

Excellencies
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning and let me add my welcome to this – the first ever – ITU Global Standards Symposium.

My sincere thanks go to the South African administration for hosting this event and for providing such excellent facilities and hospitality. I am also especially grateful to H.E. Mr NGUYEN THANH HUNG, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Information and Communications of Viet Nam for agreeing to chair this event. I also want to thank the many high-level speakers from government, industry, regulatory bodies and major standards organisations who are with us here today.

The need for coordination and collaboration on standards work at an international level is perhaps more obvious today than it has ever been, and will be the key focus of today's discussions.

The standards world today is characterized by a bewildering array of organizations, with different agendas, different participants, and with very divergent working methods. The standardization scenario gets more complex by the day, but all of us here today can play a role in bringing greater clarity to the process. We must ensure we all pull together and avoid duplication of effort and waste our increasingly limited resources. Even large organisations are having difficulty resourcing this effort, so how can small organizations, especially from developing countries, hope to play a role.

ITU has long championed this cause, and is committed to providing high-quality, demand-driven international standards, which are developed rapidly, in line with the principles of global connectivity, openness, affordability, reliability, interoperability and security.

But although we will strive to meet this commitment with every tool at our disposal – we cannot do it alone. To that end, this GSS will provide a platform to the world's policy makers, standards leaders and technology companies to give their views on how to create an environment of trust, efficiency and clarity in the world of global ICT standards.

And can we imagine a world without global ICT standards? The world would be a very different place today. Imagine a world with no Internet, no telephone call from one side of the world to the other. Literally thousands of standards pin together this framework of technologies that keeps the world's businesses and citizens connected.

The Secretary-General reminded us of the importance of standards in bringing the benefits of ICTs to the disadvantaged, as a key means to alleviate poverty and improve living standards.

But I am sure I don't have to tell this audience about the importance of standards. This meeting will focus on how best to meet the needs of the global community in the coming years. Standards affect everyone. So that's why we have assembled today some of the key players from government, industry, regulators, and major standards bodies. This is our opportunity, jointly, to address the important issue of coordination and collaboration but also other key topics facing the standards community today.

This first-ever GSS will deal with major themes beginning with the need to find ways to bridge the standardization gap between developing and developed countries. Work in this area has long been a major focus of ITU's standardization activity. We will discuss the concept of the "ladder of development", in which a country is profiled, in terms of ICT standardization, based on criteria such as usage and application of standards, capacity building and human resources, participation in the standards-making process, development of future technologies, and setting technological trends. We'll review our work to date to determine the best ways going forward to bridge the standardization gap.

Another key challenge is developing the necessary standards so that ICTs can best play their role as an enabling technology that can combat climate change, by limiting and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across all sectors.

Climate change has become a significant focus of ITU's activity. The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon underlined ITU's role when he visited us last year. He considers ITU to be one of the very important stakeholders in the area of climate change, which is in his words is the moral challenge of our time. From a standardization perspective, ITU has already produced a checklist for standards authors to ensure climate change is taken into account in the development of our standards. We have also had the first meeting of the ITU-T Focus Group on ICTs and Climate Change. One of the tasks of the Focus Group is to develop common methodologies to measure the direct and indirect impact of ICTs on climate change. It is currently very difficult to compare carbon footprints because so many different methodologies are used.

For example, estimates of the reduction in total GHG emissions that could be achieved through the application of ICTs in other sectors such as energy generation, transport and buildings, is between 15% and 40%. Even taking the most conservative estimate, this would equate to a saving of around \$900 billion dollars in energy costs by 2020. Industry is faced with probably it's biggest ever challenge but also its biggest every opportunity in terms of corporate social responsibility. There is the challenge for the ICT industry to limit its own emissions, but also the opportunity to maximize its potential to help other sectors reduce their emissions. This could make for a tremendously good-news story for the ICT industry. Several ITU sector members have already made commitments in this direction and we strongly encourage others to do so.

The role of standards in accessibility is another of the challenges to be discussed today. I believe that standards have an enormously important role to play in making ICTs more accessible to persons with disabilities.

ITU was the first international standards body to address accessibility issues - back in 1991. By 1994 the international text telephone standard, Recommendation ITU-T V.18, was published. V.18 was a major landmark bringing together different text telephone protocols to allow different - previously incompatible – text phones in different countries to communicate.

Since then, ITU's accessibility experts have helped to incorporate accessibility requirements into a range of our standards, especially standards for multimedia, teleconferencing, and most importantly created the concept of Total Conversation, with real time text.

We look forward to the roundtable discussion among leading standards makers this afternoon on ways to strengthen collaboration on these and other issues and how we might improve our efficiency, while facing the realities of the somewhat turbulent times we are currently facing.

It is therefore all the more important that all SDOs including ITU work closely together to ensure that the global needs for efficient standardization are met. We should recognize that our roles are complementary and not competitive. Otherwise we will see more and more fora and consortia being established, and an ever increasingly complex standardization scenario.

I would like to conclude by reiterating a strong point... Standardization *is* a key building block in constructing a globally connected society. We can and will connect the world. We will do so by building on the work of the thousands of dedicated individuals—from governments, the private sector and civil society—who come together, in organizations like these represented here today, to develop standards and guidelines that keep costs low and facilitate access to global markets, and allow for economies of scale in production and distribution, safe in the knowledge that standards-compliant systems will work anywhere in the world. The work is not the most visible, but it is nonetheless essential for our common digital future. Working together we will succeed.

Thank you for your attention