



Journal Title: ITU News

Journal Issue: (no. 4) 2010

Author: Hamadoun I. Touré

Article Title: Editorial: World Telecommunication and Information Society Day

Page number(s): p. 1

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Editorial

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day

Dr Hamadoun I. Touré
ITU Secretary-General



■ This year marks the 145th anniversary of the establishment of ITU. I am proud to be leading this dynamic organization, the specialized United Nations agency which defines the cutting edge of information and communication technologies (ICT) and is steadfastly committed to connecting the world so that people everywhere can enjoy the benefits of the ongoing digital revolution.

ICT provide solutions to many of the problems facing cities even as they become magnets for migrating populations as well as contribute to making them more eco-friendly and economically viable. That is why our governing body, the Council, chose the theme “Better city, better life with ICT” to mark this year’s World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (17 May). This theme is in keeping with the overarching theme — Better City, Better Life — of the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, China, which is also the venue for the global observance of the Day.

For many city dwellers, it is nearly impossible to imagine life without ICT. From television to mobile phones and the Internet, ICT have reshaped the world, helping billions of people to live, work and play in the most creative ways. ICT present innovative ways of managing our cities — smart buildings, intelligent traffic management, new efficiencies in energy consumption and waste management, and not least exchanging information and knowledge and communicating on the move in an increasingly converged information society.

On the 145th anniversary of ITU, it is my pleasure to honour those who have made this possible

through their foresight and commitment to harnessing the potential of ICT to make the world a better place. Malaysia’s Prime Minister Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak; Wang Jianzhou, Chairman and CEO of China Mobile; and Robert E. Kahn, Chairman, CEO and President of the Corporation for National Research Initiatives, are the eminent winners of the 2010 ITU World Telecommunication and Information Society Award.

While the world’s cities are undoubtedly endowed with many advantages, the disparities between the “haves” and the “have-nots” among urban populations are often a vivid reminder that the vast majority is left out of the reach of development. It is ironic that even in densely populated urban centres, countless millions are deprived of access to the means of communication and information that are taken for granted by others. Along with this growing digital divide, the lack of safe drinking water, sanitation, food, shelter, health care and education are basic needs that are addressed by the Millennium Development Goals, which call for the significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

By tapping into the huge potential of ICT to improve the lives of people, and by providing affordable and equitable access to information and knowledge to empower everyone to achieve their aspirations, countries can contribute towards meeting the rising expectations of an ever-growing population in the world’s cities. For its part, ITU is committed to connecting the world, including the millions who remain unconnected in our teeming cities. ■