



GUIDELINES

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CA Centre Waiyaki Way | P.O. Box 14448 Nairobi 00800 | Kenya

Contacts: | +254 (20) 4242000 | 0703 042 000 | 0730 172 000 | www.ca.go.ke | info@ca.go.ke

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1. Introduction

Numbering, naming, addressing, and identification (NNAI) resources are telecommunication resources used for differentiation of services, systems, and subscribers. They include fixed numbers used in public switched telephone network (PSTN), mobile numbers used in public land mobile network (PLMN), signaling point codes used for distinguishing telecommunication networks, and short codes used for value added services (VAS).

Noting that telecommunications is an international service and networks have to interoperate and interwork, the NNAI resources are administered internationally by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The ITU is the UN specialized agency on ICTs that handles international connectivity in communication networks through allocation of radiofrequency, satellite orbital slots, and numbering resources.

Mobile telephony numbers which identify subscribers on the PLMN follow an ITU defined standard, namely, ITU-T Rec. E.164. The said standard prescribes the structure of a mobile number as containing country code (CC), national destination code (NDC), and subscriber number (SN). The maximum length, therefore as per the standard is 15 digits. The structure is summarized as in Figure 1.

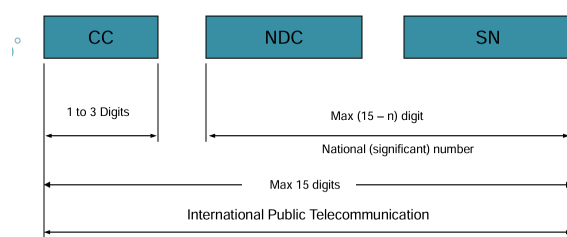


Figure 1: E.164 numbering format

Whereas the maximum length is 15 digits, countries have the liberty to select their desired length, factoring in the set principles for numbering resource management. One of the principles requires that in setting the length of the numbering resource, countries use the least number of digits as practicable.

By virtue that telecommunication numbering resources are allocated internationally by the ITU, and are usable in the international telecommunication arena, one of the principles of administration of the resources is that an assignment confers right of use of the resources and should not be considered owned by the assignee.

2. The value of numbering resources

Beyond telecommunications services, namely, telephony, messaging, and data services, telecommunications numbering resources, in particular mobile numbers, play a vital role insofar as financial services, digital authentication for online services, and acting as digital identities.

Noting these critical roles, management of numbering resources therefore impacts the country's financial integrity, social stability, and security. Financial integrity is impacted when numbering resources are used as a conduit for money laundering, misuse of digital credit

facilities, especially government empowerment financing initiatives, and for SIM swap activities where the target is mobile financial services linked to the mobile phones.

The social stability of citizens can be negatively impacted by mobile numbers occasioned by identity theft, where citizens could be duped on the identity of the person they are in communication with. Further, mobile numbers could also be used to send alarmist messages, thereby creating widespread panic among the citizens.

The country's security is also negatively impacted by numbering resources in cases where the resources facilitate covert planning of criminal activities like terrorism, and ransom related crimes, where ransom money is to be sent via fraudulently registered numbers.

3. Number recycling rationale

Given the finite nature of the numbering resources, deactivation and recycling of inactive and unused numbers is one of the practices in NNAI management. Globally, regulators are supposed to ensure that assigned numbers are prudently used before additional assignments can be issued.

The reasons that may make a number amenable to deactivation and recycling include:

- i. Abandonment of SIM Card – this occurs when a user stops using the registered SIM Card occasioned by various reasons like a lost phone leading to acquisition of new phone and line, permanent migration, and possession of other lines.
- ii. Permanent migration – this occurs when a user relocates to a foreign country and decides to discontinue the services from their previous number.
- iii. Business closure – when a business is closed down, the owner may discontinue usage of the associated registered business number
- iv. Social mischief – a person wishing to evade meeting their obligations, e.g., payment of debts linked to the number, may permanently stop using the number, which renders the number available for recycling
- v. Reclaimed numbers – when a number is used for illegal activities, e.g., SIM boxing, the Authority reclaims the number, which makes it available for recycling
- vi. Transition – numbers may also become available for recycling when the registered owner is no longer available

4. Number deactivation and recycling process

Service providers shall abide by the following steps during number deactivation and recycling process:

- 4.1 Number deactivation and recycling shall be triggered when a number records no revenue-generating activity, such as making/receiving a call, sending/receiving an SMS, using data, topping up airtime or using the number for value added service, for a period of three (3) months.

