

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguish delegate:

It is a both big honor and my pleasure to chair together with Mr. Visser this respective workshop. I use this opportunity to thank very much to Syrian telecom for offering hospitality to us in the beautiful city of Damascus. It is my second time in Syria and I think I share also your feeling that it is more nicer than earlier.

In the last decade, large pre-IMT-2000 mobile telecommunications networks have been deployed all over the world. In some countries, the penetration of mobile users exceeds 75% and the mobile generated traffic is comparable to – if not greater than – the fixed traffic. At the end of 2003, there were approximately 1.3 billion mobile phone users, with 227 million new subscribers added in 2003.

From 1995 to 2002, the number of mobile lines has grown by 75% in Africa, 30% in the Americas, 52% in Asia, 50% in Europe and 29% in Oceania.⁴⁷ Even though growth has been impressive, there is huge space for wireless growth in developing areas – India has over a billion people with no telecommunications line, China just under a billion and the vast majority of the developing world would count its connected population in single figure percentages. For many developing nations, wireless technology has been identified as the best medium to get telecommunication services – both voice and data to the masses.

More developed markets are reaching their saturation point, which implies that future growth will be driven by the developing world. By 2008, it is estimated that 90% of new subscribers will be from developing countries.

Today, wireless communications and Internet are merging in IMT-2000 to provide advanced mobile services such as multimedia services with video, pictures, audio, text, data and voice. Wireless Internet devices are rapidly becoming one of the most important personal items people carry with them, and are increasingly combining the numerous functions of today's mobile phones, personal computers, TV, newspapers, cameras, library, personal diary and scheduler, wallet, and credit cards. Wireless Internet has the power to offer complete personalization of end user applications and services, reflecting their own lifestyles and the choices that they make. In the early days of wireless Internet, a significant share of revenue is expected to come from business users with Intranet/Interanet access. Access to personalized, selected content will provide additional operator revenue as soon as the user market begins to take off. Applications and services will drive the new revenue models that seek to leverage the increased technical capabilities and bandwidth that IMT-2000 systems deliver, therefore IMT-2000 has important role to play in bridging the "digital divide" between regions and cultures. In addition, new services and applications created for IMT-2000 can be expected to exhibit distinct regional trends in terms of user take-up.

⁴⁷ ITU, 2002.

It is obvious that Voice services are expected to remain a major revenue source for the operator. Even number of years from now, we can say, voice is expected to continue to dominate operators' ARPU, but this proportion will probably decline steadily as IMT-2000 systems enable the creation of an ever-wider range of data services.

Summarizing about IMT 2000 some of the key features and objectives of IMT-2000 as compared to pre-IMT-2000, are:

It is a Global system

It offers new services and capabilities

- **It could be achieved by Evolution and migration**

It has flexibility and multi-environment capabilities

In this context, ITU is playing a pre-eminent role not only in defining IMT 2000 frameworks and system concepts but assisting in developing policy and strategy to meet infrastructural requirements for the emerging Information Society. In order to provide assistance to Members, the ITU-D SG 2, in the framework of Question 18/2, has prepared the Mid Term Guidelines on Smooth Transition from Existing Networks to IMT-2000 for Developing Countries, we call it the MTG.

The purpose of our Workshop is to present and discuss the MTG and to provide information to telecommunication operators, policy makers, regulators and other stakeholders with an understanding of viable transition paths - including economic aspects - to go smoothly from their pre-IMT-2000 networks towards IMT-2000. The reflection induced by the MTG should help to perceive the pros and cons of the possible solutions towards IMT-2000 and to take adequate decisions. Presentations prepared for this Workshop will come deeper in these issues and likely help us to find our optimal way.

It is worth to mention that the MTG have been prepared using information provided by a variety of administrations, companies, industry groups and associations, including examples of their products, systems, models and case studies. The contribution and advice of ITU-R WP8A and WP8F, as well as ITU-T SSG, are gratefully acknowledged.

I would, also, like to highlight the Syrian role in the development of these Guidelines. Mr. Kisrawi, with his active participation and guidance has contributed very much. Mr Passerini and Mme Akpo were important pillars in our work.

I hope, outcomes of this workshop will provide valuable input for the Q 18/2 meeting in Cameroon, the last before SG 2 meeting in September when we expect that complete Guidelines on on Smooth Transition from Existing Networks to IMT-2000 for Developing Countries

I wish to all of us successful and fruitful work in the next three days.