Special report from Antalya

A turning point

▮ The 17th ITU Plenipotentiary Conference that took place in Antalya, Turkey, from 6 to 24 November 2006 was attended by over 2000 participants from 164 countries, including more than 100 government ministers. In our December 2006 issue, we covered the elections at the conference of ITU's new leadership.

Appreciation for the outgoing team

At a swearing-in ceremony on 20 November, delegations from around the world expressed their support and encouragement for the new management. They also thanked the outgoing Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi and his team for having led ITU with dynamism and clear-sightedness.

On behalf of the Asia-Pacific region, Singapore expressed appreciation to Mr Utsumi and to then Deputy Secretary-General Roberto Blois for their leadership. The delegate said that under Mr Utsumi, ITU had successfully organized the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and had become a facilitator in implementing its results.

The Syrian Arab Republic, on behalf of the Arab group, also thanked the outgoing Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General for their service to ITU and wished them every success in their future endeavours. Kenya, on behalf of the African group,

wished the outgoing team "nothing but the very best" and offered full support to the incoming team. Norway, on behalf of Europe, expressed gratitude to the outgoing officials, especially Mr Utsumi for having stayed focused on streamlining the management of the Union. The delegate also wished the incoming team success in the four years to come.

A new road map for the industry's future

In his closing remarks to the conference, Mr Utsumi said that, during his eight years as Secretary-General, a transformation in the telecommunication environment had taken place, in which ITU had played a key role. A mark of this change, he said, was that almost every resolution and decision emerging from the Plenipotentiary Conference mentioned the outcomes of WSIS. "The WSIS consensus provides our industry with a road map for our common future as we strive to build an inclusive information society," he said.

Looking ahead, Mr Utsumi commented that over the next four years, the industry will evolve even more swiftly, with growing competition requiring a more flexible approach on the part of regulators and policymakers. "These changes will be driven by the private sector," he said, and "ITU itself must also remain flexible and must continue to adapt to the information society." ▮

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan with Yoshio Utsumi, during the opening ceremony of the Plenipotentiary Conference in Antalya

Yoshio Utsumi was presented with an award from the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity in recognition of his dedicated efforts to accelerate the development of the information society

New directions

Decisions of the Antalya Plenipotentiary Conference

⁄ The Plenipotentiary Conference in Antalya set out a road map for ITU to follow over the next four years in order to remain the pre-eminent organization at which Member States, Sector Members and Associates can work together to help people everywhere benefit from the emerging information society. In particular, the conference endorsed ITU's essential role in supporting the expansion of global communication networks and in bridging the digital divide. It also reaffirmed ITU's focus on implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

A path for WSIS implementation

WSIS is mentioned in nearly all the resolutions adopted or updated at the conference. More specifically, a new Resolution 140 covers ITU's work on WSIS at three levels. One is an overall facilitation role in the multi-stakeholder implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, alongside the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Another role for ITU is as sole facilitator for WSIS action lines C2 on "information and communication infrastructure" and C5 on "building confidence and security in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). The third is as a partner and stakeholder in the implementation of all other relevant WSIS action lines.

The resolution welcomes the establishment of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) to coordinate implementation of the WSIS outcomes. (ITU is a permanent member of UNGIS, and shares its rotating chairmanship.) The Secretary-General is asked to strengthen cooperation with other UN bodies within the framework of UNGIS, and work to establish an understanding of each organization's role in order to avoid duplication of activities. He is also urged to raise public awareness of ITU's mandate and activities and provide broader public access to its resources.

According to the resolution, the Council will oversee ITU's implementation of the WSIS outcomes, and it is requested to maintain its Working Group on WSIS. ITU Member States, Sector Members and Associates are also invited to participate actively in implementing the WSIS outcomes. An additional resolution (141) says that other organizations, too, should be encouraged to participate in such ITU activities, and partnerships should be fostered between them and Member States. The Council is to set up a working group to establish criteria defining which stakeholders can take part in ITU activities related to WSIS, taking account

Delegates at the conference

of the strong development orientation that has been agreed for follow-up of WSIS by the United Nations system as a whole. The working group will present a final report in advance of the next Plenipotentiary Conference in 2010.

