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Press release

## MOBILE NETWORK SHARING

### Signature of a mobile network sharing agreement between Digicel and Free Caraïbe in the Antilles and in Guiana: Arcep examines and contract and issues a request for comments from the sector

Paris, 12 June 2020

#### **In February 2020, Digicel and Free Caraïbe signed mobile network sharing contract in the Antilles and in Guiana, which has been notified to Arcep**

On 3 February 2020, Digicel and Free Caraïbe signed a contract with a view to sharing their mobile networks in the Antilles (Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin) and in Guiana. The contract was notified to Arcep on 28 February 2020 and was the subject of press releases from companies Iliad and Digicel on 2 June 2020.

**This agreement between the two operators was made manifest by the creation of a joint venture called Madiacom, in March 2020, to operate the shared radio access network (RAN) of which it is the owner.** The two operators will share the network equipment, but they “*will each maintain their own core network and their frequency licences, and will continue to have complete business autonomy*”<sup>1</sup>. The aim of the partnership for both operators is to “*pool their investments to be able to increase the number of cell sites significantly,*” and to “*supply additional fibre connectivity*” and “*thereby increase coverage and speeds*”<sup>2</sup>.

#### **The contract notified to Arcep plans on implementing mobile network sharing in three successive stages**

The two operators are planning on a gradual implementation of radio access network (RAN) sharing across every territory, temporarily sharing their low-band frequencies and, as an interim measure, hosting Free Caraïbe on Digicel frequencies.

The project includes:

- **An initialisation phase in 2020:** the joint venture will employ only Digicel frequencies and will host Free Caraïbe on these frequencies (MOCN<sup>3</sup> solution) to enable Free Caraïbe to provide 3G/4G services. This temporary “roaming” solution for Free Caraïbe will gradually be phased out in each territory as the RAN-sharing solution is put into place;
- **A planned two-year transition phase:** the joint venture will gradually engineer the network to be transmitting on both operators’ frequencies. This will involve the implementation of a RAN-sharing solution in each territory, without sharing spectrum on high frequencies (MORAN<sup>4</sup>) and temporarily including cross-sharing (MOCN sharing) of low-range frequencies (800 MHz and 900MHz)<sup>5</sup>. The cross-sharing of low-range frequencies is due to be phased out once the technical work in all of the territories is complete (which both operators expect to be within two years);
- **A long term phase once the transition is complete** – of transmission over the frequencies belonging to the JV’s two operators without spectrum sharing (MORAN).

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<sup>1</sup> Iliad press release of 2 June 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Iliad and Digicel press releases of 2 June 2020

<sup>3</sup> Multi-Operator Core Networks

<sup>4</sup> Multi-Operator Radio Access Network

<sup>5</sup> The contract includes the possibility of cross-sharing of low-band frequencies without distinction, depending on the territory. In Guadeloupe and in Martinique in particular, Digicel would have access to the Free Caraïbe 10MHz duplex in the 800MHz band and Free Caraïbe would have access to the Digicel 10.4 MHz duplex in the 900MHz band.

## Arcep examines the contract and issues a request for comments from the sector

Arcep has the power to request that mobile network operators amend their network sharing contracts<sup>6</sup> when it appears necessary to achieve regulatory objectives<sup>7</sup>.

To this end, Arcep is currently in the process of examining the contract established between Digicel and Free Caraïbe, notably with respect to the regulatory objectives and guidelines governing mobile network sharing of 25 May 2016<sup>8</sup>.

Market stakeholders are invited to send their comments before 10/07/2020 to the following address: [partage-reseaux@arcep.fr](mailto:partage-reseaux@arcep.fr).

## Arcep at a glance

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications, Postal Affairs and Print Media Distribution (Arcep), a neutral and expert arbitrator with the status of independent administrative authority (IAA), is the architect and guardian of internet, fixed and mobile telecoms and postal networks in France.

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<sup>6</sup> Cette compétence est prévue à article L.34-8-1-1 du code des postes and des communications électroniques, introduit par la loi pour la croissance, activité and égalité des chances économiques, publiée le 7 août 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Mentionnés à article L. 32-1 du code des postes and des communications électroniques

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.arcep.fr/uploads/tx\\_gspublication/2016-05-25-partage-reseaux-mobiles-lignes-directrices.pdf](https://www.arcep.fr/uploads/tx_gspublication/2016-05-25-partage-reseaux-mobiles-lignes-directrices.pdf)

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