



**Regional Development Forum 2008:  
"Bridging the ICT standardization gap in developing countries"  
for the Asia-Pacific Region, Hanoi, Viet Nam  
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Mr. Malcolm Johnson  
TSB Director, ITU

Honorable Mr. Nguyen Thanh Hung, Vice Minister, Ministry of Information and Communications of Vietnam,  
Mr. Toshiyuki Yamada, Secretary General of APT,  
Distinguished speakers, chairpersons, and delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends  
Good morning everyone, Xin chao kaban.

On behalf of the ITU, it is a great pleasure for me to be with you today to welcome you to the ITU Regional Development Forum 2008 for the Asia-Pacific Region on "Bridging the ICT Standardization Gap in Developing Countries".

I wish to express deep gratitude to the Ministry of Information and Communications of Viet Nam, and personally Mr. Nguyen Thanh Hung, Vice Minister, MIC, for agreeing to host this Forum, here, in the great city of Hanoi.

Hanoi is of course famous for its cultural and historic heritage, but increasingly as a regional political and economic centre, due to its pro-active response to the challenges of globalization and its embrace of the fast evolution of information and communications technologies (ICTs).

I would also like to thank Mr Yamada for the support of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity, my colleagues from ITU's Regional Office in Bangkok, and our friends and colleagues from the three Sectors and Bureaux of the ITU. The Asia-Pacific region spans some of the world's most sophisticated telecommunications and ICT markets with some of the highest levels of ICT penetration in the world. Economies such as the Republic of Korea, with over 30% broadband penetration and Hong Kong, China, with more than 25% are among the world's broadband leaders. Penetration of ICTs continues to increase rapidly across the region.

The region also encompasses some of the world's largest and fastest growing markets, such as China and India, where, for example, mobile subscribers alone now account for some 600 m and 280 m respectively, with millions more joining

every month. However we must also meet the challenge of providing connectivity to some of the less developed and less populated areas, to bridge the digital divide in this most geographically and culturally diverse region.

Standards are one of the most important tools that we have to address the digital divide. Global standards avoid costly market battles over preferred technologies, and for companies from emerging markets, they create a level playing field which provides access to new markets. They are an essential aid to developing countries in building their infrastructure and encouraging economic development. Through economies of scale, they can reduce costs for all: manufacturers, operators and consumers. Increasing the participation of developing countries in the standardization process - bridging the standardization gap - will help to reduce the wider digital divide. One of the key causes of the digital divide is unequal access to technologies. Participation in the standardization process ensures that developing countries' voices are heard and that their requirements are taken into account in the development of new technologies.

Following the adoption of Plenipotentiary Conference Resolution 123 (Rev. Antalya 2006) - "Bridging the standardization gap between the developing and developed countries", ITU's Development Sector (ITU-D) and the Standardization Sector (ITU-T) have been working together on a number of initiatives that will bring assistance and support to members from developing countries in particular, in the area of standardization, infrastructure, and ICT network applications.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference Resolution 17 (Rev Doha, 2006) also called upon ITU-D, especially - the BDT - to implement regionally approved initiatives at the national, regional, interregional and global levels. One of the five Regional Initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region is "Strengthening the collaboration between ITU T and ITU D". The objective is to assist developing countries in the region in understanding and implementing ITU-T Recommendations.

We are making a lot of effort to bridge the standardization gap, but clearly more needs to be done. I fully expect this issue to take a lot of time at our upcoming World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA) in Johannesburg, October in 2008, to be followed by the next World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in 2010.

For example, we have been encouraging members to host meetings in the regions, and have established a fund to assist hosts with the cost of doing so, as well as to provide eligible members with fellowships to attend the meetings. I would like to thank the Administration of Korea for its recent contribution to this fund, and our hosts Viet Nam, and other countries in this region, for hosting several ITU events over the last few years.

This year we have also been trialing new collaboration tools which will allow remote participation in our meetings. The intention is to organize meetings in the regions which can be linked to the main meeting, in Geneva (or elsewhere). I am encouraged by the success of these trials. They clearly have the potential to significantly increase participation from the regions.

I am also encouraging the establishment of regional groups. These are groups in the regions that follow the work of a particular study group. There are currently six of these regional groups and I hope to see more established in the next study period.

In terms of study group leadership Asia-Pacific is quite well placed with 24 leadership positions held in the region. There will be a need for many new chairmen and vice-chairmen at the upcoming WTSA due to the application of the term limit for the first time.

A significant development in closing the standardization gap was the agreement of last year's Council to my recommendation to make available ITU-T Recommendations for downloading free of charge. In 2006, we sold just 5,000 copies of ITU-T Recommendations. In 2007, almost 3 million copies were downloaded free of charge. We have found a notable increase in access from developing countries, both in terms of total number of downloads, and the percentage of downloads which has almost doubled. This means that in 2006 there were only around 500 copies dispatched to developing countries compared to almost 600,000 in the last 12 months with free downloading. Clearly this makes a significant contribution to bridging the standardization gap.

As for implementation of the ITU Recommendations (i.e., international standards), a complaint I often hear, especially from developing countries, is that there is no way of being sure that a vendor's equipment follows the ITU Recommendations. This is because we do not have any testing or certification for our standards. ITU was founded to ensure interoperability of international telecommunications. But this can only be ensured if we reintroduce not only a form of testing and certification but also the issuing of an ITU Mark or Logo in the equipments approved. I believe this is something that can also be addressed at the WTSA-08.

This WTSA will be the first to be preceded by a Global Standardization Symposium (GSS) on 20 October 2008. The GSS will have a number of high level speakers from ministers, ambassadors, to CTOs addressing the standardization gap as well as the concerns about the proliferation of ICT standards bodies (now estimated at over 500), ICTs and climate change, and accessibility to ICTs for persons with disabilities. The afternoon session will be devoted to improvements in global standards collaboration to meet these objectives and future challenges.

I am very grateful to H.E. Mr Nguyen Thanh Hung, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Information and Communications (Viet Nam) for agreeing to chair the GSS.

All sectors of ITU are now in the process of planning five ITU Regional Development Forums for 2009, the outcomes of which can also be integrated into the WTDC-10. We will work in close cooperation with regional offices to develop the programmes likely to include such topics as NGN Technologies, Broadband Technologies, Mobile Broadcasting, Satellite, and Spectrum Management, etc.

Here in Hanoi, we will open the platform to discuss and share our goals and needs, trends and challenges, for development programs, actions, initiatives and projects being implemented globally and regionally by ITU-D Sector; the status of current hot topics under discussions in ITU-T and ITU-R Sectors; and how to become more actively involved in our standardisation activities in order to champion the interests of this region in the development of international ICT standards.

Once more, I wish to thank the Ministry of Information and Communications of Viet Nam, and wish everyone a successful and fruitful outcome of this Regional Forum.

Thank you for your attention