terminal equipment or registered end users as variables.

(h) Philippines. The NTC charges a Supervision and Regulation Fee equivalent to 1% of the annual gross revenue of value-added service providers, the category under which satellite providers operate.

There are other examples in the world and in the region, but Starlink wished to highlight the above as examples of good spectrum regulatory frameworks that ECTEL should take into consideration as it looks to modernize its spectrum regulatory fees framework.

While not the focus of this consultation, Starlink requests that ECTEL clarify the definition of a user terminal compared to other VSAT licenses and establish that recategorization from a VSAT to a user terminal fee structure would not require an operator to reapply.

11.10 In response to Question 11, Starlink considers that ECTEL's proposal to charge fees per station rather than per frequency, uniformly across frequency bands, is well oriented, as mentioned above only in what concerns Gateway spectrum fees, but should be avoided for end-user satellite terminals (kits) considering its nature and the shared nature of satellite spectrum and avoids penalizing operators for incorporating new bands. Therefore, Starlink respectfully restates the following adjustments to the proposed fees:

(a) Gateway earth stations should be subject to a reasonable fixed fee per location, applied to each gateway site regardless of the number of dishes installed, rather than the proposed fee of XCD20,000 per gateway earth station. This fee should reflect the administrative cost of managing the spectrum used, and should be brought closer to the benchmark median.

(b) The proposed fee of XCD6,000 per VSAT earth station should not apply to the user terminals used to provide NGSO broadband services to end users. These terminals should not be subject to any fee per terminal. Any fee related to the service provided through user terminals should instead be calculated either on the basis of the spectrum authorized in block to the operator, provided that the resulting amount is reasonable, or as a reasonable fixed and fully predictable annual fee.

In any case, any fee charged should be based on the administrative costs of managing the spectrum, and not on revenue-raising objectives that end up affecting connectivity penetration and broadband deployment in the country.

L. **Question 12:** Do you agree with a single linear NTN spectrum fee of XCD25 per MHz per Member State per year for shared, non-exclusive satellite spectrum, with no additional spectrum fee where the service uses IMT spectrum already licensed to a mobile network operator?

Response:

12.1 Starlink welcomes ECTEL's recognition that NTN authorizations involve shared or coordinated spectrum use and do not confer exclusive national spectrum rights, and that fees for these services should therefore be set on cost-administrative principles. Starlink also welcomes the proposal that no additional spectrum fee should apply where an NTN service uses IMT spectrum already licensed to a mobile network operator.

12.2 Nevertheless, Starlink respectfully submits that a fee calculated on a per-MHz basis is not well suited to NGSO systems, whether it is applied to the spectrum authorized or to the spectrum actually used.

12.3 First, a fee based on the spectrum authorized to an NGSO operator would be technically feasible, as the number of MHz authorized is fixed and known in advance. However, it would not be an appropriate basis for calculating the fee, for several reasons. Unlike terrestrial mobile operators, which receive exclusive rights over specific frequency

bands, NGSO operators are not assigned spectrum on an exclusive basis by the Member States. The frequencies used by NGSO systems are coordinated at the international level through the International Telecommunications Union by the notifying administration of each system, and the Member States simply authorize operators to use this spectrum on a shared, non-exclusive basis, alongside other satellite systems. ECTEL itself acknowledges this distinction, noting that the proposed fee is not intended to price an exclusive satellite spectrum license. A fee calculated on the full authorized bandwidth would therefore charge operators as if the spectrum had been assigned to them, when they have only been permitted to use it on a shared basis. Moreover, NGSO operators are typically authorized to use a much larger bandwidth than they use at any given time due to the whole nature of NSOS technologies in which any satellite link is only used for some minutes before it “jumps” to the next satellite, for which per MHz calculations become burdensome and expensive, even prohibitive for new market entrants, as ECTEL itself recognizes in Section 8.4.10, so the resulting fee could easily become disproportionate to the actual use of spectrum in each Member State. Finally, such a fee would increase each time an operator incorporates a new frequency band, discouraging the migration of traffic to higher and less congested bands. For these reasons, if a fee were to be calculated on a fixed predetermined fee, it would only be justified to the extent that the resulting amount remains reasonable.

12.4 A fee based on the spectrum actually used would be equally unworkable. NGSO systems do not use all of their authorized bandwidth across the entire territory at all times. Each user terminal uses only one uplink channel and one downlink channel at any given

moment, within a specific coverage cell, and the frequencies used vary dynamically depending on orbital geometry and traffic demand. Calculating the spectrum actually used would therefore require determining how many terminals are active, in how many cells and on how many channels at each moment. This is not technically feasible, and the information would provide no regulatory value to ECTEL or the NTRCs.

12.5 Any attempt to estimate the spectrum used, for example based on the average uplink or downlink usage per terminal, would necessarily rely on the number of terminals in service. The result would, in practice, be a per-terminal fee, which ECTEL has rightly decided not to introduce.

12.6 International experience. Please see our comments to section 11.8 above.

12.7 The regulators that adopted simple and low fee regimes, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, have become leaders in NGSO development. By contrast, rigid formulas and prices disconnected from the cost of spectrum management tend to slow the growth of these services. Based on this experience, Starlink considers that spectrum fees for NGSO systems should follow these principles:

(a) A uniform fixed fee should apply to unlimited service links, maximizing incentives to grow and to serve underserved communities.
(b) Fees that scale with bandwidth should be avoided, as they discourage the efficient use of non-congested bands.

(c) Fees that scale with the number of user terminals should be avoided, as they discourage operators from adding subscribers.

(d) Fees should reflect the costs of spectrum management, not revenue-raising objectives.

12.8 Proposed alternatives. In light of the above, Starlink considers that the only viable ways to calculate spectrum fees for NGSO systems are the following:

(a) A fixed annual fee per Member State covering all the spectrum authorized to the operator, set at a level that reflects the cost of managing and supervising NTN authorizations. This is Starlink's preferred option, as it is simple, predictable and consistent with the cost-recovery principle that ECTEL has adopted for satellite services.

(b) Alternatively, a percentage of the revenue derived from the provision of telecommunications services in each Member State, excluding revenue from the sale of equipment such as user terminals. This percentage should not exceed 1%, consistent with the approach adopted in the Philippines, and should be subject to an annual cap to ensure that the fee remains reasonable as the number of users grows.

12.9 Starlink also notes that the proposed fees represent a significant increase compared with what operators currently pay. For example, in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Starlink is currently assigned one (1) pair of frequencies in the Ku band, for which the

existing Fees Regulations set an annual spectrum fee of EC$12,000.00. Under the proposed regime, Starlink would be charged for the 2,000 MHz it would use, resulting in an annual fee of EC$50,000.00, and for the 500 MHz it would use, resulting in an annual fee of EC$12.500.00, which is considerably higher than the amount it currently pays. Moreover, the proposed methodology does not take into account that this spectrum is shared, and therefore results in a higher charge for spectrum that Starlink does not use on an exclusive basis. Even though the fee is based on assigned spectrum, the value should not increase but rather decrease, given that the band is used by several operators and is not assigned on an exclusive basis.

M. **Question 13**: Do you agree with the removal of the paging entries from the fee schedule and with leaving fees for spread spectrum, land mobile, maritime mobile, aeronautical mobile, community radio and studio transmitter links unchanged?

Response: No comments

N. **Question 14:** Do you have any other comments on the proposals in this consultation?

Response: No comments

Starlink appreciates the opportunity to participate in this consultation and remains at ECTEL's disposal for any clarification or further discussion.

Best regards,

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