Joint ITU-T and OASIS Workshop and Demonstration of Advances in ICT Standards for Public Warning
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

Let me introduce myself. I am Houlin Zhao, Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau of ITU. On my side is Mr. Patrick Gannon, President and CEO of OASIS. We have jointly invited you to this workshop. Welcome you to this workshop on ICT standards for public warning.

Having timely and reliable access to information and communication technologies before disaster strikes is indispensable to the public and authorities and, above all, to save lives. ITU has worked on emergency communications and early warning systems from its early days. The creation of disaster resistant telecommunication networks has been a strategic imperative of ITU through the development of the telegraph, radio and television broadcasting and the Internet. We have done this by producing ITU Recommendations that range from SOS signalling to technical standards to reduce degradation or disruption of communication networks as a result of disasters. ITU was instrumental in the development of the Tampere Convention, which was ratified early January 2005. We continue to study the regulatory issues that are vital to our work in this area and are implementing projects to ensure their success.

As we know, there are four distinct communication channels when such an emergency occurs in other words, citizen to authority, authority to authority, authority to citizen, and citizen to citizen. These channels encompass a system to collect data from affected areas, a coordinated system to allow authorities and international agencies to exchange views so that a decision can be made in a timely manner, a system to inform the public of imminent dangers, a system to enable authorities to mobilize all resources necessary, and to coordinate post-disaster relief actions. In addition, overloaded traffic caused by a panic reaction may prevent the public communication networks from functioning. Hence, urgent messages for disaster relief may not get through the network, or in the worst case scenario, public communication networks may be paralysed. In these cases we have to make sure that the public system is working properly. On the other hand, tasks such as upgrading the current disaster monitoring system, guaranteeing interworking among systems run by different agencies from different countries (or even within the same country!), and establishing an efficient public warning system, all these need good communication tools. New ICT technologies can improve our ability to react, and the internationally agreed standards that ITU develops are necessary to facilitate interconnection and interoperation. In these areas, I believe that ITU has much to offer.

ITU, with its competence and technical expertise is committed to cooperating with ITU Members, UN family organizations, the private sector, the scientific and industrial community and civil society in a joint effort to develop an integrated early warning system based on modern technologies.

ITU is not the only one active in this field, and ITU cannot be the only one in this field. One of active organizations is OASIS. I would leave the introduction of OASIS to my friend Mr. Gannon. Let me say a few words about this workshop itself.

The specific objectives for the Workshop are:

-       To review progress concerning public warning since 2003, including the Tampere Convention

- To demonstrate the availability and effectiveness of interoperable technologies based on the OASIS Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) content standard which is applicable to all alerts and notifications in disasters and emergency situations

- To identify existing standardization gaps, including authorization and authentication of public warnings and the attendant implications for public policy

- To prepare an action list for filling gaps and promoting public warning standardization, and identify key players that could collaborate in such work.

The workshop will be accompanied by demonstrations of standards-based implementations providing all-media, all-hazards public warning in various societies worldwide, using the CAP OASIS Standard. I wish to thank the exhibitors for their effort to bring their products to this meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you look at the programme, you will find a strong team of speakers and session chairs who are senior experts in those areas indicated, and they are coming from a very wide range of entities covering UN agencies and other international agencies, national authorities, industry members, civil societies and others .I am very grateful for their kindness to join us at this workshop, despite of their heavy schedules they have at home. I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the steering committee who have worked very, very hard to set up the programme. My appreciation is also to the secretariat staff from both OASIS and ITU who have spared no effort to coordinate and bring this workshop into reality. I would like to express my thanks to Verisign who kindly sponsors a reception this evening, to which you all are invited.

The last point I would like to make is to thank my friend, Patrick, for his efforts to organize this workshop. We attended the WSIS Phase II at Tunis in November 2005, where he suggested to organizing this workshop jointly by ITU-T and OASIS. Viewing the high interests shown during the WSIS Phase II preparation and the conference itself, I did not hesitate to agree with his proposal. I am very pleased with the result of that discussion. I would like to advice you that this is not the first time we have worked together. As a matter of fact, a few years ago, OASIS joined ISO, IEC, UNECE and ITU to sign a MoU on E-business. OASIS became an A.4/A.5 partner with ITU-T shortly afterwards. Very recently the cooperation between two sides brought us a further fruitful result that two OASIS products, SAML and XACML, were successfully adopted as ITU-T Recommendations in June 2006, at a very short time delay after they were presented to ITU-T. This workshop might facilitate the adoption by ITU of the OASIS CAP standard that is showcased in this event. Last week, I was privileged to meet with the Members of Directors of OASIS Board. We had a very friendly and very constructive discussion. For all these positive developments, I would like to express my sincere thanks and high appreciations to Patrick for his excellent leadership and very good spirit of international cooperation.

Thanks for your attention.

Now, please allow me to invite Mr. Gannon to make his opening remarks.