

**[ REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9707, August 08, 2009 ]**

**AN ACT GRANTING THE CONVERGE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representative of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. *Nature and Scope of Franchise.* — Subject to the provisions of the Constitution and applicable laws, rules and regulations, there is hereby granted to Converge Information and Communications Technology Solutions, Inc. hereunder referred to as the grantee, its successors or assigns, as franchise to construct, install, establish, operate and maintain for commercial purposes and in the public interest, throughout the Philippines and between the Philippines and other countries and territories, wire and/or wireless telecommunications systems including, but not limited to, mobile, cellular, paging, fiber optics, multichannel multipoint distribution system (MMDS), local multipoint distribution system (LMDS), satellite transmit and receive systems, switches and their value-added services such as, but not limited to, transmission of voice, data, facsimile, control signs, audio and video, information services bureau and all other telecommunications systems technologies as are at present available or will be made available through technological advances or innovations in the future; and/or construct, acquire, lease and operate or manage transmitting and receiving stations, lines, cables or systems as in or are convenient or essential to efficiently carry out the purpose of this franchise.

SEC. 2. *Manner of Operation of Stations or Facilities.* — The stations or facilities of the grantee shall be constructed and operated in a manner as will, at most, result only in the minimum interference on the wavelengths or frequencies of existing stations or other stations which may be established by law, without in any way diminishing its own right to use its selected wavelengths or frequencies and the quality of transmission or reception thereon as should maximize rendition of the grantee's services and/or the availability thereof.

SEC. 3. *Authority of the National Telecommunications Commission.* — The grantee shall secure from the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), hereinafter referred to as the Commission, a certificate of public convenience and necessity or the appropriate permits of its telecommunications systems/facilities. In issuing the certificate, the commission shall have the power to impose such conditions relative to the construction, operation, maintenance or service level of the telecommunications system. The Commission shall have the authority to regulate the construction and operation of its telecommunications systems. The grantee shall not use any frequency in the radio spectrum without having been authorized by the

Commission. Such certificate shall state the areas covered and date the grantee shall commence the service. The Commission, however, shall not unreasonably withhold or delay the grant of any such authority, permits or licenses.

SEC. 4. *Ingres and Egress.* — For the purpose of erecting and maintaining poles or other supports for said wires or other conductors for the purpose of laying and maintaining underground wires, cable or other conductors, it shall be lawful for the grantee, its successors or assigns, with the prior approval of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), to make excavations or lay conduits in any of the public places, highways, streets, lanes, alleys, avenues, sidewalks or bridges of said provinces, cities and/or municipalities: *Provided, however,* That a public place, highway, street, lane, alley, avenue, sidewalks or bridge distributed, altered or changed by reason of erection of poles or other supports, or the underground laying of wires, other conductors or conduits, shall be repaired and replaced in workmanlike manner by said grantee, its successors or assigns, in accordance with the standards set by the DPWH. Should the grantee, its successors or assigns, after the ten (10) days notice from the said authority, fail, refuse or neglect to repair or replace any part of public place, road, highway, street, lane, alley, avenue, sidewalk or bridge altered, changed or distributed by the said grantee, its successors or assigns, then the DPWH shall have the right to have the same repaired and placed in good order and condition at double expense to be charged against the grantee, its successors or assigns.

SEC. 5. *Responsibility to the Public.* — The grantees shall conform to the ethics of honest enterprise and not use its stations/facilities for obscene or indecent transmission or for the dissemination of deliberately false information or willful misrepresentation, or assist in subversive or treasonable acts.

The grantee shall provide basic or enhanced telephone service in any municipality in the Philippines where it has an approved certificate of public convenience and necessity for the establishment, operation and maintenance of basic and/or enhanced local establishment, operation and maintenance of basic and/or enhanced local exchange service, without discrimination to any applicant therefore, in the order of the date of their applications, up to the limit of the capacity of its local telephone exchange, and should the demand for the telephone service at any time increase beyond the capacity thereof, the grantee shall increase the same to meet such demand: *Provided,* That in case the total demand to be satisfied by the expansion is less than the smallest viable local exchange available in the market as determined by the Commission, the grantee shall not be obliged to furnish such service unless the applicant for the telephone service defrays the actual expenses for the installation of the telecommunications apparatus necessary for such services and, in such case, the Commission may extend the time within which the grantee shall furnish such service.

The grantee shall operate and maintain all its stations, lines, cables, systems and equipment for the transmission and reception of messages, signals and pulses in a satisfactory manner at all times and, as far as economical and practicable, modify, improve or change such stations, lines, cables, systems and equipment to keep abreast with the advances in science and technology.

SEC. 6. *Rate for Services.* — The exchange and rates for telecommunications services of the grantee, except the rates and charges on those that may hereafter