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Union Activities

The French Minister for Posts, Telecommunications and Space, Mr P. Quilès, opens ITU Plenipotentiary Conference

"It is with the certainty that your work will be of the greatest importance for the future of world telecommunications that I have the honour to open this Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union." It was with these words that the French Minister for Posts, Telecommunications and Space, Mr P. Quilès declared open the 13th Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union on Tuesday, 23 May. The Conference, which is meeting at the Acropolis in Nice, will last almost six weeks, until 29 June.

The Plenipotentiary Conference, the ITU's supreme body, is meeting for the thirteenth time since the foundation of the organization in 1865. This is the first time it is being held in France since the ITU was founded.

Telecommunication authorities from the world over are taking part (over 900 delegates from 140 countries).

In his opening address, Minister Quilès declared:

"Although history does not repeat itself, it seems to me that the 1865 Convention enshrined an objective which was ambitious in its simplicity and which remains a topical issue: to establish an international communication network. This means that questions relating to standards and regulation, and particularly co-ordination, were already in the foreground. Of course, we were only 20 signatory countries at that time, and we have now become 166, which provides clear evidence of the universal character of telecommunications".

"In this connection, I would draw attention to the enormous and disquieting gap which persists between the North and the South of our planet. I must say that I was particularly struck by a section in *The Missing Link* (the Report of the Maitland Commission) which makes the point that 75% of the 600 million telephones in existence throughout the world are concentrated in only nine countries. I can clearly only subscribe to the comments by the rapporteurs whom

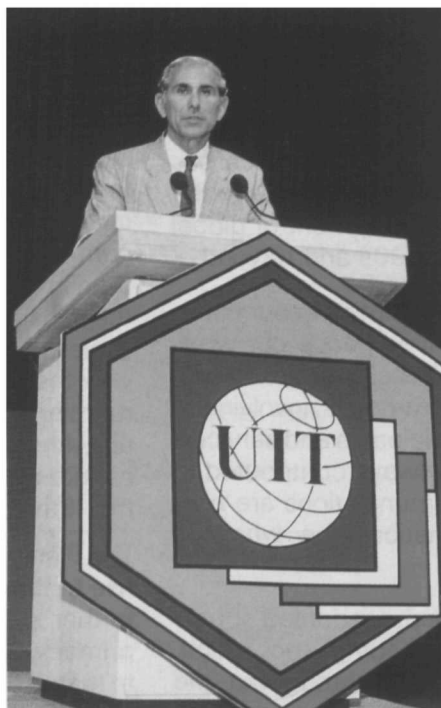
you appointed at the Nairobi Conference in 1982 to the effect that a disparity of this magnitude is unacceptable both from the human standpoint and from the point of view of a clearly understood common interest. It is my belief, and this is precisely why I have selected this example, that all the difficulty and also all the value of the exercise in which the ITU has been engaged for such a long

time in the telecommunications field resides indeed in the fact that the two terms are indissociably linked, since economic interest calls for the establishment of a world-wide telecommunications network, which is essential to human progress. In this field, as in others, the North will not be able to found its own wealth on the inadequacies of the South; this is a fact of which we can be sure".

"I therefore find it particularly welcome that, in the course of these five weeks of deliberations aimed at establishing the new Convention, you will be dealing with the question of the reduction of the technological gap between the developed and the developing countries, and sometimes even separating the industrialized countries themselves..."

Mr Quilès described the ITU as a "global catalyst, striving to bring into harmony the various national activities so as to ensure that the different national telecommunication systems can be harnessed for world-wide operations. It is also the task of the ITU to maintain and amplify international co-operation and to afford technical assistance to the developing countries. It is likewise required to promote the development of techniques designed both to enhance the performance of telecommunication services and to increase their use. Hence the ITU is concerned with regulation and standards, and also with the management of the natural resources belonging to mankind as a whole, such as the frequency spectrum and the satellite orbit".

"It is no longer enough", said Mr Quilès, "to correlate technical parameters, but it is now essential to harmonize and co-ordinate national policies. A further level of universality would thus be reached in the role of the Union. This



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Mr P. Quilès during his opening speech at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference

issue, which you are about to discuss, is a fundamental one and touches also upon the organization and the structures of the ITU, for which this new function would constitute a genuine challenge”.

The Minister concluded: “...Your deliberations are taking place likewise at a time when a genuine “communications society” is very clearly taking shape; this will lead to drastic changes in the nature of human activities and the manner in which they are carried out. Your work therefore forms part of a process whose promise we cannot yet even begin to assess”.

The Secretary-General of the ITU, Mr R. E. Butler, then gave an address in which he stressed the importance of reforming the ITU without delay in order to maintain its primacy on the international scene.

The inaugural ceremony was followed by the first Plenary Meeting, at which the Conference elected Mr J. Grenier, Director of the Directorate of Industrial and International Affairs of the French Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Space, Chairman of the Conference.

After thanking the Conference for the confidence it had shown by electing him Chairman, Mr Grenier drew attention to the changes which had occurred since the last Plenipotentiary Conference in Nairobi, “changes of a technological and regulatory nature, which affected countries to a greater or lesser extent depending on the sophistication of their networks, their social and economic development, their cultures and traditions... The Union must meet this challenge and map out new paths for international co-operation which will accommodate both the diversity of national telecommunication policies and the



General view of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Nice, 1989)

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organization’s objectives of harmonization and universality”.

