



GSR

5th Annual Global Symposium for Regulators
Opening Remarks

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Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 5th annual Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR).

The information and communication technologies (or ICT) sector is undergoing a radical transformation, from an industry based on "plain old telephone service" (POTS) to one that provides voice, data and multimedia applications. At the same time, countries around the world are in the process of updating their licensing and regulatory frameworks to address this convergence so as to be better able to promote affordable access to the entire range of communication services, from voice to high-speed Internet access.

It is for this reason that the 2004 edition of *Trends in Telecommunication Reform: Licensing in an Era of Convergence* has been released for this year's GSR. The report focuses on the global trend towards reducing licensing requirements and to adopting converged licensing regimes. This trend will enable service providers to offer any, and all, services using the technology of their choice, in a more competitive market environment.

Because of convergence, the boundaries between different services and technologies are becoming increasingly blurred. In some countries mobile handsets can now deliver live TV, as well as Internet access at speeds of up to 2 Megabits per second. Broadcasting has crossed over into mobile telephony and mobile telephony into wireless broadband access. Gone are the days when a phone was just a phone, and was regulated as a phone. The traditional framework of licensing according to a specific category of services no longer works.

At the same time as convergence is taking hold, we have seen an unprecedented rise in the number of wireless services—all of which require spectrum. Today's wireless services and applications require spectrum management policies that are rooted in modern-day technologies and modern-day markets. At the New Initiatives workshop on Radio-Spectrum Management, held in Geneva in February, we learned that many countries are now making the necessary transition to modern day spectrum management.

At one end of the scale, many countries have started to auction spectrum while a few have taken the bolder step of introducing spectrum trading. At the other end of the scale, more spectrum is being dedicated worldwide to license-exempt use, allowing industry and technology a freer hand in managing spectrum for themselves. These developments pose

many regulatory challenges. For example, how can governments reconcile the reality that they are charging large sums of money for some parts of the spectrum, while giving away other parts free of charge? This problem becomes acute as the services offered over different parts of the spectrum become increasingly substitutable.

The rise of wireless services, for example, gives great hope to developing countries. Many developing countries have already been able to raise substantially the number of users with access to voice telephony, through the adoption of mobile phones and pre-payment cards.. The advent of wireless broadband and Internet technologies, such as Wi-Max and Wi-Bro, lends even more optimism to our quest to bridge the digital divide. If developing countries take up these new wireless Internet services at the same rate that they have embraced wireless voice services, there is every reason to be hopeful for the future. The rise of Internet and broadband access will be further fueled by these new technologies.

But not all market and technology trends are so rosy. Along with increased Internet access comes new problems, such as spam and other forms of Internet fraud. I strongly encourage this community of regulators to work together to develop a multi-pronged attack on this scourge of the Internet. The work begun in the ITU WSIS Thematic Meeting on Countering Spam, held this July under the able leadership of Bob Horton, must continue.

Next year, 2005, will mark the 20th anniversary of the completion of the Maitland Commission Report, entitled "The Missing Link". The world has changed dramatically in those two decades. I remain convinced that establishing an effective regulatory framework remains key to the success of transforming yesterday's telecommunications sector into tomorrow's ICT sector. Effective regulation can help foster investment in the ICT sector, the rollout of innovative new technologies and provides an environment in which consumers can enjoy high-quality services at affordable prices.

Since I joined the ITU, we have worked to respond to the needs of the growing community of regulators. Hosting this meeting on an annual basis is just one example. I believe that this meeting has helped in facilitating an international exchange of views and experiences among regulators.

I wish you every success in your work this week.
Thank you.