Internet issues

During the WSIS process, ITU showed that it has expertise relevant to the Internet Governance Forum established last year by the United Nations. This expertise is acknowledged in Resolution 140, which also notes that ITU has a specific responsibility to study international Internet connectivity, as well as to ensure efficient use of, and equitable access to, the radio-frequency spectrum by all countries, based on relevant international agreements.

Resolutions 101 and 102 were updated, covering Internet protocol-based networks, and ITU's role in the management of Internet resources and in international public policy regarding the Internet. The conference also declared that there should be enhanced cooperation on Internet governance among the membership. It said that ITU should embrace opportunities to build bridges between the "Internet community" and the more formal intergovernmental community, through cooperative projects that benefit all Internet users. These would include, for example, work on cybersecurity and promoting a multilingual Internet.

Cybersecurity

Resolution 130 has been updated to strengthen the role of ITU in building confidence and security in the use of ICT. It notes the need to enhance international cooperation and develop appropriate national, regional and international mechanisms to deal with this issue.

The resolution says that the *Cybersecurity Gateway* should be maintained on ITU's website as a way to share information on initiatives worldwide. Also, work within existing study groups of the Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU–T) should be intensified in order to address threats to cybersecurity. For example, ITU–T should seek ways to enhance the exchange of technical information in this field, promote implementation of emerging protocols and develop standards that can further enhance security. The Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) is urged to develop projects on cybersecurity and combating spam that meet the needs of developing countries.

Multilingual content and domain names

For the Internet to become more accessible to people everywhere, it is necessary to make content available in non-Latin scripts. Referring to WSIS outcomes, the conference stressed that there should be a commitment to work towards "multilingualization of the Internet, as part of a multilateral, transparent and democratic process, involving governments and all stakeholders".

World Telecommunication Policy Forum

The plenipotentiary confer- ence decided that the fourth World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF) will be convened in Geneva in the first quarter of 2009. It was agreed that ITU provides a unique venue for consider- ing emerging telecommuni- cation policy and regulatory issues. The Policy Forum al- lows discussion of global and cross-sectoral issues by high-level participants. Topics cited by the conference as be- ing of high interest to the ITU membership, and that could be discussed at the WTPF in 2009, include the continuing convergence of technologies, the development of next-gen- eration networks, and the In- ternet and its implications for capacity building, particularly in developing countries. The WTPF will prepare reports and opinions (where appropriate) to be considered by Member States, Sector Members, rel- evant ITU meetings and the Council.

In this context, the conference updated Resolution 133 on the role of administrations in the management of internationalized (mul- tilingual) domain names (IDN). The resolution underlines the need to promote regional root servers and the use of IDN in order to over- come barriers to access, and to quickly intro- duce multilingualism in such areas as e-mail addresses. Another way to overcome the lin- guistic digital divide, it adds, is to strengthen cooperation between relevant bodies to fur- ther the development of technical standards and foster their global deployment.

The conference recognized the role played by the World Intellectual Property Organiza- tion (WIPO) in resolving disputes concern- ing domain names, as well as that played by UNESCO with regard to promoting cultural and linguistic diversity and local content. These are among the organizations with which ITU's management is instructed to cooperate as it takes an active part in international discussions and initiatives on the deployment and man- agement of IDN. All entities working in this field are urged to expedite their activities. In this regard, the resolution recognizes ITU–T's role as defined in the decisions of the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA) in 2004.

International Telecommunication Regulations

The conference approved Resolution 146 calling for a review of the International Tel- ecommunication Regulations (ITR). This was considered a major milestone, as many differ- ent positions were presented at the confer- ence on what to do with this treaty that gov- erns cross-border communications. The new resolution calls for a World Conference on In-

Antalya conference officials

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Vice-Chairmen of the Conference
David Gross (United States)
Hikaru Chono (Japan)
Mohammed Jamil Mulla (Saudi Arabia)
Philippe Mvouo (Republic of Congo)
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Committee 1 (Steering)
Composed of the Chairman and Vice- Chairmen of the Conference, of the other committees, and of the Working Group of the Plenary

Committee 2 (Credentials)
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Ernest Chukwuka Ndukwe (Nigeria)
Vice-Chairmen
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ternational Telecommunications (WCIT) to be convened in Geneva in 2012, at which the ITR will be reviewed. It instructs the ITU Council to adopt by 2011 the agenda and exact dates for holding a WCIT.

