



Buenos Aires Declaration (1994)

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BUENOS AIRES DECLARATION ON GLOBAL TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

1. The first World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-94) held by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) since the establishment of its Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D), took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 21 to 29 March 1994. Delegations from 133 Member countries of the ITU, headed by ministers or senior officials, and representatives of 31 organizations and agencies, as well as many private sector representatives, participated in the Conference. The purposes of the Conference were: (a) to review the progress made in telecommunication development since publication in December 1984 of the Report of the Independent Commission for World-Wide Telecommunications Development "The Missing Link"; (b) to set the goals and objectives up to the year 2000 and to define and establish a common vision and strategies for achieving balanced telecommunication development by and beyond the end of the century; and (c) to approve an action plan which translates the goals and objectives agreed upon into a concrete work programme to be implemented over the next four years, identifying those priorities specific to the ITU and those areas of cooperation with its development partners.
2. In his opening address, Dr. Pekka Tarjanne, Secretary-General of the ITU, reviewed developments since the Maitland Report ("The Missing Link") and briefly outlined the challenges facing the world telecommunication sector. In his keynote address, United States Vice-President Al Gore called on legislators, regulators and business people to work together to build and operate a Global Information Infrastructure which would bring improved social and economic conditions to all people. He emphasized the need for all countries of the world to participate fully in the benefits of this "network of networks" and urged the Conference to bring this goal quickly within the reach of developing countries.
3. The Conference was inaugurated by His Excellency Dr. Carlos Menem, President of the Republic of Argentina. He convincingly articulated the intimate link between telecommunications and development, not only in his own country but in all countries of the world.
4. The Conference was chaired by Dr. Oscar González, Undersecretary of Communications of Argentina.
5. The Conference was addressed by many ministers responsible for telecommunications and other senior representatives of governments and international and regional organizations. They stressed the importance of translating the indisputable potential of telecommunications into concrete action to improve the lives of all peoples of the world, especially those in developing countries. They also stressed the serious imbalance in world telecommunication development which constrains the development of the global economy and should be a common concern of the whole international community. Practical remedies should be adopted.

6. The Conference expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Argentina for hosting the Conference and providing the conditions which contributed to its success.

7. The Minister of Transport and Communications of Malta extended an invitation to host the next WTDC in 1998. This proposal was gratefully accepted by the Conference.

8. The Conference was the culmination of a process highlighted by:

- (a) the Maitland Report;
- (b) the Arusha Declaration on World Telecommunications Development (May 1985);
- (c) the decision of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Nice, 1989) to strengthen the Union's development role by establishing the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT);
- (d) the ITU High Level Committee's Report "Tomorrow's ITU: The Challenges of Change", which recommended that "... the ITU [should] play a more clearly-defined catalytic role, as envisaged in Nice Resolution No. 14, by working cooperatively with international, regional and bilateral development and financial agencies, and by presenting to developing countries the range of policy and structural options that will generate greater resources for telecommunications development";
- (e) the ITU Constitution and Convention (Geneva, 1992) which refer, *inter alia*, to the Union's catalytic role in stimulating telecommunication development, call for special attention to be given to the requirements of the least developed countries, and establish the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector;
- (f) the Resolutions and recommendations of the first cycle of regional telecommunication development conferences:
 - Harare, 1990 for Africa
 - Prague, 1991 for Europe
 - Acapulco, 1992 for the Americas
 - Cairo, 1992 for the Arab States
 - Singapore, 1993 for Asia and the Pacific;
- (g) the insights provided in the message from the Telecommunication Development Advisory Board;
- (h) the concept of sustainable development emphasized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, June 1992.

9. Taking note of the above and with a view to setting goals and objectives for the future, the Conference **declares that:**

- (a) Telecommunications is an essential component of political, economic, social and cultural development. It fuels the global information society and economy which is rapidly transforming local, national and international life and despite physical boundaries is promoting better understanding between peoples. Thus, ITU Members have the duty to provide for communications to be made available to all individuals, groups and peoples. A dynamic area of economic activity in its own right, telecommunications underlies practically all areas of economic activity and facilitates trade.

- (b) New technological developments in telecommunication and information technologies have the potential to close the development gaps between developing and developed countries and, in individual countries, between densely and sparsely populated areas. Telecommunications may unintentionally perpetuate the development gaps without a more determined, integrated and strategic approach to the challenges of telecommunication development by governments, the private sector and international and regional organizations.
- (c) Any strategic cooperation for the development of telecommunications must recognize the varying levels of development in developing countries. While encouraged by the convergence between medium and high teledensity countries, there is still a growing divergence between medium and low teledensity ones. This fact underscores the need to pay special attention to the requirements of the least developed countries.
- (d) Given that the telecommunication requirements of most developing countries are vast, and the resources available to meet them limited, governments should establish appropriate telecommunication policies and regulatory structures.
- (e) The development of telecommunications may be fostered by liberalization, private investment and competition in appropriate circumstances. Their introduction in any restructuring exercise should be compatible with national development goals and with improving service to underserved areas. Such a restructuring should include a regulatory system which will :
- create a stable and transparent environment to attract investment;
 - facilitate access of service providers to the network with a framework that promotes fair competition while protecting network integrity;
 - ensure the provision of universal service helping to achieve integrated rural development as well as promoting innovation and the introduction of new services and technologies; and
 - guarantee the rights of users, operators and investors.

Restructuring should promote partnerships between telecommunication organizations in developing and developed countries that equitably take account of the interests of developing countries.

- (f) The ITU has a special role to play in advising policy-makers on the options available in tailoring policies and regulatory structures to fit a country's particular requirements. The ITU should work in close cooperation with regional telecommunication organizations and international, regional and national development and financing agencies.
- (g) Since the resources available through multilateral cooperation will not be sufficient to meet the requirements of developing countries, the ITU must play a creative catalytic role in concert with all the entities forming part of its wide family, and with global, regional and national organizations and agencies, and the private sector. These development, financing and investment agencies, both global, regional and national, are urged to attach higher priority to the development of telecommunications in developing countries.
- (h) The studies carried out in the ITU Radiocommunication and Telecommunication Standardization Sectors play a significant role in the transfer of knowledge and technology. Close cooperation between these Sectors and the Telecommunication Development Sector is necessary to bring about new dynamism to this transfer.
- (i) Development strategies should encompass sound and television broadcasting via terrestrial and satellite systems as one of the key factors in promoting social and cultural development. The new broadcasting technologies being developed will provide opportunities, including those of distance learning, for a greater contribution to development.

- (j) No telecommunication network can be designed, installed and operated efficiently without appropriately skilled staff at all levels. Human resources development and management require innovative approaches to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing telecommunication environment.
 - (k) The Buenos Aires Action Plan, adopted by this Conference, establishes a programme of cooperation among the members of the Telecommunication Development Sector (development conferences, study groups, etc.), a programme of assistance to developing countries, and a special programme to enable the least developed countries to reach a threshold of sustainable telecommunication development.
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