

## Chairman's Statement



In the first half of 2015, despite the challenges brought by the regulatory policies such as the value-added tax (“VAT”) reform and “speed upgrade & tariff reduction”, the Company managed to achieve a breakthrough in geographical limitations following the issuance of the LTE FDD licence and accelerated development comprehensively. With full exploitation of the competitive capabilities of network, terminals, channels and customer service accumulated in preceding periods and leveraging the favourable policy of tower sharing, the Company focused on strategy implementation and promptly grasped the development pace and initiatives. The 4G network coverage was effectively enhanced and the 4G subscriber scale and market share rapidly increased despite intensified market competition. The edges in broadband network were rapidly transformed into marketing edges, accelerating development in fibre broadband services. The new integrated offering advantages of dual-100Mbps with 4G and fibre broadband gradually emerged while the scale operation and data traffic operation of the Company achieved remarkable overall results. At the same time, seizing these favourable opportunities, the Company persisted in comprehensive in-depth reform and accelerated the Internet-oriented transformation, resulting in continual strengthening in differentiated core competitiveness and vigorous promotion of scale development with a view to expanding the new horizons for future development in full strengths.

### Operating Results

In the first half of the year, despite the impact of the regulatory policies such as the VAT reform, the Company's overall development remained solid. Operating revenues amounted to RMB165.0 billion. Service revenues<sup>1</sup> amounted to RMB147.0 billion, remaining stable as

<sup>1</sup> Service revenues were calculated based on operating revenues minus sales of mobile terminals, sales of wireline equipment and other non-service revenues.

## Chairman's Statement

compared with the same period last year and outperforming industry average growth. The revenues from emerging business increased by approximately 21% over the same period last year, accounting for approximately 34% of service revenues and representing an increase of 6 percentage points over the same period last year. The business structure continued to optimise rapidly. EBITDA<sup>2</sup> was RMB50.7 billion, up by 0.4% over the same period last year while EBITDA margin<sup>3</sup> was 34.5%. Profit attributable to the equity holders of the Company was RMB11.0 billion, representing a decline of 4% over the same period last year. Basic earnings per share were RMB0.14. Capital expenditure was RMB36.7 billion while free cash flow<sup>4</sup> was RMB10.5 billion.

Since the commencement of the pilot programme of the VAT reform in the telecommunications industry in June 2014, the Company has been striving to optimise its development and sales models, implement enhanced management over cost, procurement and vendors' tax qualifications as well as continue to optimise in revenue structure. The relevant monthly average adverse impact has been moderated. In the future, with the continual expansion of the VAT reform to other industries, it is expected that the Company will be entitled to more input VAT credits, which will be beneficial for the enhancement of its profitability in the long term.

Taking into consideration the Company's profitability, cash flow level and the capital requirements for future development, the Board of Directors has decided not to pay an interim dividend this year in order to maintain adequate funding flexibility. The Board of Directors will proactively consider a final dividend proposal when reviewing the full year results and will propose to the shareholders' general meeting accordingly.

### Focusing on key businesses to accelerate scale development

In the first half of the year, the Company accelerated the development of its 4G services, driving steady growth of the mobile business. Taking full advantages of tower sharing, the Company rolled out the 4G network fast and effectively to enhance time-to-market and savings in capital expenditure. Leveraging the global mainstream technology standard and spectrum resources advantages, the network has basically covered city areas of county-level or above in general. With investment focus on high-valued areas, the coverage in key cities with high data traffic demand was further strengthened. The Company reasonably applied carrier aggregation technology and launched "e-Surfing 4G+" (LTE-A) service in selected key cities in August to create superior network, branding and reputation. The launch of signature 4G handsets specialised in video streaming, on-line shopping and security functions as well as entry-level handsets rapidly facilitated the all-round co-operation with mainstream handset manufacturers with enriching selection. The Company strengthened brand promotion and experience marketing. A new integrated offering of dual-100Mbps was launched and the design of package plans was optimised to induce the existing subscribers to upgrade to 4G services. Meanwhile, the Company adhered to the terminal-led approach with strategic handsets such as Apple and Samsung to attract more high-end subscribers, resulting in effective enhancement in customer acquisition capabilities. In the first half of the year, mobile service revenues reached RMB62.3 billion, representing an increase of 0.6% over the same

<sup>2</sup> EBITDA was calculated based on operating revenues minus operating expenses plus depreciation and amortisation.

