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## Address delivered by Mr. M. Mili, Secretary-General of the ITU, at the inaugural meeting of the World Administrative Radio Conference for Space Telecommunications

Geneva, 7 June 1971

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Federal Councillor,

Doctor Candau, representing H. E. U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Executive Heads of the international organizations,

Representatives of the Cantonal and Municipal Authorities,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like first of all to thank Mr. Bonvin, Federal Councillor, for the remarkable speech he has just made and for the honour he does us in being present at this official opening meeting of the second World Administrative Radio Conference for Space Telecommunications. No one is more qualified than the Head of the Department of Transport, Communications and Power, who also is a good friend of the ITU, to address an important Conference organized by a specialized agency of the United Nations which for more than a century has enjoyed

the generous hospitality of his country and for more than a quarter of a century has chosen to have its headquarters in this beautiful city of Geneva.

I should also like to extend my warmest thanks to the Cantonal and Municipal Authorities for honouring this opening meeting by their presence.

We are deeply touched, too, by the kind words spoken by my old friend Dr. Candau, who was good enough to bring greetings and good wishes from all the international organizations members of the large family of the United Nations. It is a great pleasure for us that the Director-General of the World Health Organization has been able to attend this meeting and to transmit the message by the Secretary-General of the United Nations which so rightly stresses the importance of telecommunication in the world today.

In his remarkable message U Thant very aptly recalled the substance of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on space matters. As far back as 12 December 1959, these resolutions drew the world's attention to the problems posed by the advent of the space era and particularly to the role which the ITU must play in this field. No one knows better than he the heavy responsibilities that the Union must discharge towards all of the peoples of our planet.

I should like to ask Dr. Candau, on your behalf, to convey to the Secretary-General of the United Nations our warmest thanks for the encouraging message he was good enough to send us.

In fact, the ITU has discharged its responsibilities with competence, resolution and efficiency for more than a century. But at no time in its long history have these responsibilities emerged so clearly as with the advent of the space era.

Our position today could easily be likened to that of builders who must convert and enlarge a handsome well-constructed building in order to meet new requirements which are constantly increasing at bewildering speed, without being able to predict exactly what the future holds in store.

To realize how true this is we have only to consider the progress which has been achieved in space telecommunications since the first Space Conference in 1963.

I shall simply cite two significant examples to show how the progress accomplished in a few years has upset the most optimistic forecasts. The first concerns the *Mondovision* broadcast which was made when man first landed on the moon and showing the two astronauts carrying out their delicate mission on lunar soil. Admittedly, technicians had already foreseen the practical use of television in the exploration of outer space. But the fact that pictures could be seen at the same time by several million viewers on all five continents, in their own homes, made this new telecommunication medium much more impressive than a mere instrument of space research.

The second example illustrates even more strikingly how events today have exceeded all expectations. I refer to telecommunications by satellite. You will remember that in 1963 we were still thinking of low-altitude and medium-altitude satellites which, because of their drift in relation to the earth, required extremely complex earth stations. At that time some doubt was felt about the utility of geostationary satellites in view of the long propagation delay involved.

Today, not quite eight years later, we are already accustomed to geostationary satellites providing high-reliability and high-capacity telecommunication services between countries which, without this new medium, could never have been linked up by high-quality service.

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In order to arrive at a correct estimate of our responsibilities in space matters, I think that we must look beyond the technical reasons which led us to convene this Conference and focus our attention on the following basic questions:

Why was the ITU created and what is the justification for its existence?

To answer such questions, we must remember two things: the first is that the operation of a telecommunication service, however simple it may be, demands appropriate equipment, i.e. capital investment; the second is that the user of the equipment must enjoy satisfactory service quality and be sure that the equipment is highly reliable.

The corollary of these basic principles is that the telecommunication services must be protected at international level so that at no time do they become disorganized. It is likewise necessary that the costly equipment installed should at all times retain its original utility. This is true of telecommunications as a whole and particularly of radiocommunications.

Unfortunately, it appears that the international protection of telecommunication services is not always given the attention it deserves, though for the ITU such protection is a self-evident necessity. For it is practically impossible to conceive how any form of telecommunications could be organized in complete disregard of the international regulations established by the ITU.

Who could, or would want to, invest money in modern telecommunication equipment without the assurance that it would function satisfactorily? We can go even further and say without any hesitation that much of the work of research and development on which the advance of modern telecommunications is based, would be worthless without the regulations established by the ITU which protect both existing and potential services.

