



**OPENING ADDRESS AT WTSA-08 BY H.E.
DR. IVY MATSEPE-CASABURRI, MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS
EMPERORS PALACE CONVENTION CENTRE
21 OCTOBER 2008
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATIONS STANDARDIZATION ASSEMBLY

Secretary-General of the ITU, Dr Hamadoun Toure

Honourable Ministers

Heads of Delegation

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

We take this opportunity to thank the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) family for honouring us with the hosting of this important event, when for the first time a World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly takes place on African soil.

Since the admission of democratic South Africa to the ITU in 1994, we have been beneficiaries as well as active participants in the work of the Union in all the three core sectors: Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R), Standardization Sector (ITU-T) and Development Sector (ITU-D),

and have hosted the ITU Telecom Exhibition and Forum twice in succession in 1998 and 2001.

It is thanks to work of the ITU that South Africa, although a developing country, has been able to join pioneering countries in the development and deployment of ICTs and gained confidence and experience in navigating its way in a rapidly changing technology sector.

Consequently, Telkom SA, an ITU-T sector member, is leading the roll-out of Next Generation Network infrastructure in the country and together with Sentech, our signal distributor, they are guarantors for the provision of state of the art infrastructure, thus contributing to making the 2010 FIFA World Cup – another first on African soil – the best ever such event to date.

In line with the ITU decision to migrate to digital television, our government has decided that South Africa will start its digital migration process which will commence as WTSA-08 closes. On the first of November 2008 we will switch on the digital terrestrial television (DTT) signal, thus ushering in a new broadcasting era in our country. We have decided to migrate over three years, thus completing the migration in three years in 2011.

As a developing country that is confronted with a multiplicity of challenges, we are happy that WTSA-08 will give focused attention to, amongst others, several issues that we are grappling with such as:

- **Accessibility** - to achieve equitable communication for everyone
- **Cybersecurity** - to combat spam and cyber crime and build confidence and a sense of security in the use of ICTs
- **Connecting the unconnected by 2015** - thus bridging the digital divide
- **Climate change** - thus promoting the use of ICTs to combat climate change

- **Saving lives** - by greater use of ICTs for **disaster management**
- **Networks of the future** - deploying Next Generation Networks, especially in developing countries

WTSA approves standards, based on work performed in the ITU-T Study Groups over the previous 4 years. This year for the first time the standards will also be shaped by the GSS recommendations.

These recommended standards will be used by manufacturers, regulators and users of ICT equipment globally. We accordingly take this opportunity to thank the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and participants of all the ITU-T Study Groups that spearheaded that ITU standardization work since Florianópolis, Brazil, for providing the basis for the WTSA 2008 deliberations. We thank Mr Malcolm Johnson who under stewardship of the Secretary-General ably steers this work. The Assembly will also approve questions for study by the ITU-T Study Groups over the next 4 years which will result in new ICT standards for the future.

The 21st Century business models and systems based on the knowledge economy and information society, require that we function in an increasingly globalised digitally networked economy from which none are excluded. As we now live in a world in which at the touch of a key we are able to traverse vast distances between us, crossing borders and closing time zones through the transmission of information, data and images in a matter of seconds, we need interoperability and trust as never before from the standards set to have confidence in the use of ICT infrastructure. The ITU-T and the Study Groups provide standardization work which seeks to allay our concerns, hence the importance for all of us to make an effort to participate in ITU standardization work to bridge the digital divide.

We are extremely happy that over 800 delegates from the 119 ITU Member States and the ITU-T Sector Members have registered to attend this WTSA-08. We hope you will find the Emperors Palace, to be a good home to the Assembly.

We trust that you will all have fruitful discussions, whose fruit the world will enjoy in the near future. Have a memorable stay in South Africa and enjoy our warm African hospitality. We look forward to see you in 2010 when some of the fruits of WTSA work will clearly be visible.

OBRIGADO, MERCI, GRACIAS, KE A LEBOGA, DANKIE
I THANK YOU.