



Ladies and Gentleman,

On behalf of the Italian Communication Minister and of the Istituto Superiore delle Comunicazioni e delle Tecnologie dell'Informazione (ISCTI) Director I would welcome this EC IPv6 Task Force and IPv6 Cluster joint Meeting.

The Ministry and the ISCTI (which is the technical department of the Ministry) in particular have always devoted particular care to the evolution of communication systems.

This attention has to be considered from two different points of view: the institutional one of course, as research in ICT field is one of the main topics under our responsibility, but even more important is the impact that these emerging technologies have to the end users.

To enforce its commitment in this specific field, ISCTI is investing relevant resources: we have for instance recently set up a laboratory for the assessment of the Quality of Services of multimedia terminal, taking into account both the subjective and objective parameters.

Coming back to the subject of this meeting, I would just briefly remind you the urgency for the setting up of a European IPv6 framework, due to the well known predictions that are the base of the existence of this Task Force: the world population is now about 6.2 billion, and it is foreseen that by 2004 the Internet users will be 1.5 billion.

While the theoretical number of addresses available in IPv4 is more than 4 billion, more realistic estimates based on efficiency considerations show an actual maximum of about 250 million. With the current rate of Internet growth, the IPv4 address space is going to be exhausted in a few years: because of this address shortage, policies for the allocation of new IPv4 addresses are becoming stricter and stricter. Providers are not able to get enough addresses for their customers, and thus the availability of Internet access for all is at stake.

Another point we can't fail to appreciate is that IPv6 offers a secure end to end communication environment with embedded features that should, hopefully, constitute the base for the next generation open network framework.

As you know, Italy, as the other EU countries, is strongly pursuing the implementation of the eEurope 2005 action plan and in this light, the adoption of IPv6 is particularly important for the EU interests.

Internet has become a strategic resource and not only for the research community but also for Government, education, business and citizens intended in the broader sense.

We are aware of the importance of a structural and cooperative approach to the problem, so we can only agree with what the Commissioner Liikanen said in his opening speech to the IPv6 Task Force: "Our objective is to ensure that Europe's competitiveness in wireless technology is not jeopardised by the lack of a clear road map towards IPv6".

We have chosen this relevant event to formally launch the Italian IPv6 Task Force, which follows other similar initiatives already active in other European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom.

In the next months, possibly weeks, we have a lot of work to do to investigate and manage critical issues related to IPv6 in Italy. Topics like Security, Privacy, Business opportunities, Broadband Applications contain a number of issues to debate both at national and international level.

We are confident that our country is ready to accept this challenge and our Ministry will take its responsibility to achieve the Task Force objectives.

To conclude, I really believe that EU could play a leading role in this global exercise and Italy will do its part.