FACILITATION MEETING ON WSIS ACTION LINE C6, 10 MAY 2010, ITU HEADQUARTERS
"*BROADBAND POLICY AT THE CROSSROADS:*
HOW TO ACHIEVE ENHANCED COLLABORATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS"

1. SUMMARY OF THE MEETING

The Facilitation Meeting on WSIS Action Line C6 (the Enabling Environment) took place on 10 May and attracted about 80 participants. As in previous years, the meeting was organized as an interactive panel discussion, involving multiple stakeholders. A number of questions were taken directly from the floor, resulting in an open debate fully driven by stakeholders. The overall theme of shaping modern broadband policies stayed in the heart of the debate and stimulated an insightful exchange of ideas and experiences among stakeholders.

In his opening remarks, the Director of BDT, Mr. Sami Al-Basheer set the scene for the discussion stressing that recent market developments have shaken up regulatory regimes enormously. Today, regulators and policy makers face many pressing questions, such as how to address convergence of the telecom and the broadcasting sectors, how to democratize access to broadband services, and ultimately, how to boost investment. Innovative thinking and new-generation policies are needed to ensure sustained growth in ICT markets, diverse service offerings and accessible applications.

In his key note, Dr Mongi Hamdi, Head of the Science, Technology and ICT Branch/DTL, UNCTAD echoed that providing access to advanced and affordable access to ICTs and to broadband in particular remains a major challenge. With the impressive take up of fixed and mobile broadband over the last 5 years, the digital divide has taken a new dimension. Gaps in access to basic services persist, especially outside main urban areas. But even more importantly, the growing broadband divide results in true handicaps for many developing countries, both for individuals and businesses.

In order to set a sound framework for making decisive progress in creating an enabling environment for investment, competition and innovation, ITU has created a Roadmap for the implementation of WSIS Action Line C6 (available at: www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2010/forum/geneva/ifm/ifm_1.html). This roadmap catalogues a wide range of ongoing ITU activities in the area of policy and regulation. It is intended to evolve as a living document and will be updated on a regular basis with new activities and initiatives.

During the panel discussion, there was a common understanding that regulatory reform is getting an ever more complex task. The balance between the various ingredients of an efficient policy and regulatory framework is essential for achieving a level-playing field for businesses while ensuring accessible and affordable services for consumers. Competition, together with privatization and the establishment of a separate regulatory body remain the pillars of market-focused strategies of Governments to meet social and economic goals, such as increased access to broadband and revenue from ICT services.

With the advent of light-touch regulation and the move from imposing obligations to creating incentives for all stakeholders in the ICT environment, enhanced cooperation among governments, regulators, industry and consumers appears to be a viable solution for bringing broadband policies to the next level. Many participants stressed the central role of multi-stakeholder alliances (such as Public-Private Partnerships, etc.), which can work as enablers of meaningful reforms and sustained growth.

Panelists and participants were unanimous that decisive progress still needs to be made towards achieving the WSIS goals, and those related to the creation of an enabling environment. Nevertheless, the general feeling was clearly positive. In the early 2000, very few were those who anticipated the "mobile miracle", which allowed connecting an expected 5 billion mobile subscribers by the end of 2010. Likewise, broadband technologies and wireless broadband in particular, offer opportunities to design new network and business models, and leapfrog towards a connected, inclusive and sustainable Information Society.

Which strategies are likely to be the most successful in stimulating broadband growth? There are likely to be as many answers as there are countries and stakeholders, because broadband growth is specific to different national contexts, policy goals and market structures. Nevertheless, this year's facilitation meeting on the Enabling Environment reached consensus that multi-stakeholder partnerships (including public-private and private-private partnerships) are the shortest way to a broadband world.

2. SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS

➢ **High-level speakers**
  - Sami Al-Basheer Al-Morshid, Director, BDT-ITU (opening remarks)
  - Dr Mongi Hamdi, Head, Science, Technology and ICT Branch/DTL, UNCTAD; Head of the Secretariat of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (key note)

➢ **Moderator**
  - Mario Maniewicz, Chief, BDT's Policies and Strategies Department, ITU

➢ **Panelists**

1. Fabio del Alisal Sánchez, Director International Department of CMT, Spain
2. Dr Krisnadi Iwan, Commissioner, Indonesian Telecommunication Regulatory Authority
3. Pierre Lucante, Head of Sector Project, ICT for Development, GTZ, Germany
4. Gabriel Solomon, Senior Vice-President, GSMA
5. Rajesh Aggarwal, Chief, Business & Trade Policy, International Trade Center, Geneva

4. FOLLOW-UP

➢ A website dedicated to the facilitation of WSIS AL C6 will be created and will be developed as a one-stop-shop for best practices in the area of creating the enabling environment, drawing on ITU's work (www.itu.int/ITU-D/treg/bestpractices.html) as well as on the work of other stakeholders, in particular of private sector.

➢ Contact for questions and/or requests related to facilitation on WSIS AL C6 or to direct assistance in the area of regulation: bdt-rme@itu.int.