4.2 Upon detection of inactivity for the stated period, the service provider shall make efforts to notify the owner of the affected number using the contact details collected during the number registration know your customer (KYC) process.

4.3 The means of notification may include SMS to the number and other contact information associated with the subscriber as collected during the KYC process.

4.4 The notification process for an inactive number will continue for an additional three (3) months unless the owner initiates a revenue generating activity.

4.5 Thirty (30) days before the lapse of the three (3) months in clause 4.4, and with the number still inactive, the service provider shall publish the list of numbers susceptible to deactivation and recycling if they are not activated within 30 days from the date of publication.

4.6 The generic notice of intention to deactivate and recycle inactive numbers shall be posted on the provider's website, publicized in other media, and published in the daily newspaper with nationwide circulation on a quarterly basis.

4.7 The public notice shall include the *106# option for checking the status (suspended, active, under recycle or deactivated) of the number.

4.8 Upon the lapse of the notice period and with the number still inactive, the service provider shall de-link and securely archive the personal data, cached data, and services associated with the previous owner such that they are not accessible to or inherited by any new subscriber, while retaining records required by law.

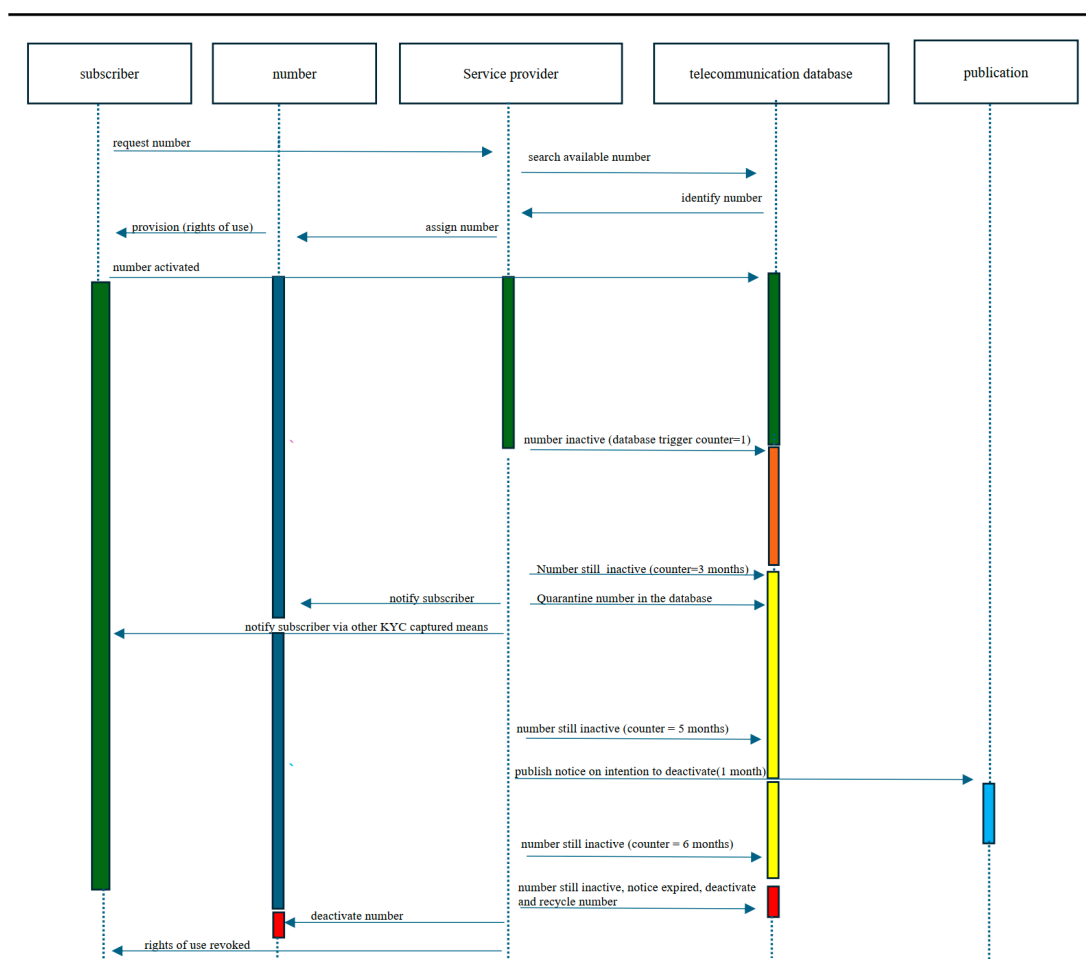
4.9 The service provider shall send a list of all deactivated/recycler numbers to the centralized system on a quarterly basis, which shall be used by third parties to update their records prior to calling, sending SMS with regards to obligations associated with that number.

