Journal Title: ITU News

Journal Issue: (no. 5) 2006

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Article Title: Editorial: The ITU World Information Society Award

Page number(s): p. 3

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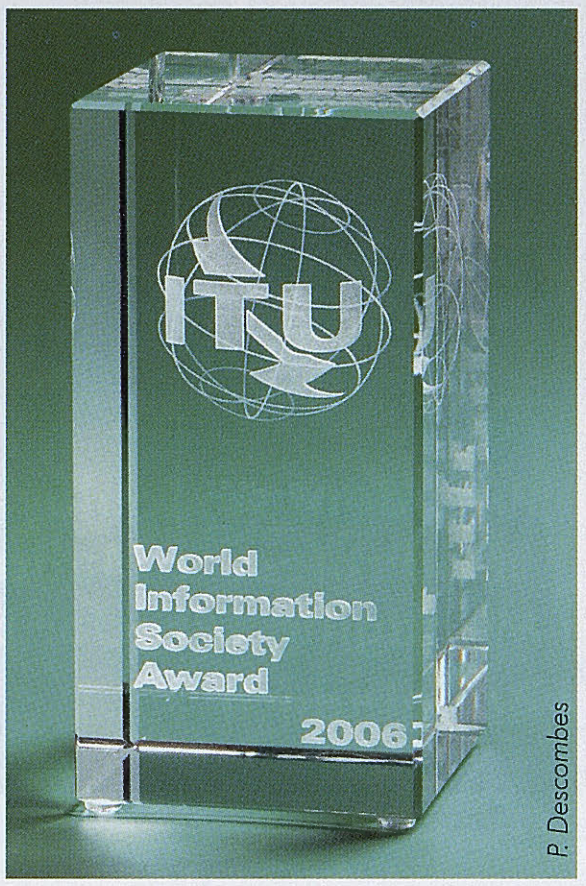
The ITU World Information Society Award

Yoshio Utsumi
ITU Secretary-General

The ITU World Information Society Award has been created to honour those that have made a significant contribution to promoting, building, or strengthening a people-centred, development-oriented and knowledge-based information society. Beginning this year, the award will be presented annually, on 17 May, to mark World Information Society Day.

I believe strongly in supporting efforts to close the digital divide. When I see my little granddaughter surrounded by the many wonders of the digital revolution, I think of the millions of children around the world who are deprived of the benefits that information and communication technologies (ICT) can bring. We must put an end to this intolerable situation, and use the opportunities created by ICT, not only for improving living standards, but also for reaching out to vulnerable communities and for building bridges between cultures. Together, we can create a bright and sustainable future for all. A future in which we can all share information and knowledge. A future in which everyone has a voice.



The crystal glass award is 20 cm tall and has the effect of an ITU globe embedded within

These are aims which are already being pursued by the first two people to receive the ITU World Information Society Award. Thanks to Professor Muhammad Yunus, the word "grameen" is one that is now used and respected around the globe in work to reduce poverty. And the Digital Solidarity Fund, promoted by laureate President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, promises to make it possible for more and more people in developing countries to become connected. Both men have demonstrated that individuals can truly make a difference in helping to bridge the digital divide. They generated the seeds of simple but powerful ideas, and they had the imagination to envision them flourishing into ever-growing systems to improve our world.

In future years too, whether for mobilizing public opinion, for example, or for creating key technical innovations, recipients of the ITU World Information Society Award will be recognized for achievements that give people a better quality of life through the use of ICT. ■