



Geneva, 9-11 April 2003

OPENING REMARKS

**Yoshio UTSUMI,
ITU Secretary-General**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you here to Geneva for this workshop on promoting broadband and to thank you for participating in this event.

This workshop is the eleventh in a series of expert meetings and workshops carried out under the ITU's New Initiatives Programme, which has been running since 1999. Our most recent events have covered topics on competition policy in telecommunications, critical network infrastructures, IP connectivity in least developed countries and multilingual domain names. Support from our members, in the form of voluntary contributions, enables us to commission original research and create a forum to discuss issues of high current policy interest. We are particularly grateful to the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications of Japan for its support for this workshop on how to promote broadband effectively.

Both broadband and narrowband networks offer access to the Internet and the vast store of information it contains. Access to information is an essential component in building the information society. The difference between broadband and narrowband is partly a matter of *quantity*, or speed of connection. But it is more connected to the *quality* of the user experience. In successful broadband economies, users are making broadband part of their daily lives and are directly benefiting from the rich information resources the Internet offers.

Governments around the world have made a strategic decision that broadband is essential to realizing their vision of a knowledge-based society. They fear that, without broadband, their economies and their citizens will be trapped on the wrong side of a new digital divide.

Initially, much of the policy attention on broadband has focused on building high-performance networks. However, this is only the first step. The next step is to create applications that use the extra bandwidth available and respond to the real needs of users. To do this, it is necessary to build awareness of the advantages that broadband can offer. The major current uses of broadband are in entertainment applications, such as interactive gaming and file-sharing. Broadband can help create demand for paid content and create new business models that are different from those that prevail in the narrowband world. It can also support new types of applications in the fields of medicine, education and environmental management.

There are significant differences between countries in their level of take-up of broadband. For instance:

- Korea has almost as many broadband users as the whole of the European Union combined;
- The penetration rate in Hong Kong, China is almost three times that in Singapore;
- Canada's penetration rate is almost twice that of the United States.

ITU has organized this workshop to try to discover the reasons why some economies are doing better than others. We hope to provide a forum where experts can discuss ways to promote broadband around the world, in the quest for a truly global information society.

Despite the fact that similar technologies are used throughout the world, there is no one single solution to promoting broadband effectively in all countries. Each economy is at a different level of development and users and their preferences vary. ITU, with its 189 Member States and over 650 Sector Members, is well placed to tap the wealth and diversity of experience that is accumulating on broadband.

So, what then can we expect to achieve from this workshop?

First, I hope that this workshop will serve as vantage point from which we can view and examine success stories. In this regard, ITU has commissioned country case studies of Canada, Iceland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Hong Kong, China, which will be discussed today. We also look forward to learning about the experiences of the other countries represented here as to their own approaches to promoting broadband.

Second, this workshop is intended to serve as a forum, allowing for a free and frank exchange of information and views. Those participating in this workshop represent a wide range of interests that do not always coincide, including telecommunication regulators, incumbent operators, new market entrants, academics, international organizations, and equipment manufacturers. I hope that there will be a spirit of listening and learning from each other's knowledge and experience.

Third, we hope that this workshop will be able to provide some guidance as to how ITU might play a future role in the area of promoting broadband in terms of both technology and policy. ITU's work is already on the leading edge of developing technical standards that facilitate broadband. One example is the new H.264 standard, accepted as part of MPEG 4, which will stream video and audio more efficiently over broadband connections.

On the policy side, ITU can use the vast experience of its membership to play a role in transferring know-how and expertise, especially to developing countries. Two years ago, we held a new initiatives workshop on the regulatory implications of broadband. Now we are shifting our attention to the task that policy-makers face in stimulating demand and ensuring optimal conditions for the supply of broadband.

In conclusion, I hope that you will all benefit from the discussions here over the next few days. Please remember that the success of the workshop depends on the contributions that you each make, in a personal capacity, and on your willingness to share and participate in the discussions. Please feel free to express your opinions and, just as importantly, to ask questions.

In order to help guide our discussions, we will require an able chairman. It is my pleasure therefore, to nominate **Dr Richard Horton** as Chairman.

Dr Horton is the senior programme manager for market development at the Commission for Communications Regulation in Ireland. He is responsible for ComReg's Forward-looking Programme, assessing and interpreting the market, technology and policy forces shaping the telecommunication and information technology sectors of the Irish, European and global economies, and the future regulatory implications that flow from them.

A Chartered Engineer, he has worked during the past 15 years in the information and communication technology sector in Europe, North America and Asia. His experience includes strategic business development, R&D management, techno-economic analysis, government policy and regulation in the private and public sectors.

He obtained his PhD in applied mineralogy and stochastic geometry at Imperial College, University of London, and is a member of the Institution of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. Horton as Chairman of this workshop.