

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good afternoon.**

I would like to first to welcome you to ITU and to this *fourth International Conference on Standardization and Innovation in Information Technology*. As you may know, the International Telecommunication Union (or ITU) joined the United Nations system as the specialized agency for Telecommunications in 1947, but its roots actually go back to its founding in 1865 – a picture of it you have on the poster used for the event. The purpose of the Union is, in short, to provide a forum in which members can cooperate to improve, and use more efficiently, telecommunications of all kinds. ITU currently has 189 Member States and over 700 Sector Members – among them telecom manufacturers, network operators, research and development centers, and academia. I mention this to highlight the fact that ITU is a unique environment where governments and the private sector work together. Back in December 2004, ITU was named as one of the world’s top ten most enduring institutions by a panel of distinguished scholars from universities across the United States, as a result of a project conducted by the global strategy consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton, in order to celebrate institutions that “have reinvented themselves time and again — and remained market leaders — as the unique circumstances of the their founding have given way to changing conditions.” ITU has several branches, or sectors: telecoms development, radio, and ICT standardization.

ITU, as a lead global standards organization, together with ISO and IEC, is very pleased to take a facilitating role in the world’s standardization activities and to facilitate international coordination. In this spirit, ITU has a great pleasure to host your *fourth International Conference on Standardization and Innovation in Information Technology*. I would like to highlight the fact that ITU has enjoyed a long-existing cooperation with the IEEE on subjects of common interest, and that the IEEE has become in 1999 the first of a number of partners according to ITU-T Rec.

A.5 cross-referencing procedure. We will have in these two-and-a-half days presentation of interesting papers ranging from strategic directions on standardization to analysis of the dynamics of the standardization process to modelling of the complex standardization process.

It is also interesting for us to have you here, because I think it is important that we, as standardizers, understand what is the perception that you, as external observers of the standardization process, have of the work we do, and how we perform. It is a tool for us to better understand what we do, as an institution, to allow us to have a critical thinking on how we could do things better.

We also wanted to invite you to come here so that you could feel the air, so to speak, of the ITU standards-setting environment. I think that it is important for you, as analysts of the standardization process, to have exposure to this environment. And this week you can see experts of our study group bustling around from meeting room to meeting room; I hope you can meet some of them and get some of this air.

I should warn you that this air is also contaminated by a virus – a benign one, worry you not – which I hope you will help spread, which is that of an open, transparent standards development organization that highly values innovation. I hope you can spread this virus back into your organizations, many of you coming from academic institutions. I tell this small half-joke just to let you know that we taking steps to increase the participation of universities and research & development groups in our technical work – as part of our continuous effort to continue to be relevant to the market place. I will be going to Beijing in October to attend an International Forum for University Presidents on ICT Education, at which more than 50 universities from all over the world will be present, and I will discuss cooperation issues with them.

We have created a technology watch function, which is open to everyone, and have opened a focused discussion on RFIDs – which is also a subject of a panel in this

Conference. We regularly organize workshops on many ICT related topics to help us on the one hand, to promote the work of our study groups, and, on the other hand, to better coordinate and advance their work. These workshops are free and open to all. Focus Groups are another tool, and that has been instrumental to allow ITU to lead the standardization work on NGN. Many of our study groups also have intense participation of academia, and one of the recent examples is the work we jointly conducted between ITU-T's Study Group 16 and ISO/IEC's MPEG, for the H.264 Advanced Video Coding compression standard, which is a truly remarkable technological achievement – soon to be found in your home!

These are some of the mechanisms we have in place, and I welcome any ideas you might contribute to help us achieve this goal. And I also encourage you to help spread the word that ITU, ISO and IEC are places where academic and R&D organizations are welcome. We are truly committed to see the contribution from academia increased, in particular to help us produce innovative ICT standards in areas not yet covered by our work.

Next year, ITU will be celebrating the 50 years of the creation of the CCITT – which in 1992 became the Standardization Sector of ITU, or ITU-T. One aspect is very important in this history, that of change and adaptation to the needs of our membership – to reflect the needs of the marketplace.

For example, ITU-T has changed its approval procedure several times during the last decade. Before 1990, ITU used to approve its Recommendations every four years. Today, the average time to approve a technical Recommendation is only nine-and-a-half weeks! How do you see this change?

Another significant change is in our membership. Although ITU has enjoyed a partnership between governments and industries from its creation back in 1865, it was not long ago that governments had dominated the standardization process.

Today, the situation is completely different: it is the industry that dominates the process. To illustrate that, consider that out of ITU-T's 14 study groups, 13 chairmanship positions are taken by experts coming from the industry. Of course, we also see an important presence of governments, of administrations in our work – equally from developed and developing countries. Global standards require global acceptance – and ITU-T's process, open, transparent, democratic, allows industry to embrace and all our 189 country members to endorse the Recommendations we produce.

After all, ladies and gentlemen, this is ITU's role as an honest, impartial global broker: to help the world communicate.

Thank you for coming, and I wish that you enjoy your time here and have many fruitful discussions.

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