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For Immediate Release

FCC PROPOSES TO REMOVE NONDISCRIMINATION REQUIREMENTS TO FACILITATE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA

WASHINGTON, February 12, 2016 – The Federal Communications Commission today took steps to promote international telecommunications services between the United States and Cuba by proposing to remove nondiscrimination requirements on the U.S.-Cuba route.

Currently, the Commission’s nondiscrimination rules require all facilities-based U.S. carriers providing the same or similar services on the U.S.-Cuba route to operate under identical rate terms and conditions. In 2012, the Commission removed nondiscrimination requirements for U.S. carriers operating between the United States and other countries. Cuba is the only country to which the nondiscrimination requirements still apply. If the proposal is adopted, U.S. carriers would have more flexibility to negotiate rates with the state-owned telecommunications operator, ETECSA, and to respond to market forces.

Today’s action responds to a recommendation from the State Department to remove the nondiscrimination requirements based on the changes in U.S.-Cuba relations, and seeks comment on whether such an action would serve the public interest. In particular, today’s action seeks comment on removing certain nondiscrimination requirements and asks whether removal would lead to more direct agreements between U.S. carriers and the state-owned telecommunications operator, ETECSA, and encourage competition on the U.S.-Cuba route.

The FCC continues work to increase connectivity between the United States and Cuba and access to telecommunications services within Cuba. The agency recently removed Cuba from the Exclusion List, opening the door for U.S. telecom carriers to provide facilities-based services to Cuba without separate approval from the Commission. While these actions should lead to increased competition on the U.S.-Cuba route, the Commission will continue to maintain safeguards designed to protect U.S. consumers should any market failures occur on the U.S.-Cuba route.

Action by the Commission February 10, 2016 by Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 16-13). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, and Pai approving; Commissioner O’Rielly concurring. Commissioners Pai and O’Rielly issuing statements.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).