

## **Closing address**

**Malcolm Johnson, Director, ITU Telecommunication Standardization Bureau  
ITU Arab Regional Development Forum 2008 on Bridging the ICT standardization gap  
in developing countries  
Damascus, Syria, 22 July 2008**

It has been a pleasure to participate in this ITU Arab Regional Development Forum on Bridging the Standardization Gap.

My sincere thanks, on behalf of ITU and all the participants, go to the government of Syria, and in particular the Syrian Telecommunications Establishment, for the generous hosting of this forum. The arrangements and facilities have been excellent, everything has worked well, and we will not forget the tremendous hospitality we have enjoyed.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the Radio, Development, and Telecommunication Standardization Sectors, and especially Mr Sami Trabulski who has worked closely with Mr Nabil Kisrawi to organize this event. I would also like to thank all our speakers and presenters, and of course our interpreters. I would especially like to thank my good friend Nabil Kisrawi who has applied his famous energy, knowledge and experience to the success of this Forum.

The fact that we had more than 14 Arab countries attending this meeting shows the increasing extent of interest of countries in this region to participate in our standardization activities. I was especially impressed that some of you used your own time and money to be here with us.

I am sure you will agree with me that it has been a very informative few days, and 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 standardization gap.

I am sure that the excellent ideas that have been generated, not only in the forum but also in the discussions over coffee, lunch and dinner will prove an excellent basis for consideration of common proposals in the WTSA Preparatory Meeting which will start this afternoon.

Thank you all for your participation.

## Opening of Preparatory meeting

I am pleased to be able to speak to you at the start of this Arab Regional Preparatory meeting for WTSA-08.

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. In some regions this can require difficult negotiations and willingness to compromise. However, the solidarity of the Arab countries in ITU is well known. This together with the strong leadership that Nabil Kisrawi has given to the group, makes your positions especially influential in the negotiations in ITU conferences. This is why I am particularly pleased to be here at the start of your meeting, and I will return to be briefed on the outcome of your discussions.

A number of issues that could be considered in your preparations have been identified in the Forum discussions which concluded this morning. These included cybersecurity; interoperability and the ITU Mark; use of regional groups; and reduced membership fees for small companies in developing countries, and for universities and research institutes.

So in conclusion, I hope that the discussions we have had over the last two days provides you with an excellent platform to develop these common positions in plenty of time for Johannesburg in October 2008.

I know your chairman has worked very hard preparing for this meeting, and has many documents for your consideration so look forward to seeing your proposals, and seeing you all in Johannesburg.

Thank you all for your participation.