The ITR were last updated in Melbourne in 1988. At Antalya, several delegations said that the system for global traffic exchange has worked well within the ITR framework. The regulations were also seen as being particularly important for developing and least developed countries that have mainly public-sector telecommunication services. Reflecting such views, Resolution 146 underlines that treaty-level provisions are needed for international telecommunication networks and services. It says that as technology evolves and converges, countries are evaluating their regulatory approaches to ensure an enabling environment and legal framework that encourage development of the information society. This makes it important that the ITR are reviewed "and, if deemed appropriate, revised and updated in a timely manner." It calls on ITU–T to lead this review, in collaboration with the other ITU Sectors.

Closing the digital divide

Access to opportunity

Many people in developing countries, particularly those living in rural areas, still do not have access to basic telecommunications. A new resolution (139) points to the need "to create opportunities for digital services in developing countries, including the least developed countries, landlocked and small island developing states, and countries with economies in transition." The resolution notes the importance of ICT in underpinning economic

New directions

Council membership

The conference decided that there is to be a study of a possible enlargement of ITU's Council. In accordance with the ITU Convention, the number of Member States of the Council must not exceed 25 per cent of the total that belong to ITU. Some delegates at Antalya questioned the manner in which the equitable geographical distribution of Council Member States is applied, and it was decided that this needs to be clarified, particularly as more countries have joined ITU in recent times. Resolution 134 says that the Council membership should be increased with effect from the 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference. It adds that seats should be allocated among the world's regions according to criteria that are to be worked out by the Council with the assistance of the Secretary-General.

As described in the November 2006 issue of ITU News, some regional groups of Member States put forward divergent views on whether the three Directors of ITU's Bureaux should continue to be elected alongside the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General. The conference decided to refer the issue to the Council to set up a working group for further study.

and social progress, and says that ITU should continue to implement programmes and projects that aim to close the digital divide. It urges all agencies responsible for development assistance, including the UNDP and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), as well as donor and recipient countries, to give high priority to ICT for development.

The conference also updated Resolution 30 on "Special measures for the least developed countries and small island developing states." Noting the outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference in Qatar in March 2006 and its *Doha Action Plan*, the resolution instructs the Secretary-General and the Director of BDT to review telecommunication and ICT services in such countries and "identify areas of critical weakness requiring priority action." Concrete measures should then be proposed, and effective assistance provided.

Countries that need special support in rebuilding their communication infrastructure are mentioned in Resolution 34. These are countries which have "suffered from natural disasters, domestic conflicts or war," and which "in the foreseeable future," will not be able to operate a telecommunication service without help from the international community. Listed in the resolution are Afghanistan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Timor-Leste. It calls on ITU Member States "to offer all possible assistance and support" to these countries, while the Director of BDT is instructed to carry out an assessment of each country's needs and mobilize

resources to help them, such as from the ICT Development Fund.

Bridging the standardization gap

Developing countries may also face difficulties in the area of technical standardization. A shortage of human resources results in a low level of participation in relevant ITU activities, according to Resolution 123. This, it says, can lead to problems when interpreting Recommendations from ITU's Radiocommunication Sector (ITU–R) and from ITU–T. The rapid pace of technological advance adds to the difficulties.

The resolution says that "initiatives to assist in bridging the standardization gap are intrinsic to, and are a high priority task of, the Union." It instructs the Secretary-General and the Directors of the three Bureaux to work on closing this gap, in collaboration with relevant regional organizations. ITU Member States and Sector Members are invited to contribute to the fund for this project.

Symposium for regulators

Resolution 138 notes that the rapid and profound changes in the telecommunication environment present challenges to regulators everywhere, but especially in developing countries. It says that training, advice and the exchange of expertise in this area should continue to be provided through making the Global Symposium for Regulators an annual event within the work programme of ITU's Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU–D). The venue for the symposium is to be rotated through the various world regions.

