

Opening Remarks
by
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ITU/EBU Meeting of High-Level Experts
“Competitive Platforms for the Delivery of Digital Content”
EBU HQ, Geneva, 21-22 June 2007

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Dr Hamadoun I. Touré, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this meeting of high-level experts, jointly organized by ITU and the European Broadcasting Union, under the framework of the ITU's Initiative on *Shaping Tomorrow's Networks*.

The title of this meeting – Competitive Platforms for the Delivery of Digital Content – captures the essence of the topic. There are now multiple routes into the home or workplace for the provision of electronic content. Furthermore, the convergence of telecommunications and broadcasting services is getting a momentum in more and more countries in which there will be multiple platforms for the delivery of digital content, and increasing competition between them.

There are three broad factors that underlie the changing environment:

- Firstly, **technological change** is a very significant driving force. All networks in the telecommunications, computing and broadcasting sectors are shifting on to an all-digital, all-IP platform, and so it is becoming much easier for content to be shared between networks;
- Secondly, **market change**, in particular the liberalisation of infrastructure competition, is encouraging the rapid deployment of new and upgraded networks, such as DSL broadband, cable modems, digital terrestrial television, third-generation mobile, WiMAX etc;
- Thirdly, there has been a huge growth in the **availability of digital content**, both in terms of its supply and the demand for it. In particular, the recent trend has been towards greater involvement by users in the supply of their own content – on websites such as YouTube, Wikipedia or MySpace – and a huge increase in the consumption of such content, over broadband networks.

These three broad changes – in technology, in markets and in the availability of digital content – mean that today's consumers have more choice than ever before. For instance, a consumer in Switzerland may theoretically have a choice between ten or more different networks platforms:

- Fixed-line, mobile and voice-over-IP for telephone calls;
- Fibre optics, DSL, cable modems or wi-fi for broadband Internet access;
- Cable, satellite, over-the-air or IPTV for broadcast entertainment.

In addition, there may be a choice of suppliers for each of these potential platforms as well as emerging new platforms, such as WiMAX or power-line communications etc.

Furthermore, as well as having a wider choice of suppliers, today's consumers also enjoy much lower prices.

In view of these changes, which are blurring the boundaries between point-to-point telecommunications and point-to-multipoint broadcasting, it is important to bring together these two communities together to discuss the topics of common interest. That is why ITU and the EBU have taken the initiative to host this joint meeting. The issues that confront our different memberships are increasingly the same ones – issues such as access to content, multiple play, intellectual property protection, user-generated content etc. Similarly, the need for standardization and interworking of different network platforms is becoming more important for both sectors.

I look forward to a lively and fruitful policy debate over the issues concerning the delivery of digital content, fully recognising that participants in this meeting are coming from different sides of the telecommunications and broadcasting industries. I am aware of the fact that both sectors have a long history of infrastructure investment in the roll-out of networks, and we have to capitalise on that investment, not to devalue it. However, there is also a great opportunity for all of us to improve our life in the future Information Society.

A Cooperation Agreement was signed on 13 April 2007 between the Secretary-Generals of our two organisations as a basis for future cooperation. As a matter of fact, two organizations have been working together on several projects including the IPTV projects. I believe that there are great benefits to be gained from our two organisations working more closely together and the members of

both organizations as well as the ICT industry will benefit from our cooperation. I hope that this meeting will mark the further strengthening of a long and productive relationship.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the EBU Secretary-General and his staff for hosting this meeting and for working so collaboratively with ITU in the preparations for this event.

I wish you all a very successful meeting.

Thank you for your attention.