The Conference also elected the Vice-Chairmen of the Conference and the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the ten Conference committees. The structure of the Conference is given below.

Structure of the Plenipotentiary Conference

Chairman of the Conference:
Mr J. Grenier (France)

Vice-Chairmen of the Conference:
Messrs T. Marshall (United States);
A. Ituassu (Brazil); C. Lemos

Simmonds (Colombia); H. Venhaus (Fed. Rep. of Germany); P. Muscat (Malta); Y. B. Zoubarev (USSR); A. Popov (Bulgaria); J. Tomaszewski (Poland); R. Sagna (Senegal); A. Wolde Amanuel (Ethiopia); D. A. Mark (Nigeria); Son Zhiyuan (China); F. A. Zaidan (Saudi Arabia) and S. M. Gharazi (Islamic Republic of Iran)

Committee 1—Steering Committee

Consisting of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Conference and the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the other Committees.

Terms of reference: to co-ordinate all matters connected with the smooth execution of work and to plan the order and number of meetings, avoiding overlapping wherever possible in view of the limited number of members of some delegations.

Committee 2—Credentials Committee

Chairman:

Mr J. Szekely (Hungary)

Vice-Chairman:

Mr O. Sanda (Cameroon)

Terms of reference: to verify the credentials of delegations and to report on its conclusions to the Plenary Meeting within the time specified by the latter.

Committee 3—Budget Control Committee

Chairman:

Mr M. K. Rao (India)

Vice-Chairman:

Mr M. Wakrim (Morocco)

Terms of reference: to determine the organization and the facilities available to the delegates, to examine and approve the accounts of expenditure incurred throughout the duration of the Conference and to report to the Plenary Meeting the estimated total expenditure of the Conference as well as the estimated costs entailed by the execution of the decisions of the Conference.

Committee 4—Finances of the Union

Chairman:

Mr M. H. Ghazal (Lebanon)

Vice-Chairman:

Mr P. Gagné (Canada)

Terms of reference: to examine the financial management of the Union and approve the accounts for the years 1982 to 1988; to study the financial position of the Union and proposals affecting the finances of the Union; to determine the financial needs of the Union for the period up to the next Plenipotentiary Conference (Additional Protocol I); to examine other questions and proposals relating to the finances of the Union; to consider the report by the Administrative Council on the activities of the

Union in so far as financial matters are concerned.

Committee 5—Staff matters

Chairman:

Mr F. Molina Negro (Spain)

Vice-Chairman:

Mr K. D. Meier (German Dem. Rep.)

Terms of reference: to examine questions and proposals on staff matters such as: staffing policies, grading of posts, United Nations Common System, geographical distribution, etc.; to consider the report by the Administrative Council on the activities of the Union in so far as staff matters are concerned.

Committee 6—Technical Co-operation

Chairman:

Mr H. Vignon (Benin)

Vice-Chairman:

Mr M. A. Yusoff (Malaysia)

Terms of reference: to examine questions and proposals relating to telecommunication development, the technical co-operation activities of the Union, funding of technical co-operation activities, transfer of technology, the changing nature of technical co-operation activities and the Centre for Telecommunication Development, etc.; to consider the report by the Administrative Council on the activities of the Union in so far as technical co-operation is concerned.

Committee 7—Structure of the Union

Chairman:

Mr A. Vargas Araya (Costa Rica)

Vice-Chairman:

Mr Y. Otaki (Japan)

Terms of reference: to examine questions and proposals relating to the structure and internal organization of the Union: Plenipotentiary Conference, administrative conferences, Administrative Council and the permanent organs, including the secretariats.

Committee 8—Purposes, rights and obligations

Chairman:

Mr M. F. Dandato (Zimbabwe)

Vice-Chairman:

Mr V. Cassapoglou (Greece)

Terms of reference: to examine questions and proposals relating to the following: the purposes, composition, rights and obligations and general legislative provisions for the functioning of the Union, other than those dealt with in Committees 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9, including provisions relating to languages.

Committee 9—Basic Instrument of the Union

Chairman:

Mr H. H. Siblesz (Netherlands)

Vice-Chairman:

Mr M. Bangue-Tandet (Central African Rep.)

Terms of reference: to examine proposals arising from the report of the Group of Experts established in accordance with Resolution No. 62 of the Nairobi Plenipotentiary Conference on the separation of the provisions of the present Convention into two instruments, namely:

- a Constitution containing the provisions which are of a fundamental character, and
- a second instrument of a less permanent character comprising the other provisions which by definition might require revision at periodic intervals;

to deal with matters of a juridical character related to the adoption and amendment of a Constitution and associated second instrument.

Committee 10—Editorial Committee

Chairman:

Mr M. Thué (France)

Vice-Chairmen:

Mr R. Priddle (United Kingdom)

Mr V. Rubio Carretón (Spain)

Terms of reference: to perfect the form of the texts to be included in the Final Acts of the Conference, without altering the sense, for submission to the Plenary Meeting.