

Closing remarks on behalf of ITU

Malcolm Johnson, Director, ITU-T
ITU Regional Development Forum, Accra, 26-28 May 2008
Wrap-up session: Future Initiatives, Next Steps and Conclusions

- It has been a pleasure to be with you in Accra this week for this second ITU African Regional Development Forum on Bridging the Standardization Gap, which has built upon the excellent work carried out last year in Kigali
- I would like to take this opportunity to offer my most sincere thanks, on behalf of ITU and all the participants, to the government of Ghana, and in particular the Ministry of Communications, and the National Communications Authority of Ghana. We are immensely grateful for your generous offer to host this meeting and your excellent conduct of the meeting itself, not forgetting the splendid arrangements for dinners, lunch breaks and coffee breaks. Many of us will be returning to our home countries several kilograms overweight as a result of Ghana's wonderful hospitality!
- And will we ever forget our terrific Master of Ceremonies? Many thanks Godwin Avenorgbo for keeping us under control with your unique Ghanaian humour. (Of course he had to be a broadcaster!)
- I would like to thank my colleagues in the Radio, Development, and Standardization Sectors, and the Regional Offices. I am very grateful that we have been able to count upon the full support of the African Telecommunications Union. Many thanks to Mr Akossi Akossi for being with us this week.
- We must also not forget our very generous sponsors who are recognized on the panel behind the podium.
- The fact that we had more than 200 delegates to this meeting, following just 6 months after the previous Forum in Kigali, which attracted 160 participants, shows the latent interest and ambition of African countries to participate in our standardization activities.
- We have had a very good cross section of participants: from ministers; regulators; CEOs and CTOs; and the engineers actually dealing with the implementation of standards on a daily basis. And it is this implementation that is the real key.
- I am sure you will agree with me that the presentations have been very informative – many thanks to all the speakers and the moderators. By listening to the presentations, discussing with colleagues from other countries, and by sharing our experiences, we are going a long way towards bridging the gap.
- I am particularly grateful for the excellent ideas that have been generated, not only in the forum but also outside the meeting room. You can rest assured that I will be promoting these ideas in the various preparatory meetings, and I look forward to a discussion on them at the African Preparatory Meeting which will start after the coffee break.

- So the real work starts after coffee. A number of issues have been identified including: accessibility; e-health; climate change; Internships; the confusing standardization scenario; need for ITU to address service delivery; difficulties of radiation measurements; and the concern that a small number of countries can block progress.
- I have long been a supporter for regional preparations, having proposed the first ITU Resolution on the subject in 1997. Solidarity is the key to regional success. This can require difficult negotiations and willingness to compromise. However, from the discussions I have heard this week; it seems there should not be too many difficulties in reaching common positions on these issues.
- In conclusion, I believe that the discussions we have had over the last two days provides us with an excellent platform to develop these positions in plenty of time for Johannesburg in October 2008.

Thank you all for your participation.