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WiMAX Forum
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Ronald Resnick
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Roger Marks
Chair, IEEE 802.16 Working Group (r.b.marks@ieee.org)

Dear Roger,

Thank you for your timely response to our recent liaison statement titled “WiMAX Forum position on backward compatibility and suggestion for consideration”.

The WiMAX Forum emphasizes the industry need for a clear standardization and product roadmaps that maintain end-to-end interoperability of systems and products despite technology evolution. A mandatory requirement is for strict backward compatibility to the WiMAX Forum Mobile System Profile Release 1.0.

The WiMAX Forum recognizes the need for a clear reference in IEEE 802.16 to ensure unambiguous definition of backward compatibility requirements. Presently the System Profile document is a public document that is available freely to anyone regardless of membership status in the WiMAX Forum. The document contains a broad express copyright license that the WiMAX Forum believes is more than sufficient to permit general use of the WiMAX Forum System Profile as a reference document in IEEE 802.16 documents and otherwise. However, if there is some reason that IEEE feels that this is not the case, the WiMAX Forum will work with IEEE to address the issue.

Assuming the resolution of any copyright issues that IEEE may perceive and considering that the WiMAX Forum System Profile is simply a list of 802.16e features mandated for implementation, with direct references to sections of existing IEEE 802.16 Standards, we believe directly referring to WiMAX Forum’s System Profile in the System Requirement Document is sufficient to unambiguously define the backward compatibility needed. With such clear reference for backward compatibility, it is expected that proposed new features in 802.16m amendment be developed and accepted only if they can coexist with and do not violate the operation of those in features of IEEE802.16-2004 and amended by IEEE802.16e-2005, which are designated as required by the WiMAX Forum System Profile.

We do recognize that we are not a standards body but as we represent the majority of companies that will create a business for this technology and we play a critical role in ensuring industry products that are compliant to the IEEE 802.16 standards, we strongly wish to have the WiMAX Forum System Profile referenced in the 802.16 standard in the best way possible.

If IEEE is not willing to reference from the WiMAX Forum, we are also open to consider other options, including soliciting the help of ETSI to provide you with a reference.

A direct link in 802.16m Requirements document to WiMAX Forum's System Profile by reference would help to prevent any confusion in the industry on future tracking of a unique underlying reference system for 802.16-based product interoperability. It would also serve as a symbolic confirmation of ongoing consistency between WiMAX Forum interoperability specification and the underlying IEEE core standards.

The WiMAX Forum hopes that the above simplified approach enables the IEEE802.16m Task group to proceed with clarification of backward compatibility in a way that meets our common goals.

We would like to continue to strengthen the relationship between WiMAX Forum and IEEE and we hope resolving this issue can help us progress further on this front. We also look forward continuing and expanding our collaboration with IEEE 802.16 to promote the 802.16 air interface standard and resulting WiMAX Certified products as the leading mobile broadband radio technology for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Ron Resnick
President and Chairman of the Board
WiMAX Forum

cc:
Brian Kiernan, Chair, 802.16 Task Group m (TGm)
Paul Nikolich, Chair, IEEE 802 Executive Committee