Liaison Statement  
To: 3GPP SA WG4, Stefan Bruhn

For Information  
Source: IETF CODEC Working Group, Real-Time Applications and Infrastructure Area (RAI)

IETF Contact person: Jonathan Rosenberg <jdrosen@jdrosen.net>  
Date: May 5, 2010

The IETF would like to thank you for your liaison statement dated August 24, 2009 regarding codec discussions within the IETF.

Firstly, the IETF would like to give an update on the status of codec activities within the IETF. On 26 January 2010, the IETF formally approved the formation of the Internet Wideband Codec (CODEC) working group. Its charter called for three documents to be produced – a guidelines draft which discusses the work process for the group, a requirements document which defines requirements for the codec, and a specification of the codec itself. The charter can be found at <http://datatracker.ietf.org/wg/codec/charter/>. The initial chairs of this group were Michael Knappe ([mknappe@juniper.net](mailto:mknappe@juniper.net)) and Peter St. Andre ([stpeter@stpeter.im](mailto:stpeter@stpeter.im)). However, the subsequent election of Peter to the IESG caused him to step down, replaced by Jonathan Rosenberg ([jdrosen@jdrosen.net](mailto:jdrosen@jdrosen.net)) and Cullen Jennings ([fluffy@cisco.com](mailto:fluffy@cisco.com)).

The group met for the first time as a formal working group from March 21-26 in Anaheim. The focus of activities at this meeting was around the requirements and codec process. There was also discussion on candidate codecs. Minutes can be found at <http://www.ietf.org/proceedings/10mar/minutes/codec.html>. The group has also adopted a requirements document as a working group item. The current draft can be found at <http://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/draft-ietf-codec-requirements/>.

To address the specific points made in your liaison statement:

Firstly, the IETF is most certainly aware of the codec work done in 3GPP, and in particular both the AMR and AMR-WB codecs. At this time, the IETF CODEC group has not made any decisions on whether to select an existing codec or create a new one that meets its requirements. The ability to widely distribute this codec on the Internet remains a critical goal for us, and is discussed in our charter and in the documents above. Payment of royalties is certainly a hindrance to widespread adoption, and though the IETF is not ruling out the selection of a codec which requires payment of royalties, it is a major consideration. We would welcome your participation in the discussions and any clarifications you can offer on whether AMR-WB can meet our goals for widespread adoption, and whether it can be made available without royalties, without requirements for obtaining a license, without requiring a business agreement, and so on.

Secondly, your liaison statement expresses concerns about IETF involvement in codec standardization. This was considered at length in the formation of the working group. However, the IETF concluded that our goal of widespread and open availability of a codec on the Internet was one that could not easily be met under the existing processes of other SDOs, and that this requirement was unique relative to functional ones which are certainly readily fed into existing processes within ITU, 3GPP and MPEG. Certainly there was a concern that IETF did not have the expertise to do this work. However, the IETF participants are not a fixed set of people or companies, and it is both open and varied across working groups based on interest. We found that this activity attracted many participants with deep expertise in codec design, who were willing to participate and bring their expertise to the IETF. Of course, the IETF would still like to have actively involvement and participation from experts from other SDOs, and we would welcome involvement from 3GPP.

Certainly we share the concern that a proliferation of standards is a hindrance to interoperability. However, in this case, the opposite appears to be true – the lack of a wideband codec that can be freely distributed and used across many Internet applications has prevented there from being a single, baseline codec that vendors are comfortable implementing in their products. As such, we believe that the results of our activities will improve interoperability and not hinder it.

Your liaison statement also raises the concern that the requirements for the IETF work would not properly consider requirements for transmission across existing systems, such as 3GPP networks. Certainly the IETF believes that a key goal is for this codec to work across the Internet at large, and that includes a wide range of underlying IP transport systems, from existing 3G wireless systems, to LTE, to the rich set of wired broadband transports. If there are specific requirements that are absent from our documentation, we would very much like to receive them and ensure that they are properly considered.

The IETF has had a long and fruitful relationship with 3GPP. Our cooperation on IMS standards is certainly one of the success stories in inter-SDO partnerships. We look forward to continued cooperation with 3GPP, and would very much welcome your active participation and involvement in our process.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Rosenberg

CODEC working group co-chair