**GIFT BUTHELEZI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, DEPT. OF COMMUNICATIONS**

**ITU/ATU REPORT BACK WORKSHOP ON THE OUTCOMES OF WCIT/WTSA**

**10-11 JULY 2013, DURBAN ICC**

Malcolm Johnson, Director ITU T

Abdulkarim Soumaila, Secretary-General of the African Telecommunications Union

Representatives of African Governments

Regulators and Industry Representatives

Ladies and Gentleman

We congratulate the appointment of our new Minister of Communications Yunus Carrim whose care and contribution you will enjoy, and equally we would like to thank the past Minister Dina Pule for the contribution she has made in this sector. These are the official sentiments and message of our President HE GJ Zuma to the delegates. The South African Government is proud to have you in our shores as you engage in this crucial work of the UN agency called the ITU.

Welcome to the mild and pleasant winter climate that typifies Durban and the KwaZulu-Natal coastland. This was the most pleasant area we could think of to host you in South Africa in July.

This should help us in our work, as we reflect on our achievements from the WTSA and WCIT meetings in Dubai last year. Before we consider the way forward with respect to the specific issues, we should also reflect on how effective we were as a region in these negotiations. We remained united throughout the process, day and night. Many countries among us were active in leading in the debates on specific issues on behalf of Africa. This was one of the most political conferences we have faced in our sector, and in spite of considerable pressure, including serious disinformation in the media and political lobbying, we were unwavering.

The internet remains the domain of powerful vested interests, which are working hard to shun the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, in particular with respect to the rightful role of governments in Internet Governance. But who else is supposed to address public policy issues? We are always told about the multi-stakeholder model, but how we engage with stakeholders, and which stakeholders we engage with, is itself a public policy issue.

The last few months have been revealing in terms of how the internet and ICTs are being used as tools by powerful governments to entrench their advantages over the rest of the world. If smaller nations do not unite to protect their interests, it will be easy to find ourselves in a situation where we have allowed private interests and powerful countries to dominate our legitimate public policy concerns.

All of our countries and our peoples have had to overcome too many challenges to be told what we can and cannot talk about, and what is and is not in our interest. Our countries and peoples, and our leadership, are the ones who will decide these questions. I was proud of the work we did collectively in Dubai. We showed how strong we can be when we identify common goals and positions, and work as a team to successfully negotiate these.

However, we must continue to build on this work, and drive forward to attain our goals. I would encourage all of the African Member States to accede to or ratify the new International Telecommunication Regulations. We should encourage everyone to do so. This will put some pressure on those that are reluctant to ratify the agreement, as they will then be the ones who will have to explain what they find so difficult about this agreement. They truth is that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with this agreement.

We should also continue to coordinate as a region, and do so more consistently and with greater effort, in our work in the ITU. This should include ensuring our participation, through a coordinated approach, in all of the Study Groups of the ITU. We must also be well prepared to discuss our common positions and objectives in the African preparatory meeting in Ghana later this year, for the forthcoming WTDC in 2014.

Over the last two days we have enjoyed expert discussions during workshops on SPAM and e-Waste, organised with our assistance by the ITU and the African Telecommunications Union. We have identified certain actions through which we can strengthen our capacity in these areas. We must ensure that the good work we do in all the workshops and meetings in which we participate are brought back to ATU, and are taken also to the WTDC.

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentleman, I hope we have a fruitful meeting and I look forward to our discussions.