



Treaties Committee approves changes to the International Telecommunication Union

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties' *Report 119*, tabled today in the Senate, has recommended Australia ratify amendments to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Constitution and Convention that will ensure the ITU's funding is stable and predictable.

"The ITU is a low profile but important organisation for Australians," the Committee's acting Chair, Senator Simon Birmingham, noted. "The ITU establishes international standards for mobile communications. Because of the ITU's work, Australians can access the latest mobile hardware and software. It also enables Australian developers of mobile hardware and software to take advantage of an international market for their products."

The amendments to the ITU Constitution and Convention will:

- limit Member States reducing their contribution to the ITU by not more than 15 per cent of their prior level of contribution at any time; and
- increase the number of funding choices available to Member States wishing to contribute to the ITU.

"Contributions to the ITU are voluntary, which means the ITU cannot be certain of its funding levels from year to year," Senator Birmingham said. "The amendments will give the ITU financial stability and predictability, enabling more forward planning and releasing constraints on longer term programs."

Australia contributes about A\$5 million to the ITU annually. The funds are raised through a registration levy on the communications industry. Given the quantum of consumer spending enabled by international mobile communications standards, Australia's communications industry generally views its contribution to the ITU as good value for money.

Report 119 is available on the Committee's website: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/reports.htm or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Media contact:	Senator Simon Birmingham (Ben Bartlett)	(02) 6277 3198
Background:	Committee Secretariat	(02) 6277 4642