

**Opening Address**  
**Global Standards Symposium: Bridging the Standardization Gap**  
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H.E. Minister Ivy MATSEPE CASABURRI  
H.E. Vice-Minister Dr Mr Nguyen THANH HUNG  
Excellencies, Ministers, Ambassadors  
Directors of BR, TSB, BDT  
Chairman of TSAG  
Distinguished colleagues  
Ladies and gentlemen

Welcome to the Global Standards Symposium. It is a great pleasure to be here with you today, in Johannesburg, the heart of Africa's most vibrant and fast-growing region for information and communication technologies. It is an especially great pleasure for me to welcome Dr Ivy MATSEPE-CASABURRI, Minister of Communications, South Africa whose wise words we have just heard.

In the last few weeks we have seen a global financial crisis unravel that affects us all. No industry is immune. With lines of credit not so freely available it is quite possible that the rollout of new technology will stall and if so, there will be a knock on effect for manufacturers, operators and users. I am optimistic that we will weather this storm as we did following the end of the dotcom boom. After all the ICT Sector is the engine for all other sectors. Moreover, in times of crisis for other industries such as energy, transport, the use of ICT becomes the best way to solve those problems.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Standards are a proven tool in terms of economic development. The WTO trade report of 2005 underlines the important benefits that standards can deliver. A study by the British Standards Institute has shown that standards make an annual contribution of GBP 2.5 billion to the UK economy and 13 per cent of the growth in labour productivity is attributed to the role of standards. The German standardization institute DIN has estimated that the economic benefits of standardization are about one per cent of GDP in Germany. In Canada standards accounted for 17 per cent of labour productivity increase and nine per cent of growth of GDP over the 1981-2004 period according to its national standards body. I look forward to reading similar figures coming in the future from developing countries.

Standards may have a significant effect on limiting the undesirable outcomes of market failure.

The work of ITU and in the development of global standards for ICTs and telecoms has helped the smoother, more economical introduction of new technologies.

Today I hope we can find inspiration to move forward into an era of even greater efficiency and cooperation. With the combined influence of the individuals in this room I think we can really hope to make a difference.

As the United Nations' lead agency for telecommunication and information technology, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is spearheading an ambitious global effort to help connect the unconnected by 2015 (or 2012). In doing so, ITU has actively engaged governments, industry, development banks and financial institutions, civil society and other partners.

Our objective is to mobilize human, financial and technical resources for the implementation of the connectivity targets of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the regional initiatives adopted by Member States at the ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference 2006. As recognized by global leaders during WSIS, achieving these connectivity objectives will serve as a catalyst to help realize the broader 2015 United Nations Millennium Development Goals in health, education, economy, industry, agriculture, employment and poverty reduction.

In this vein, ITU and partners are organizing a series of Connect the World regional Summits over the coming years, bringing together like-minded stakeholders to work together on concrete actions and projects to expand information and communication technology (ICT) networks and access as a means of spurring investment, employment and broader social and economic development. The Connect Africa Summit, the first in the series, was held in Kigali, Rwanda in October 2007, under the patronage and leadership of the President of Rwanda, His Excellency, Mr. Paul Kagame.

Those of you who attended the Connect Africa event will remember the tremendous buzz this generated. In just two days we were successful in raising an unprecedented 55 billion dollars in funding and in-kind contributions, most of which will be allocated to pan-regional projects aimed at solving major ICT bottlenecks in areas like bandwidth, access costs and network reach.

Additional Summits will be held in other regions in the coming years. I passionately believe that this win-win initiative will benefit every single developing economy, by helping build new markets for ICTs, and by helping nurture new pools of ICT-skilled labour in disadvantaged countries. These 'new economy' professionals will help spur even faster regional growth, while at the same time helping themselves and their nations build a better, more prosperous future.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

The standards, topologies, protocols and interfaces developed by standards organizations such as ITU engender a smoothly functioning global ICT network. A network that powers commerce, politics, democracy, health, education, entertainment, literacy and of course the financial markets that we have heard so much about recently. In short, a network that has become fundamental to our modern lives.

As the world's pre-eminent ICT standards body ITU's standards work underpins much of this amazing technological achievement and plays a strong role in the Union's noble ambition: to Connect the World.

Through this meeting I am confident that you can influence the future direction of standardization, ensuring that standards meet the specific requirements of global business, consumers, developing countries and others with limited access to the benefits of ICTs, as well as people with disabilities. I also strongly believe that the work of standards bodies can also significantly help lessen the effects of climate change.

Today's events and the events of the WTSA that starts here tomorrow see the public and private sector meet to define the standardization priorities and broad work programme for the coming four years. They are critical events for every manufacturer and developer. I am particularly proud of the way in which my friend and colleague Malcolm Johnson has taken the leadership of the Standardization Sector, and how he was able to fit into ITU's management team to make the 'One ITU' concept a reality. A 'One ITU' where all three Sectors, BDT, BR and TSB are working with one common goal 'To connect the world'.

But while we're pioneering new standards systems and applications, let us remember the three billion people in the world still lacking an affordable and reliable connection to basic services. Many governments have recognized that ICTs are now the key engine for economic growth. With the right mix of infrastructure and services, these under-developed markets will quickly take off.

That's not just a boon for under-resourced communities, it's a huge opportunity for many of your organizations.

And that makes it a win-win situation in which everyone will benefit. Booming markets will create more jobs, and more wealth. And here in Africa and other places, in the Americas, Asia Pacific, Arab world, and Europe, every child will get access to the information and communications they need to realize their potential and create a much brighter future.

Thank you.