<sup>3</sup> EBITDA margin was calculated based on EBITDA divided by service revenues.

<sup>4</sup> Free cash flow was calculated from EBITDA minus capital expenditure and income tax.

## Chairman's Statement

period last year. The net addition of mobile subscribers was 5.82 million, with total mobile subscribers reaching 191 million. Of which the net addition of 4G terminal users was approximately 22 million, reaching a total of approximately 29 million. The 4G user market share enhanced rapidly as compared with the end of last year. The 3G/4G subscribers accounted for approximately 68% of the total number of mobile subscribers and the subscriber structure was further optimised.

In the first half of the year, the Company fully leveraged the network edges accumulated over the years and comprehensively commenced the end-to-end bandwidth upgrade. The Company also reinforced the concerted development of broadband and 4G, as well as speeding up the product upgrade to promote the profitable and sustainable development of wireline broadband services. Capitalising on its own investment and the introduction of private capital, the construction of fibre network was accelerated. The interconnection of IDCs and capacity expansion of backbone network were fostered to enhance the transmission efficiency of Internet data. Through the establishment of strategic cooperation with key Internet content providers, the access of high quality content sources was assured. Focusing on customers' experience and clearing all hurdles in the entire end-to-end process, the Company provided superior and high speed Internet experience for subscribers. Implementing the policy of "speed upgrade & tariff reduction", the Company launched free upgrade for subscribers below 4Mbps bandwidth, and provided promotion offers such as tariff reduction for 50Mbps and 100Mbps mainstream broadband products, leveraging the price elasticity to optimise subscriber structure and enhancing value of subscribers. The Company also focused on the high-definition contents and integrated applications to further perfect the "Smart Family" products portfolio with "Joy me" as a core. In the first half of the year, the wireline broadband service revenue reached RMB37.6 billion, representing an increase of 3% over the same period last year. The number of wireline broadband subscribers reached 110 million, representing a net increase of 2.61 million. The average bandwidth of wireline broadband subscribers reached 18Mbps in June, doubling over the same period last year while the 100Mbps bandwidth subscribers accounted for over 10% of the total subscribers.

In the first half of the year, the Company accelerated the development of emerging business with continual expansion in business scale and revenue contribution. In addition to focusing on innovative data traffic products including dedicated-data traffic packages, "Data Traffic 800" and "Liuliangbao", the Company refined the package design in response to the policy of "speed upgrade & tariff reduction", providing more data concessions to subscribers. It led to rapid increase in data traffic scale and overall value. In the first half of the year, mobile handset Internet access revenues amounted to RMB22.5 billion, representing an increase of

## Chairman's Statement

43% over the same period last year. The handset Internet data traffic increased by 77% over the same period last year, and the monthly average data traffic per 3G/4G handset subscriber reached 311MB, representing an increase of 43% over same period last year. The Company reinforced differentiated capabilities of YiChat products by launching the enterprise version to create the edges in business communications services. New services applications like payment and lifestyle service were also embedded. The user scale of YiChat expanded continuously and the registered users reached 180 million by end of June. The Company also accelerated the expansion of the collaborative business coverage of "BestPay" and deepened the exploration in Internet finance services such as wealth management and credit reference. In the first half of the year, the gross merchandise value of "BestPay" reached approximately RMB380 billion, an increase of two-fold over the same period last year. Led by the "Smart Cities" project, the Company fully leveraged the industry applications to drive the key markets such as business customers and campuses. The Company persisted in strengthening the integrated operation of IDC nationwide and launched the new deployment "8+2+X"<sup>5</sup> integrating cloud and network to provide secured, timely and premier cloud services for customers to establish the differentiated service capability in the enterprise market. The Company firmly grasped the business opportunities of "Internet+" and accelerated the upgrade of ICT service from basic integration service to Internet-oriented operations. In the first half of the year, the Company's overall ICT revenues amounted to RMB14.2 billion, representing an increase of 11% over the same period last year.

