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Yoshio Utsumi

Secretary-General elect



"We must share a vision for the future success of the ITU. I believe I can offer the leadership needed to achieve that vision for the 21st century."

I am very honoured to be elected as the Secretary-General of the ITU. I would like to thank Pekka Tarjanne for what he has done to help the ITU adapt to the changing telecommunications environment. I have the greatest respect for his achievements, and I hope to build upon them as a secure foundation for the future of our Union.

Our Union has made great efforts to adapt to the changing environment of telecommunications, by such means as establishing the Development Sector, the High Level Committee Report and the Additional Plenipotentiary Conference. But the telecommunication revolution is bringing an explosion of new global services, new telecommunication players and new regulatory frameworks.

In the years to come, as we enter a new millennium, the role of the ITU will become even more crucial. It is the only world intergovernmental organization capable of ensuring that

the benefits of telecommunications are expanded and shared to create a global information society for all humanity.

Telecommunications is the strongest force in sustaining our increasingly integrated world. Nevertheless, there are still villages without a single telephone, while people elsewhere spend hours surfing the Internet. But we are a global family, and the circumstances of one member affect us all. None of us can enjoy the full value of telecommunications until we all have access to it. For that reason, the most important mission of the ITU is to bridge the gaps between people with access to telecommunications and those without.

We should take every possible measure to encourage development; for example, by establishing effective information systems, by strengthening the ITU regional offices to respond effectively to regional conditions, and expanding the ITU's role in promoting technologies that are

Election results

Yoshio Utsumi (Japan) was elected Secretary-General of the ITU in the first ballot with 85 votes. In all, there were 147 countries voting. With one ballot blank, the number of valid ballots was 146. The required majority was 74. The election took place on 20 October 1998, during the sixth plenary meeting of the Minneapolis Plenipotentiary Conference, making Mr Utsumi the sixteenth Secretary-General of the one hundred and thirty-three-year-old organization. Other candidates were Henry Chasia (Kenya), the current Deputy Secretary-General, who obtained 52 votes and Jonathan Parapak (Indonesia), who obtained 9 votes.

Mr Utsumi and his team were sworn in by the Conference on 3 November 1998, and will take up their duties on 1 February 1999.

But, in order to fulfil its mission, the ITU must itself be strengthened and even reborn as an effective force that can lead towards the achievement of clear goals. The process of strengthening will begin with decisions on the strategic plan, as well as such important matters as amendments to the instruments of the Union and consideration of the ITU budget.

Those decisions should be positive and ambitious if the ITU is to continue its success. Simply, my role is to help make a reality of the vision shared by the ITU membership. In doing so, I promise to do my very best to fulfil the mission of the ITU sincerely, effectively and efficiently.

best suited to the needs of developing countries. If we fulfil this task, the ITU will truly help to lead global economic growth. And sometime not far in the future, all our children will be able to use the information infrastructure to make friends across the world.

Creating an information network for the 21st century is one of the world's most important tasks. It will only be accomplished through the essential work of the ITU as the world coordinator of frequency allocation, and as the setter of global standards. Furthermore, we must start building bridges between the public and private sector, between telecommunication and other related industries, and between those who have good access to telecommunications and those who do not.



Y. Utsumi congratulated by T. L. Siebert, Chairman of the Conference, when taking the oath of office

Photo: Allen Brisson Smith (ITU 980123)

[This acceptance statement was made on 20 October 1998, following Mr Utsumi's election. See full results in the box above.]

Who is Yoshio Utsumi?

Career highlights

■ Management and reforms

Yoshio Utsumi is one of the founding fathers of today's competitive telecommunications system in Japan. Born on 14 August 1942 in Takamatsu in the Prefecture of Kagawa, Mr Utsumi has had a distinguished career as Senior Policy-Maker and Chief Executive Officer. He holds a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Tokyo and a Master of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Chicago (United States), which he obtained in 1965 and 1972, respectively.

Mr Utsumi has served as Deputy Minister at Japan's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) since 1997. He was also the Assistant Vice-Minister in the MPT from 1990 to 1991. As Senior Policy-Maker, he has implemented a number of significant reforms. He advocated the introduction of competition and liberalization in telecommunications at a time when such ideas were not widely accepted. This initiative led Japan to reform its telecommunication markets for the first time.

■ Multimedia development

He has been a major driving force in many of Japan's most important projects to develop multimedia industries. These projects include the ongoing construction of a nationwide fibre-optic network for advanced communications and the creation of the Advanced Telecommunications Research Institute International.

■ Restructuring

From 1996 to 1997, he served as Director-General of Posts at the MPT. Within a year of becoming Chief Executive Officer, he established and largely implemented a plan for the major restructuring of Japan's postal services by enlisting the full cooperation of staff at every level among the 200 000 personnel for whom he was responsible. The plan has not only strengthened the financial basis of postal operations, but also gives users better services at lower costs.

■ On the international scene

Mr Utsumi was the Director-General of International Affairs in MPT from 1993 to 1995, representing Japan at numerous international conferences. Prior to that, he had served as First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the international organizations in Geneva from 1978 to 1981. In that capacity, he was Japan's liaison officer to ITU for three years.

He played a vital role in many negotiations, including the historic World Trade Organization talks on basic telecommunications. Perhaps most familiar to ITU Members is Mr Utsumi's chairmanship of the successful ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Kyoto in 1994, when he was able to witness the endorsement of a Japanese proposal which he had long encouraged — the creation of the World Telecommunication Policy Forum.

■ The all-rounder

As an all-rounder, Mr Utsumi held several other important positions within the MPT: Deputy Director-General of the Communications Policy Bureau (1991–1993), Director of the Policy Division and of the Computer Communications Division of that same Bureau (1982–1987), Director of the General Affairs Division, Broadcasting Bureau (1988–1989), Director of the Fund Management Division, Postal Life Insurance Bureau (1986–1988) and Professor of Public Administration at the Postal College (1972–1973).