4.10 Upon execution of clause 4.9, the service provider shall initiate the number recycling process and avail the number for provisioning to a new subscriber.

4.11 The service provider shall maintain and retain a record of the efforts made to contact the subscriber for a period that is in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 2019.

Figure 2, a sequence diagram, depicts the actors, lifelines, and messages exchanged during number deactivation and recycling cycle.

Figure 2: Number deactivation and recycling steps



5. Whitelisting of telephone numbers

- 5.1 The Commissioner General of Prisons shall, within three (3) months of a person being committed to a jail term of more than six (6) months, and, having exhausted their appeal options, submit the details comprising the convict's telephone number and the associated national identification number indicating the duration of the conviction, for whitelisting, to the respective service providers, and notify the convict accordingly.
- 5.2 In the case where a suspect is denied bail and likely to be in remand for more than six (6) months, the Commissioner General of Prisons shall also facilitate whitelisting of their telephone numbers .
- 5.3 Upon receipt of the convict's telephone number, the service provider shall validate alongside its database and whitelist the affected telephone numbers for a duration commensurate with the conviction duration.

- 5.4 Upon the lapse of the conviction duration, the telephone number shall be subject to conditions in Clause 4.
- 5.5 Notwithstanding Clause 5.1, any person, including caregivers of persons who may be indisposed and unable to use their numbers for a potential period of more than six (6) months, can notify the respective service provider of the need to whitelist a subscriber's number.
- 5.6 The request in Clause 5.4 shall be done in person at the service provider's office or outlet, or via any means established by the service provider that are foolproof by the requesting party, presenting original identification documents of both the requesting party and the affected subscriber, and any other supporting documentation.
- 5.7 To mitigate against the potential misuse of telephone numbers by persons other than the registered subscriber by the service provider during the know your customer (KYC) process, the whitelisting pursuant to clause 5.5 shall only be done if the number is confirmed to be inactive.
- 5.8 The whitelisting pursuant to Clause 5.4 shall be done for a duration of one (1) year and shall be subject to subsequent renewals of one(1) year, provided updated information as per Clause 5.5 is provided and the number remains inactive during the period.

6. Technical safeguards

The service providers shall implement the minimum technical controls below to protect consumers during and after number deactivation and recycling.

- 6.1 By default, newly issued, as well as recycled numbers, shall not receive any marketing messages from either the number issuing service provider or third parties.
- 6.2 For avoidance of doubt, for any business-to-customer (B2C) message, the subscriber MUST have explicitly dialed an unstructured supplementary service data (USSD) consenting to receiving messages from that specific business.
- 6.3 The dialed USSD code shall be business-specific, and dialing a given USSD shall not imply consent to receiving all B2C messages.
- 6.4 Service providers shall maintain and retain a record of the subscribers' USSD dials consenting to receiving B2C messages for the entire period during which the number remains active.
- 6.5 Before deactivating and recycling any number, the service provider shall delink the number from any previously opted-in B2C messages.

6.6 Subscriber subscription to B2C messages notwithstanding, any B2C message shall be accompanied by an easy-to-use option to opt out of continued receiving of the messages.

7. Transition

7.1 All service providers shall be required to implement the provisions of the procedural and technical safeguards for deactivation and recycling of inactive telecommunication numbering resources, 2026 , effective September 19th , 2026, save for the provisions that require a centralized database , which shall become effective once the database is established.