**Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-10) and
Global Industry Leaders' Forum**

Dakar, Senegal, 9-12 November 2010

Q&A with Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)

Why did ITU establish the Global Symposium for Regulators, and what did it hope to achieve?

When the ITU organized the first GSR in 2000 it was the first time that ITU organized an event just for telecommunications regulators and policy-makers interested in establishing a regulatory body.

At the time there were 96 separate regulatory bodies (today there are 156). In those days, countries were launching ambitious telecom sector reform, opening up their markets to competition, while fostering universal access policies to assure affordable access to voice services and establishing independent regulatory bodies. Many of these fledgling agencies were striving to increase their knowledge base to become more effective regulators, and to fully establish their credibility and authority in a market that was previously mostly under state control.

At the same time, all regulators – from those that were well-established, to those that were brand new – were struggling to keep up with the technological changes that were, and still are, revolutionizing the information and communication technology (ICT) industry. The goal of the Symposium was to launch a dialogue through which all the world's regulators could share their experiences and views in order to learn from each other.

At that time even we were pleasantly surprised at the high level of interest and participation in this new event, which confirmed our belief in the importance of providing such a unique platform for regulators to come together and share their experiences.

Who attends the event - and what brings them?

The GSR brings together regulators from all over the world. It has become the global venue for regulators to exchange their views and experiences on telecommunications. Apart from bringing together heads of national regulatory authorities from both developed and developing countries, the GSR also serves as a platform for all stakeholders, including policy makers and industry, to discuss regulatory issues with the regulatory officials of ITU Sector Members in a frank and open dialogue. In addition, the first day of the GSR is open to industry.

What was the rationale behind setting up the Global Industry Leaders' Forum in 2008?

The private sector was always invited to the first day of the GSR, but the Global Industry Leaders Forum was designed to provide a high-level forum for CEOs and other industry leaders to convey their views and make proposals regarding key regulatory and policy issues affecting their businesses and the ICT/telecommunications industry more broadly, as part of an interactive exchange with regulators and policy-makers.

The outcomes of Global Industry Leaders' Forum are presented on the first day of the GSR for the consideration of participants. The GILF is in a sense the voice of the markets whispering into GSR's ear…

How do you choose the venue of the event? Why was Senegal chosen for the 2010 event?

As for most ITU events, we count on the kind invitation of one of our Member States to host the event. With a global event such as GSR/GILF, rotation between regions is our approach. The Senegalese government offered to host this year's event, and has been very active in collaborating with the ITU to make it a success.

How do you choose each year's theme?

We follow closely the needs and concerns of regulators, and the final session of the GSR provides an opportunity for them to put forward their priorities and proposals. The themes of the GSR over the years have tended to match ongoing developments in the ICT Sector. In 2007, for example, the theme was 'NGN Regulation' followed in 2008 by 'Six degrees of Sharing' and in 2009 "Hands on, hands off; stimulating growth through effective regulation".

This year's theme is "Enabling tomorrow's digital world" What does that cover?

We will be looking at the impact of broadband on the ICT Sector and beyond the ICT Sectors. Regulators will be examining ways of stimulating nationwide broadband deployment through adaptive and targeted regulations and out-of-the-box tools. We will also be considering the driving forces of today's and tomorrow's ICT markets, notably the migration from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting and the allocation of the digital dividend.

The debate will further focus on opportunities and challenges of living in the information society, addressing new disputes arising from the digital world, what role ICTs can play in reducing the Carbon footprint, as well as measures to assess regulatory efficiency.

What issues are of particular importance for broadband uptake in developing countries?

Affordable access, appropriate technology as well as content and applications that meet consumer needs will be key to broadband uptake in developing countries. Governments will have to strike a fine balance between implementing policies and regulations that promote widespread and affordable access to broadband without imposing burdensome regulation that may inhibit investment.

Many different countries are represented at the GSR. Don't their needs differ in terms of regulation?

Yes, indeed. Each country has its own socio-economic situation, its particular geography, a certain existing infrastructure and level of development. Not only does regulation need to be based on an accurate assessment of the existing conditions in a country, but it needs to be reassessed regularly as technology and ICT markets change.

However, all countries share certain challenges in ICT regulation and can benefit enormously from each other's experiences.