### **Fostering reform and innovation to enhance differentiated edges**

In the first half of the year, the Company adhered to comprehensive in-depth reform and persisted in stimulating corporate vitality. Through thorough promotion of sub-division of performance evaluation units, the Company accelerated the selection and training of "unit CEOs" with over 30,000 "unit CEOs" nationwide. As the main force of market-oriented reform grew rapidly, the efficiency and return of the frontline operation was profoundly enhanced. The establishment of the "top-down" service support system was expedited, promoting change in corporate management and further flattening organisation structure. Through various methods including efficiently-centralised support, frontline-oriented service and reverse appraisal, internal interaction was strengthened and a highly-efficient, responsive and collaborative operating system was created.

<sup>5</sup> "8+2+X" denotes 8 major regional nodes, 2 core cloud data centre bases in Inner Mongolia and Guizhou and dynamic city nodes in accordance with customers' demand.

## Chairman's Statement

Accurately grasping the Internet dynamics, the Company has achieved remarkable progress in Internet-oriented transformation. The Company proactively commenced the professional and coordinated channel operation with O2O as a core as well as enhanced the development efficiency of specialty stores and open channels. Marketing modes such as WeChat shops were further diversified. With the consolidation of online sales and service portals, the online integrated service platform "Joy go" was launched, so as to strengthen the efficiently-centralised Internet-oriented marketing and services. The overall capability and cost efficiency of channel sales were further enhanced. Firmly seizing the strategic opportunities of the implementation of the national "Internet+" action plan, the Company timely released the "Internet+" action white paper with the layout of four key strategic areas: modern agriculture, industrial manufacturing, emerging services and corporate operations, focusing on 10 major projects such as smart production. In cooperation with the partners, the Company will explore the best business models for value chain operations and work together to create an open, highly-efficient collaborative industry ecosystem to promote the evolution and upgrade of traditional industries. The Company leveraged new international mainstream technology such as Software Defined Network (SDN) to promote the Internet-oriented transformation of the network while using customer experience as a core to promote transformation of network maintenance to network operations. Facing the demands from Internet-oriented operations, the efficiently-centralised operations of IT services was expedited, resulting in consistent enhancement in both market response capability and operating efficiency.

Focused on the Company's own strengths and resources, the capabilities of differentiated products were rapidly enhanced. The security products were developed quickly. The network security product "cloud dam" and security handsets launched at the end of last year started to establish their scale. The recent launch of "e-Surfing security" brand and a series of related products continuously optimised the all-round security protection system integrating the "cloud, pipe and device". The operation capability of secured WiFi platform was further strengthened and the hotspots of the Company's "aWiFi" platform reached 500,000. The Company leveraged the edges in secured unified account authentication and large scale hotspot resources to attract business partners to explore the new WiFi business models. The application scope and scale of Near Field Communication (NFC) business continued to expand, with the launch of public transport card function in 90 cities nationwide and e-Surfing RFID function in 24 provinces, as well as UnionPay applications collaborating with 23 banks. The NFC users have already exceeded 20 million. In addition to providing secured cloud-based infrastructure resources, the Company continued to expand cloud applications and services to further enrich the cloud computing product line. In the first half of the year, the revenues from cloud computing products amounted to RMB470 million, representing a 54% increase over the same period last year with rapid increase in worldwide leading and reputable corporate customers. Applying the existing rich data resources, the Company proactively explored Big Data products development and launched precision marketing and customer retention internally while further promoting the application scope of Big Data products such as "Smart Insight", "Smart Credit Reference" externally, laying a foundation for future scale development.

