

**Mobile web ‘will define future’** Toby Shapshak, **online services via cellphones is the key to the success**, conference told, 13 Feb 2008

Mobile broadband has emerged as the biggest new development in the cellular industry this year.

Vodafone chief executive Arun Sarin told this year’s Mobile World Congress in Barcelona — the world’s biggest telecommunications conference — that mobile Internet would define the future.

Cellular operators need to adopt new, data-centric business models, simplify their pricing and creatively integrate broadband offerings or risk losing their customers and revenue, he added. In the main address at the conference, which attracted about 55000 visitors, Sarin said: “Our industry is at an important crossroads. Operators need to invest to bring important mobile Internet services to life ... we can’t sit back and become bit pipes.”

Robert Conway, chief executive of the GSM Association, said: “The leading indicators show we have reached the tipping point with mobile broadband. We have the networks, we have the devices and we have the speed.”

Sarin agreed: “Customers want fast, wireless broadband. The new, new thing is Internet on the mobile.”

He added that Vodafone, the world’s biggest operator by revenue and a 50 percent shareholder in Vodacom, already has 21 million 3G subscribers and is looking at combinations of providing wired and wireless broadband.

He said that the current HSDPA technology has been an excellent investment that has lived up to its promises where previous 3G technologies disappointed.

Highlighting growth in emerging markets, Sarin said Vodafone’s Indian operation was growing well, while South Africa experienced 15percent growth. Vodafone’s data revenue has increased 40percent year on year, as call prices were dropping by 15percent to 20percent a year.

Rick Stevenson, head of Samsung’s US telecoms business, said mobile WiMAX would be a key driver this year, with 196 operators around the world running these networks, which use a super-fast wireless connectivity system that is backed by chip maker Intel.

He said: “We’re seeing a new business model. Operators are stepping away from the subsidy model. We’re seeing WiMAX- embedded devices sold through consumer electronics retailers [directly to consumers].”

Nokia chief executive Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo said a Village Connection system by Nokia Siemens Network aimed to get emerging markets online. These first-time users would experience cellphones and the Internet very differently from the first one billion, as new technology would give them much greater opportunities, he said.