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Workshop on Standardization in E-Health
Geneva, 23 May 2003

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Director of Telecommunication Standardization Bureau

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Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Issakov,
Mr. Touré, Director of BDT,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this very important workshop on standardization in E-Health, which is jointly organized by BDT and TSB. Last night, I checked the list of registered participants. I am very glad to see participants from developed countries as well as developing countries. I also note that our participants are not limited to the telecommunications and information industries. I am pleased to welcome representatives from medical institutions, universities and other organizations.

The development of advanced digital and telecommunications techniques has enabled the development of very sophisticated equipment used in the medical area, as well as has contributed to distributed learning. BDT has successfully carried out a project on telemedicine for many years. However, most solutions have been developed on a proprietary or ad-hoc basis, posing challenges to institutions working in the medical area willing to integrate their infrastructure and procedures, as well as to share resources with other institutions distributed in wide geographical area. These geographically distributed scenarios include not only sharing of resources and data amongst institutions in the developed countries but also serve to support provision of medical services and education in remote locations, e.g. in developing countries as well as disaster areas. Shared databases can reduce costs and increase efficiencies but can also enable early detection of epidemics and even bio-attacks.

Standardization in e-health has long been sought as a key element in support of these activities. I have been contacted by many experts on this issue, including at the PP-02. In organizing this workshop, ITU-T, with the support of ITU-D and the participation of ISO, IEC, WHO and other SDOs, aims at identifying the key issues needed in support of attaining this goal and to identify a possible role to be played in ITU-T to promote such standards.

We will hear about several technical aspects related to e-health: on medical records and medical data, telecommunications in support of E-health, medical imaging and standards, interoperability and Quality of Service. But we will also address ethical, legal and security issues related to patient data and the economic benefits of E-health standardization. We will hear about many initiatives in this direction during this workshop, and I, speaking from the ITU-T role and perspective, should like to encourage you to reflect upon the features that need to be supported in our standards. I would like to invite you to think of what would be an appropriate action plan for standardization in support of e-health.

As you can see, in preparing this workshop, the steering committee prepared a programme that will give an overview of essential items needed to understand the current situation for standardization in e-health, as well as to identify the key information needed to put together a standardization plan, the associated priorities, and to identify possible roles that ITU-T could play. For ITU-T, it is paramount to understand what could be our role to help spread standardization in E-health, taking advantage of our positive working environment and of the partnership between governments and private sector that is promoted in our study groups. ITU-T can also offer a suitable cooperation platform for comprehensive coordination across all relevant players.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, I would like to acknowledge the excellent work performed by the Steering Committee of the workshop, the session chairs and speakers for their kind acceptance to

contribute to this event. I would also like to thank my colleague Mr. Touré, Director of BDT and BDT staff for their coordination on the programme and their presence at this opening session and finally the TSB staff who has worked hard to bring this event to fruition.

Finally, I would like to invite you all this evening to a cocktail organized in your honor at 18:00 hours on the 2nd basement.

I wish you a very successful meeting.

Thank you for your attention.