*Environmentally Sound Management of E-waste*

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*Opening Address*

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Ladies and gentlemen

Colleagues and friends

Sanibonani

Bonjour

Good morning

Welcome to this second of the four events we are holding here this week - a workshop on Environmentally Sound Management of E-waste. Let me again thank the Department of Communications of the Republic of South Africa for their kind hospitality. It is a pleasure to be back in the beautiful city of Durban. Also thanks again to ATU for their excellent collaboration.

I am happy say we to have with us many experts at the workshop, in what will certainly be a rich series of discussions. I am grateful to Paolo Gemma for agreeing to moderate this workshop.

Today, we live in an era that can surely be characterized as an E-generation, where the innovational surge of computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices are revolutionizing the way we live.

However, with the growing usage of electronic items, the harsh reality remains that with 57 million metric tons of e-waste disposed worldwide every year, in landfills, streams or incinerators, releasing toxins into the air, soil and water, e-waste is the fastest growing waste stream worldwide.

Tackling the issue of e-waste can go a long way not only in curbing health and pollution problems, but also in creating opportunities. Through the implementation of smart new technologies, waste can be transformed into assets, by the creation of sustainable employment, the cutting of greenhouse gas emissions and the recovery of a wide range of valuable metals such as silver, gold, palladium, copper and indium. Indeed, if we act now, countries can turn an e-challenge into an e-opportunity.

Currently, priorities are shifting towards the implementation of new recycling technologies and regulations to safeguard both public health and the environment. This workshop can discuss the complexity of the e-waste problem and the role of policies and standards in the implementation of e-waste management, and I hope as yesterday produce some actions that can be taken to improve the situation.

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-12) held in Dubai,

UAE, 20-29 November 2012, recognized the vital role that ICTs play in tackling

environmental challenges such as climate change and e-waste by approving two Resolutions:

WTSA Resolution 73 on “Information and communication technologies, environment and climate change” and WTSA Resolution 79 on “The role of telecommunications /information and communication technology in handling and controlling e-waste from telecommunication and information technology equipment and methods of treating it”.

In addition, the World Conference on International Telecommunication (WCIT-12) held in Dubai, 3-14 December 2012, recognized the importance of energy and resource efficiency in Article 11 of the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs)which states that *“Member States are encouraged to adopt energy-efficiency and e-waste best practices taking into account relevant ITU-T Recommendations”.*

In response to the precedence set forth by the WTSA and WCIT, ITU-T Study Group 5, the lead study group on “Environment and Climate Change” took the leadership in developing a series of standards and best practices. Specifically Study Group 5 Question 13 focuses on the environmental impact reduction including e-waste.

Paolo Gemma, Chairman of Working Party 3 of ITU-T Study Group 5, will shortly provide an overview of the activities carried out by ITU-T SG5 in this area.

Once again, I would like to thank the speakers, moderators, and all participants for your participation, and I wish you a rewarding and enjoyable workshop. I look forward to any suggested actions you identify at the end of the day and promise we will follow up on them.