Technical assistance

The need for technical assistance to be provided to developing countries is covered in Resolution 135. It states that ITU should "continue to coordinate efforts for the harmonization, development and enhancement of telecommunications/ICT throughout the world." In particular, it says, BDT should "provide highly qualified technical experts to offer advice in subjects of importance to developing countries."

BDT is also instructed to cooperate with sources of finance within and outside the United Nations system, and to form partnerships to provide assistance to developing countries. BDT's Special Voluntary Programme for Technical Cooperation is to be continued, the resolution says. In addition, regional and international financial organizations and agencies, equipment providers, operators, and all other potential partners are urged to help fund programmes for developing telecommunications and ICT.

Next-generation networks

Shortages of resources, experience and skills within developing countries are delaying their deployment of advanced, next-generation networks (NGN). In Resolution 137, the conference noted that "NGN deployment and standards development activities are essential for developing countries, especially for their rural areas where the majority of the population live." It instructs the Directors of ITU's three Bureaux to consolidate their work on NGN deployment studies and standards development, to assist members in deploying NGN effectively, and to seek appropriate solutions for affordable NGN deployment in rural areas. The Secretary-General is instructed to seek support for these efforts, including funding through partnership agreements. The resolution also invites all Member States and Sector Members to take concrete action to support ITU's work in this area, and to develop their own initiatives to help improve the implementation of NGN in developing countries.

Connectivity indicators

Monitoring ICT progress in developing countries requires an internationally agreed measuring system and the regular gathering of data. In Resolution 131, the conference says that the Secretary-General and the Director of BDT should "ensure that community connectivity indicators are taken into account in regional and world meetings convened for the purpose of evaluating and following up the (WSIS) Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Agenda." It adds that the Director of BDT should "promote the activities required to define and adopt new indicators for the purpose of measuring the real impact of community connectivity on the development of communities."

The resolution also calls for two meetings to be held, in 2007 and 2009, to evaluate the application of existing indicators and decide what others might be required in order to give full effect to a decision of the Doha World Telecommunication Development Conference in this area. Doha Resolution 8 instructs the Director of BDT "to establish and collect community connectivity indicators and to participate in the establishment of core indicators to measure efforts to build the information society and, by doing so, to illustrate the scale of the digital divide."
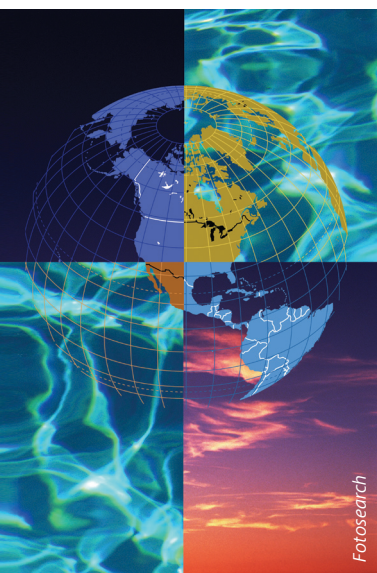

The conference confirmed ITU's role in helping to improve ICT in developing countries

Emergency telecommunication centre in Indonesia

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Fotosearch

The Director will work in cooperation with relevant international bodies to implement Resolution 131, especially those in the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. The resolution also invites Member States "to participate, through the regular reporting of their national community connectivity statistics to ITU–D, as well as through the work being done at the regional and world levels, in the evaluation of existing community connectivity indicators and the preparation of new such indicators." It says that they should provide the "requested information so as to produce telecommunication/ICT benchmarks, with a view to developing a single ICT index."

ITU's regional presence

To help support its development activities, ITU has regional offices covering Africa, the Americas, the Arab States, the Asia-Pacific region, and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The conference updated Resolution 25 to reaffirm "the importance of the regional presence in enabling ITU to work as closely as possible with its Member States and Sector Members, improve the dissemination of information on its activities and develop closer ties with regional and subregional organizations".

