



# National Telecommunications Commission

## NATCOM

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

### NATCOM TO SUSPEND COMIUM'S LICENCE

*Freetown, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2014...*The National telecommunications Commission (NATCOM), would like to inform subscribers of Comium (SL) Limited that the Commission has decided to suspend the company's licence effective 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2014.

As members of the public may be aware, Comium (SL) Limited is highly indebted to numerous creditors including NATCOM, Banks, other Telecommunications Operators, suppliers and staff of the company.

Despite the Commission's patience and efforts which provided a unique window of opportunity for the company to seek a solution to its financial quagmire, the situation remains unresolved. In September 2013, this state of affairs led the Company to enter into a Receivership, which prompted the Commission to conclude that Comium (SL) Limited has lost the capacity to continue to operate the Network and offer Telecoms services, in respect of which the Licence was issued and resources assigned to the Company. The Commission accordingly issued a Notice of Suspension of the Licence to the Company.

Several meetings with the representatives of the Company in a bid to have the financial liabilities of the Company addressed in the interest of the sector, the Consumers and the employees, proved futile. In January 2014 the Commission was left with no alternative but to issue Comium a 21-day notice of suspension of its licence and the utilization of the resources allocated to it.

With the intervention of the Ministry of Information and Communications and particularly in the interest of subscribers and other stakeholders the Commission was obliged to revisit the suspension of the licence and granted a moratorium on the said suspension for a period of three months, effective 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014. This window of opportunity was given to allow the Receiver to take concrete action to ensure the sustainability of the Company and the discharge of its financial liabilities.

Upon the expiration of the moratorium the Commission under difficult regulatory circumstances, further extended the said moratorium on two occasions spanning 4<sup>th</sup> May 2014 to 17<sup>th</sup> August 2014. Unfortunately, there seemed to be no end to the financial crisis of the company coupled with its technical inability to fully operate the Network and provide the Telecommunications services throughout the territory of Sierra Leone as per the Licence requirements.

Sometimes early this year, the Commission solicited the cooperation of the Central Bank in ensuring that requests by mobile phone companies to remit foreign currencies out of the country get authorization from the Commission before such remittances are made, which is now in force. The objective of this mechanism is to prevent a recurrence of the ugly situation that Comium now finds itself.

Meanwhile, the Commission has cancelled the licence of Ambitel (formerly Greenet) for failure to meet their regulatory obligations.

In light of the above, the Commission has no alternative but to effect the suspension of Comium's Licence on the **13<sup>th</sup> October 2014** and the Commission shall take further steps to retrieve the scarce resources of Government held on to by Comium (SL) Limited. The Commission regrets any inconvenience that this may cause to subscribers of the network.