

Celtel mobile storms Ghana

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The Celtel mobile network in Sierra Leone has extended its mobile market to the West African state of Ghana as the subsidiary of Zain (formerly MTC) now has controlling shares in Western Telesystems (Westel), the second national operator in the country.

According to the chief executive officer of Zain, Dr. Saad Al Barrak, Celtel was excited to enter the Ghanaian market which he said is one of Africa's most important markets.

"We are very excited to enter Ghana, one of the most important markets in Africa. We look forward to offering Ghanaians the quality telecommunications services which we provide in all the countries in which we operate. Based on our Pan-African experience, we are confident that the increased competition in telecommunications will benefit the people of Ghana and support the already robust economy of the country."

Dr Saad Al Barrak made this remark during the signing ceremony of an agreement for Celtel international, a subsidiary of Zain to acquire 75% of Western Telesystems Limited (Westel) from the government of Ghana for US\$120 million.

According to the agreement, the government of Ghana remain minor shareholders in Westel with a 2.5% shareholding through the Ghana National Petroleum Commission.

Ghana's Communications Minister Dr. Benjamin Aggrey Ntim said, "The government of Ghana is delighted to welcome a world class telecommunications operator such as Celtel to Ghana and we look forward to working together as partners."

The Minister also announced that the parties have agreed to list a portion of the company's shares in the future in Ghana's public stock exchange for the benefit of Ghanaians.

The release further states that Celtel is preparing to invest millions of dollars in a state of the art telecommunications network and associated services to offer its unparalleled experience as a Pan-African operator, bringing telecommunications services to more than 24 million subscribers in 15 countries in Africa.

"The company hopes to include Ghana soon in its One Network which makes it possible for subscribers to use their phones across borders without having to pay roaming charges," the release concludes.

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