The ITU thus creates the conditions required for the effective use of telecommunication services in an international environment. To do so, it prepares regulations which govern equally the technical, opera-

tional and administrative aspects of telecommunications.

It is therefore your job to draw up appropriate regulations which can be applied to all the services which use space techniques now or may use them in the future.

In other words, this Conference must define the framework of regulations that will ensure the harmonious operation of all the services which resort, or will resort to, the use of satellites. Some of these services—telecommunications and meteorology, for example—are already working. Others, such as satellite broadcasting, surveying the natural resources of the earth and aids to the mobile services, will shortly be introduced. There is also radio astronomy, which will certainly be one of your main preoccupations.

Of course it is not an easy task to concretize the requirements of all users, both present and future, large and small, and to safeguard their legitimate interests. But we are convinced that, as in the past, the ITU will faithfully discharge its responsibilities in all these fields.

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For space telecommunications in particular, the ITU's role is of fundamental importance since, once a spacecraft is launched, its only link with the earth is that provided by radiocommunications. In other words, without radio there could be no space activities, so that the motions of deep space and telecommunications are absolutely inseparable.

Aware of this fact, each of the Administrative Conferences held since 1959 has taken account in some way of the introduction of satellites. Thus the 1963 Conference established the first regulations on space radiocommunications; but now, eight years later with the constant advances of technique, we are again confronted with the same problems. We now have a much better idea of all the possibilities offered by space for such purposes as are in the mobile aeronautical and maritime services, satellite broadcasting and many other practical applications.

Today, satellite telecommunications have become an important part of international telecommunications and have reached the stage of commercial operation on an intergovernmental level. In this connection, I should like to refer in particular to the adoption, a few days ago, of the Definitive Agreement governing the international communication-satellite organization " INTELSAT ".

This new organization is the first intergovernmental commercial enterprise ever set on foot. We are therefore justified in asking whether INTELSAT does not owe its world-wide role above all to the truly international nature of telecommunications themselves, just as our Union did when it was set up 106 years ago. Personally, I am convinced that this is the case and we are looking forward with interest to the emergence of new possibilities for international co-operation resulting from the activities of the intergovernmental organizations responsible for the rational exploitation of these new media. Such an activity would be a natural extension of the ITU's technical and regulatory tasks.

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Needless to say, the reinforcement of existing telecommunication services is not the sole purpose of satellite telecommunications. They offer a number of quite new possibilities, such as highly reliable links with a large circuit capacity and spanning great distances while using only comparatively small mobile earth stations.

It is to take advantage of this new possibility that some of the organizations in the United Nations family are seeking to employ the new media in emergencies such as the natural catastrophes which have recently devastated Peru and East Pakistan. For the destruction of means of communication in the disaster areas is one of the major obstacles to the launching of prompt and effective relief operations. These difficulties can, however, be rapidly overcome by the use of small mobile equipments and this naturally leads us to speak of the role that this Conference can play in ensuring the economic and social development of mankind, a role which was so well brought out by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his message.

Speaking to the participants at the closing ceremony of the negotiations on the INTELSAT Agreement, President Nixon rightly referred to the "communication gap" which is certainly the main cause of the lack of comprehension between peoples. That gap, which must be filled, is one of the problems with which this Conference will have to deal, and I am sure that you will often have it in mind during your deliberations.

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Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Your task is a very complex one; but it will be greatly facilitated by the excellent technical groundwork constituted by the numerous proposals submitted by the various administrations. It will also be facilitated by the Final Report prepared by the CCIR Special Joint Meeting which met in Geneva early this year. You thus have a solid foundation which will enable you to avoid the long discussions which invariably arise whenever an attempt is made to envisage the future on the basis of the techniques of the past.

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In conclusion, I am surely not mistaken in asserting that the repercussions of this Conference in human terms will be very far-reaching. Some of the telecommunication services for which you are going to draw up regulations—and I am thinking more especially of direct satellite broadcasting and of satellites for surveying the earth's natural resources—will exert a decisive influence on the future of mankind. That is an unquestioned fact.

We are fortunately, from many points of view, well equipped to draw up appropriate regulations. The Members of the ITU possess a valuable body of experience in this matter and the impressive array of highly qualified experts who are gathered together here is the best guarantee of success in your work.

May I therefore wish you every success in the accomplishment of the difficult task before you.