

## First WTSA-08 meeting in Africa defines new standards landscape



● **The World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTSA-08), which closed in Johannesburg, South Africa on 30 October,** decided on a wide range of issues that would impact the future direction of the information and communication technology (ICT) industry.

ITU members across the global ICT industry and administrations from across the world, asked for increased emphasis on key areas such as ICTs and climate change, the deployment of IPv6, accessibility to ICTs for persons with disabilities, conformance and interoperability testing, and encouraging academic participation in ITU's work.

Delegates at the ten-day meeting in Johannesburg agreed on measures including a restructuring of ITU's standards work and a revised focus that will serve to strengthen ITU's position as the world's premier ICT standards body. Eight new chairmen were elected bringing a fresh outlook to many of ITU's areas of study. 768 delegates, including 13 Ministers or Vice-Ministers from 99 countries participated.

A key agreement encapsulated in a Resolution adopted by the Assembly is that ITU members will work towards reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions arising from the use of ICTs, in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Resolution also recognizes that ICTs can be a major mitigating factor in efforts to moderate climate change and to limit and ultimately reduce GHG emissions across all industry sectors. It also acknowledges that ITU has committed to achieving climate neutrality within three years.

Another Resolution tasks the ITU secretariat with carrying out studies in order to introduce the use of an ITU Mark as a voluntary programme permitting suppliers to make a visible declaration that their products conform to ITU-T Recommendations.

ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun Touré said, "We have made significant strides in the development of a knowledge-based information society. This World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly, which has brought together close to 800 experts from nearly 100 countries, has laid out a road map for the future development of standards that underpin the world's communications networks. This is a critical input for all stakeholders who join ITU in our commitment to connect the world."

The closing plenary of the Assembly saw Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, Minister of Communications of South Africa switch on South Africa's digital broadcasting signal, which will be fully implemented in time for the Football World Cup in 2010.

## ACMA to pilot cybersafety programme for primary and secondary level educators

● **The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)** launched the pilot of 'Cybersafety Outreach - Professional Development for Educators' around 30 October, 2008.

The initiative is ACMA's national cybersafety programme designed for primary and secondary level educators. It aims to equip educators to teach their students about cybersafety, in keeping with the Australian Government's broad commitment to cybersafety education.

Fifty teachers and industry stakeholders attended the pilot in Melbourne on 31 October and 3 November. Their feedback would shape and inform the final Cybersafety Outreach programme that will be rolled out nationally in early 2009.

The Cybersafety Outreach pilot will provide valuable feedback to ACMA and will help ACMA to further develop the planned programme to ensure it best meets the needs of Australia's educators. The pilot will provide practical strategies and classroom resources for educators to assist their students become responsible digital citizens.

## Phones 4U commits to stop breaches of consumer law

● **One of the roles of communications regulators is to protect the interests of consumers and on 10 November,** Ofcom received legally-binding undertakings from mobile service provider Phones 4U committing itself to change a



number of its practices which would stop it from breaching consumer protection laws relating to the sale of mobile handsets and contracts.

In a joint investigation over a six month period, Ofcom and Staffordshire Trading Standards found that Phones 4U had breached several consumer protection laws.

Phones 4U were found to have not provided customers with a refund when they returned faulty handsets within a reasonable period of time, that were purchased directly from Phones 4U. Ofcom found Phones 4U to be having unfair terms in their handset return policy; using unfair terms contained in 'chequeback' schemes; and making misleading, false or deceptive representations or omissions to consumers about matters such as network coverage in particular areas, or what was included in their mobile phone plan.

Since the investigation began, Phones 4U has made changes to a number of its consumer policies and processes, in particular its handset return policy; 'chequeback' terms and conditions; sales practices, particularly relating to informing consumers what their network coverage will be, what their mobile plan will contain and cancellation rights and upgrades.

Phones 4U had cooperated fully during the investigation leading to a substantial reduction in complaints. In addition, Phones 4U implemented changes to its staff training procedures and operations which enabled Ofcom to swiftly complete its investigation.

Earlier in 2008, Ofcom published a range of proposals to further clamp down on mobile mis-selling.



## Hong Kong proposes Fixed Mobile Number Portability

● **While the buzz has been about mobile number portability, on 31 October**, Hong Kong communications regulator, the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) issued a consultation paper to solicit public opinion on various issues related to the voluntary implementation of Fixed Mobile Number Portability (FMNP).

At present, subscribers of one fixed network operator may port their numbers to another fixed network operator and likewise, subscribers of one mobile network operator may port their numbers to another mobile network operator but cross platform number portability between fixed and mobile networks -- or FMNP -- is currently unavailable in Hong Kong.

FMNP would allow fixed and mobile users to port their fixed or mobile numbers to any fixed or mobile network as they like, which generally would help increase cross platform competition between the fixed and mobile network operators, provide innovative solution to meet the demand of the customers and encourage more efficient use of the scarce public resource of numbers.

However, there are concerns over the impacts brought about by the introduction of FMNP and the need for a regulatory regime which is conducive to market development and consumer welfare.

A consumer survey commissioned by the Telecommunications Authority (TA) reveals that around one-fourth of respondents who are using fixed service may port their numbers to mobile service if the FMNP service is provided free of charge. The corresponding figure for porting mobile numbers to the fixed networks is much lower, the survey found.

Having considered the public demand for FMNP as revealed by the consumer survey, relevant overseas experience and the fact that market force is the best way to determine the market outcome, the TA is of the preliminary view while there is insufficient justification to mandate the implementation of FMNP, it should be in the public interest to allow individual network operators to make their own business decisions to implement FMNP on a voluntary basis.

## Australia to implement mandatory Internet censorship

● **Australia's Federal Government reportedly plans to implement mandatory censoring of the Internet.**

US tech giants Google, Microsoft and Yahoo, and a coalition of human rights and other groups reportedly had unveiled a code of conduct aimed at safeguarding online freedom of speech and privacy.

The Australian Government had declared that it would not let Internet users opt out of the proposed national Internet filter. The plan was first created to combat child pornography and adult content, but could be extended to include controversial websites on euthanasia or anorexia.

Communications minister Stephen Conroy revealed the mandatory censorship to the Senate estimates committee as the Global Network Initiative, bringing together leading companies, human rights organisations, academics and investors, committed the technology firms to "protect the freedom of expression and privacy rights of their users".

Communications minister, Stephen Conroy said that trials had yet to be carried out, but that they were talking about mandatory blocking, where possible, of illegal material.

The System Administrators Guild of Australia, Electronic Frontiers Australia and others had attacked the proposal, saying it would unfairly restrict Australians' access to the web, slow Internet speeds and raise the price of Internet access.

EFA board member Colin Jacobs believes that the proposed measure would have little effect on illegal Internet content, including child pornography, since it would not cover file-sharing networks.

However, the Australian Christian Lobby welcomed the proposals and its managing director Jim Wallace said the measures were needed to prevent access to illegal hardcore material and that child pornography must be placed above the industry's desire for unfettered access.