Opening Speech
7th ITU Global Symposium for Regulators

Dubai 5 February 2007

ITU Secretary General
Dr Hamadoun I Touré

Your Excellency Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri, UAE Minister of Governmental Sector Development and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Supervision of the Telecommunications Sector,

Our gracious host, Mr Mohamed Al Ghanim, Director-General, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates,

Distinguished Chairmen; Directors General and Presidents of the Regulatory Authorities,

Members of the private sector,

Invited guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 7th annual Global Symposium for Regulators. I would like to extend a special word of thanks to our host, Mr Al-Ghanim, for inviting us to hold the GSR here in the United Arab Emirates, and for his kind acceptance to chair this year's GSR. He and his entire staff have gone out of their way to welcome us with true Emirates hospitality.

We have gathered here to discuss the road to next-generation networks. The road to next-generation networks marks a turning point for the industry, consumers, and for policy makers and regulators. Today also marks a turning point for my career in the ICT sector. The last time I addressed the Global Symposium for Regulators, I stood before you as Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau. Now, thanks to your kind support at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Antalya, I stand before you as the new ITU Secretary-General.

I also stand on this podium together with the new BDT Director, Mr Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid, my friend and colleague. While I will always remain active in the GSR as ITU Secretary-General, I now pass on immediate responsibility for the GSR to Mr Al Basheer. I have every confidence in his ability to ensure that the GSR continues to thrive and meet your needs. I would also like to especially recognize the participation in this GSR of Mr Matthias Kurth. I am grateful that you continue to support ITU and the GSR by your presence here in Dubai.

Of course, any transition is bittersweet. I will miss my role in the Way Forward Session of the GSR that has always brought forward excellent suggestions on how we can best respond to your pressing concerns. However, I look forward to the challenges ahead.

As you know, my key messages as Secretary-General at the Plenipotentiary Conference stressed several important issues: bridging the digital divide, cybersecurity and emergency communications. Regulatory reform is of key importance to all three. That is why I was delighted when the ITU Plenipotentiary adopted Resolution GT-Plen/4 on the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) in Antalya. This Resolution crystallizes the will of ITU members to hold the GSR on an annual basis, and ensures that only a future Plenipotentiary could change this decision. This Resolution also recognizes the key role that regulators play

within ITU and the importance of regulatory reform in the growth of the ICT sector. Regulatory reform is vital to ITU's mission.

Why? Regulatory reform is at the very heart of the tremendous progress developing countries have already made to improve access to ICTs. During the time that I served as BDT Director, the number of mobile subscribers increased from a little over 500 million in 1999 to nearly 2.5 billion by the end of 2006. Sixty three percent of the total 2.5 billion mobile subscribers worldwide in 2006 were in developing and emerging countries like Brazil, China, India, Pakistan and Russia, and the numbers of subscribers continue to grow.

This tremendous growth in mobile services is the result of regulatory reform, innovative business practices and leveraging technological developments. Our task now is to extend this success to broadband internet access and next-generation networks, services and applications. We all need to work together to leverage the promises of next generation networks to ensure that the WSIS targets of connecting all the world's villages to ICT by 2015 are met.

I can assure you that the whole of ITU will play its part. TSB is developing the technical standards for NGN networks. BR will ensure that spectrum necessary for wireless services is allocated. BDT will ensure that the benefits of NGNs are realized by all of the world's people.

We will also work with our partners, and I am delighted that some of our key partners in the field of regulatory reform, infoDev, the World Bank and WTO are here today. I am also working to increase the number of ITU Sector Members and I know that some of you here today recently decided to become ITU-D members in order to participate in the GSR. I would also like to encourage the ICT service providers to become members of all the Sectors, including ITU-T, ITU-R and ITU-D. I thank you for this support and welcome you.

The road to NGN may take many paths. Our vision of NGNs may continue to evolve. Regulation will be vital to ensuring that the benefits of technological advances are realized by all of the world's people. As new networks are deployed, it will be necessary to ensure that competitive bottlenecks remain open. More immediately, many regulators will focus on issues like universal access, quality of service, the enabling environment and international internet connectivity. It is also time to enhance cybersecurity and anti-spam laws and to ensure they are vigorously enforced. The model-anti-spam law we presented at the last GSR is a good place at which to begin these discussions.

The migration to NGNs represents a unique opportunity to analyze and evolve our regulatory frameworks. One guiding principle as we develop our regulatory frameworks is to ask how to craft the best regulatory framework to achieve the WSIS objective of ensuring that all of the world's people have access to ICTs.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention. I wish you all a fruitful and frank exchange.

Before I conclude I would like to extend my thanks to a number of people here

- Kathleen Abernathy. Former FCC Commissioner and former Chairperson of the GSR
- Cuthbert Moshe Lekaukau, of Botswana, the first GSR Chairperson
- Ali Ghodbani of Tunisia, last year's GSR Chairperson
- Valerie D'Costa, infoDev
- All regional and international organizations and associations
- All private sector companies that continue to attend the GSR. They have proven to be invaluable partners over the years. We shall continue to ensure together ITU and the regulators provide the private sector with the necessary environment for them to evolve and compete. After all who is bridging the digital divide that we all talk about? It is the private sector. I can assure that ITU recognizes the determining role of private sector and will continue to support you.
- I would like to once again thank our gracious host Mr Mohamed Al Ghanim, Chairman of the TRA in the United Arab Emirates, and recognize the rapid development of the ICT sector in the UAE due mainly due to good governance, vision, hard work and good

strategy. UAE is a valued ITU member that ITU membership has been recognized at the last Plenipotentiary Conference by electing UAE as a Member of the Council. I invite you to contribute more to this Union that belongs to you.

- Last but not least our wonderful host, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, and their sponsors Etisalat, Du, Ericsson, Thuraya and Cisco.