It was noted that ITU's regional presence is especially valuable for developing countries, many of which may have problems finding the resources to take part in international ITU activities. The regional offices can "provide important technical assistance to countries with development needs," according to Resolution 25. However, it adds that these offices are "inadequately staffed" and it is essential to evaluate their work and

make any necessary adjustments "to optimize the use of resources and to avoid duplication of effort."

The conference decided that "an evaluation of the ITU regional presence" will be carried out, with input invited from the ITU membership, regional and international organizations, and any other relevant entities. A report on this exercise will be submitted by the Secretary-General to the 2008 session of the ITU Council, which will make recommendations to the 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference on a appropriate action.

Supporting regional initiatives

Agenda for Connectivity in the Americas and Quito Action Plan

In spite of the impressive growth in ICT services recorded in the Americas region in recent years, considerable disparities persist. An updated Resolution 128 says that ITU should release appropriate resources under its Financial Plan for 2008–2011 (and subsequent plans) to support implementation of

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Quito, Ecuador

projects aimed at fulfilling the goals of the Doha World Telecommunication Development Conference, particularly by mobilizing the surplus income from ITU Telecom World exhibitions and forums. The resolution says that ITU should continue paying special attention to implementing the provisions of the Istanbul and Doha Action Plans that relate to initiatives under the framework of the Agenda for Connectivity in the Americas. ITU is also urged to increase its support for Member States in the region, through its Regional Office for the Americas.

New Partnership for Africa's Development

Resolution 124 on the "Support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development" (NEPAD) has been updated to take account of the outcomes of WSIS. The resolution says that ITU should continue assisting the development of ICT in Africa. Suggested activities with NEPAD include helping to prepare master plans for infrastructure development, and supporting projects that promote ICT development and regional integration. The resolution calls for the strengthening of ICT training institutions in the region, and says that a cooperation mechanism should be established among regional institutions that provide development assistance in the ICT sector. Also envisaged in the resolution are the establishment of a regional ICT think tank for Africa and an African ICT database; the strengthening of subregional telecommunication regulatory associations and regional economic communities; and the expansion of public-private partnerships for carrying out ICT projects.

ITU strategies and finances

In the November 2006 edition of *ITU News*, we outlined the draft Strategic Plan for 2008–2011 that had been prepared by the ITU Council. The conference at Antalya endorsed the plan, setting out actions to be undertaken by ITU to achieve its seven goals (see Message of the ITU Secretary-General on pages 2–4).

How to finance this work was a major topic of debate at the conference. Decision 5 taken at Antalya says that, for 2008 and 2009, the "contributory unit" will not exceed CHF 318 000. As a result, the deficit in ITU's budget envisaged in the draft Financial Plan for 2008–2011 will be "substantial."

Decision 5 instructs the Council to review and approve biennial budgets for 2008–2009 and 2010–2011 (drafted by the ITU secretariat), ensuring that, for each period, income and expenditure are balanced. The Council has been given the option of raising the level of the contributory unit by up to 1 per cent in the first budgetary period "in order to meet expenditure on unforeseen and urgent activities which are in the interests of the Union," provided that a majority of Member States approve. For both periods, a ceiling of CHF 330 000 has been set on the value of the unit.

At the same time, the Council is told to achieve "every possible economy." An annex to Decision 5 lists ways in which this might be achieved, such as by centralizing certain tasks, avoiding duplication of work, and reducing the length and costs of meetings. ▰

Future ITU conferences and meetings
Mexico announced its offer to host the next Plenipotentiary Conference in 2010. The Mexican delegation said that the offer was made in recognition of the importance and the significance of ITU as a strategic forum for progress and modernization in world telecommunications.
The Antalya conference decided the timing of the plenipotentiary and other major ITU events for the period 2008–2011:
▸ *World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly: between May and November 2008*
▸ *World Telecommunication Policy Forum: first quarter of 2009*
▸ *World Telecommunication Development Conference: March 2010*
▸ *Plenipotentiary Conference: October/November 2010*
▸ *Radiocommunication Assembly, and World Radiocommunication Conference: February/March 2011.*
The Council will set the precise dates of these events after consulting Member States.