### Corporate Governance and Social Responsibility

We are committed to maintaining a high level of corporate governance, attaching great importance to risk management and control. We strive to enhance corporate transparency and value to ensure our healthy and orderly growth. Our persistent efforts in corporate governance have been widely recognised by the capital markets. We have been accredited with a number of awards and recognition for the year to date, including the "Most Honored Company in Asia" by *Institutional Investor* for five consecutive years and the "Overall Best Managed Company in Asia" by *FinanceAsia* for five consecutive years.

We persisted in operating with integrity and proactively fulfilled our corporate social responsibility to maintain a fair and orderly environment for market competition and facilitate healthy development of the entire value chain. Meanwhile, we actively promoted green operations, further strengthening energy conservation and emission reduction to improve utilisation efficiency of resources. We accomplished telecommunications assurance tasks for significant events such as the 2015 World Table Tennis Championships and disaster reliefs and were highly commended by the society.

### Outlook

2015 marks a crucial year for the Company's 4G scale development and change in the industry competitive landscape. The Company is facing various challenges including a slowdown in macro-economic growth, saturated market on mobile subscribers, VAT reform and "speed upgrade & tariff reduction", as well as intensifying competition within and across the industries. However, following the rapid development of the Internet industry together with the initiation and implementation of the national "Internet+" action plan, the benefits from the national "innovation-driven" policy became prominent. With the rapid growth in the demand for the high speed Internet, there will be huge development opportunity for information economy represented by the "Internet+" and vast potential for the Company's prospects.

In the second half of the year, the Company will optimise the allocation of investment resources and adopt the latest technology to continuously strengthen 4G premier network quality, brand advantage and leading customer experience, fully leveraging the tower sharing to enhance corporate value and taking customer experience as the core. We will step up our support for non-customised handsets, vigorously promoting the development of signature terminals such as dual-SIM 6-mode handsets, 4G+ handsets and security handsets. We will also comprehensively accelerate the transformation of channel operation model with O2O as the core and establish 60,000 premier specialty stores to strengthen our influence on terminals and channels. At the same time, the Company will further strengthen its differentiated competitive edges in wireline broadband network and promote scale development of its "Smart Family" products, "Joy me", to continuously enhance the scale and return of the fibre broadband subscribers.

## Chairman's Statement

The Company will closely follow up and strive to accommodate the regulatory requirements of "speed upgrade & tariff reduction". The Company will continuously explore and optimise the business model of data traffic operation, leveraging data price elasticity to increase sales at lower unit prices in order to achieve a win-win situation. Making use of Big Data analysis, the Company will commence precision data traffic operations to enhance data value. We will commence co-operation in various forms and actively explore and refine the data traffic operation model integrating forward- and backward-operations. At the same time, the Company will leverage its strengths in network and customer resources to continuously promote Internet-oriented transformation and manage well its Internet data analytics to accelerate scale expansion of its differentiated products. Adhering to open cooperation, the Company will aim for achieving breakthroughs on "Internet+" applications and the rapid formation of product capabilities in cloud computing, Big Data, Internet of Things and other new technology application areas, strengthening competitive advantages of the ecosystem.

Looking ahead, we have full confidence. We will follow the established strategic plans to pursue innovative development, in-depth reform and excellent execution. We will well-perform the "punches combo" of scale development, data traffic operation and Internet data analytics to further enhance revenue and subscriber market share, fully promoting the changes in the industry landscape towards a favourable direction, with a view to continuously creating new value for shareholders.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all our shareholders and customers for their support. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to all our employees for their hard work and contribution. Also, I would like to welcome Mr. Sui Yixun and Mr. Ye Zhong to join our Supervisory Committee.



**Wang Xiaochu**

*Chairman and Chief Executive Officer*

Beijing, China

19 August 2015