ITU-UNIDO Forum on Sustainable Conformance Assessment
for the Asia-Pacific Region

25 November 2013

Yangon City, Republic of Union of Myanmar

Address

Malcolm Johnson

Director, Telecommunication Standardization Bureau
International Telecommunication Union

Mr. Khin Maung Thet, Director-General of the Posts and Telecommunications Department, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

Mr. Win Khaing Moe, Director-General of the Scientific and Technological Research Department, Ministry of Science and Technology

Distinguished colleagues

Ladies and Gentleman,

Min ga la ba

Good morning and welcome on behalf of ITU to this ITU-UNIDO Forum on Sustainable Conformance Assessment for the Asia Pacific Region.

It is a great pleasure for me to be in the historic city of Yangon for the first time.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology for hosting this event in Yangon, and Mr. Khin Maung Thet, and Mr. Win Khaing Moe, for their welcome.

I am very pleased to be once again holding a joint event with UNIDO on the important and critical issue of conformance assessment, and I would like to thank Mr Ouseph Padickakudi for this excellent collaboration.

I am also pleased that we have Mr. Venkataraman Balakrishnan of the Quality Council of India joining us and who will explain some of the important work being carried out in the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC).

It is a very exciting time for Myanmar, one of great opportunity and hope for the future. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are part of the future for all countries, but Myanmar can afford to be even more forward looking than others, with the opportunity to jump several generations of technology.

There is much work to be done but Myanmar is in a position where early-stage investments in ICT infrastructure will be in the very latest technologies. The roadmap for the growth of the country’s ICT ecosystem will be greatly assisted by conformance to international standards such as ITU Recommendations, and UNIDO and ITU are here to help you, and the other countries present.

Standards are key building blocks to trade and development. They provide the common systems needed to enlarge a trade area, and policy frameworks that encourage conformance with standards build competitive markets that produce greater choice and more affordable products.

ITU is the lead UN agency for ICTs, and its standards have enabled global communications from the day of the telegraph through to today’s multifaceted communications ecosystem.

ITU’s standardization sector (ITU-T) has three main objectives:

* To develop interoperable, non-discriminatory, international standards
* To assist in bridging the standardization gap between developed and developing countries
* To extend and facilitate international cooperation among international and regional standardization bodies.

Enabling the global interoperability of ICTs is one of the core principles underlying international standardization. Products developed in accordance with ITU standards should provide the interoperability needed for users of these products to make use of them anywhere in the world, regardless of who has manufactured them and who is offering the service. This will increase competition, reduce costs, and avoid the chance of being locked into a single vendor’s product.

To address this ITU has implemented a conformity and interoperability (C&I) programme consisting of four key elements: (1) a public database that will list products conforming to ITU standards; (2) interoperability testing events between various manufacturers’ products; (3) capacity building; and (4) assisting in the establishment of regional or sub-regional test centres in developing countries.

This problem cannot be solved by ITU alone and UNIDO has been an excellent partner in bringing international organizations together to find their respective roles in the task, and have started a project on national quality infrastructure here in Myanmar.

It is essential that we understand the conformance and interoperability concerns of each region. In this way we can identify the tools to address their unique concerns. This is why this workshop is important, and I hope we will have many more in this region.

I am pleased to announce the coming publication of two new Guidelines in this area: a Feasibility Study for Conformity Test Centres; and Guidelines on Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA). This will be the subject of an ongoing programme of training and consultation events around the world.

Beginning on Thursday this week we will hold a Regional Forum on Bridging the Standardisation Gap in collaboration with the Korean Telecommunications Technology Association (TTA). It is particularly important that developing countries participate in the standards making process to ensure that their particular requirements are included in the standards, and to gain an understanding of these complex standards and how to implement them. I hope you will all be able to stay for that event.

We are also encouraging academia and research institutes to join ITU. I am pleased to say that over 60 universities have already joined.

I very much hope that Myanmar and the other countries represented here will take advantage of these new opportunities and become involved in ITU’s standardization process.

We have an excellent panel of speakers presenting standards and conformance assessment related activities in ITU, UNIDO, ISO, IEC, ILAC/IAF and PAC, as well as sharing experiences from eight South East Asia countries.

I wish you all a very productive and enjoyable workshop.