

ITU milestone commemorated in Madrid

/// The origins of ITU date back to 1865, but it was 75 years ago that it received its current name, with the signing of a convention on 9 December 1932 in Madrid, Spain. To mark the 75th anniversary, a ceremony was held in Madrid on 10 October 2007, organized by ITU, the Spanish Government, and the Official College of Telecommunication Engineers (Colegio Oficial de Ingenieros de Telecomunicaciones).

The ceremony was led by His Majesty King Juan Carlos I of Spain, and attended by the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Trade Joan Clos; the Secretary of State for Telecommunications and the Information Society Francisco Ros; the Minister of Public Administrations Elena Salgado; the Dean and President of the Official College of Telecommunication Engineers Enrique Gutiérrez Bueno; Deputy Dean of the college Francisco Mellado; ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun I. Touré, and the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Geneva-based International Organizations, Ambassador Juan Antonio March Pujol.



Left to right: Minister of Industry, Tourism and Trade Joan Clos; His Majesty King Juan Carlos I of Spain; ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun I. Touré; and Secretary of State for Telecommunications and the Information Society Francisco Ros



Palace of the Senate in Madrid where the Final Acts of the 1932 Plenipotentiary Conference were signed



From left to right: ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun I. Touré; H.M. King Juan Carlos I of Spain, and Joan Clos, Minister of Industry, Tourism and Commerce of Spain



Plaza España, Madrid

From telegraph to telecommunication

On 3 September 1932, the fifth Plenipotentiary Conference of what was then known as the International Telegraph Union was opened in Madrid by then President of Spain, Manuel Azaña. It was chaired by Spain's Interior Minister Santiago Casares Quiroga. The event was a complex affair, as it ran in tandem with the fourth International Radiotelegraph Conference. Jointly (through a committee), they were to decide, among other matters, how to create and name a new, merged international organization.

The outcome was the amalgamation of the International Telegraph and International Radiotelegraph Conventions to form the single International Telecommunication Convention. It created what has since been known as the International Telecommunication Union.

After arduous deliberations, the new convention was signed on 9 December 1932. The Madrid Conference not only created a single treaty and organization for telecommunications, but it also marked ITU's attainment of true international status by virtue of the number of signatory States.

The new name of the Union, which came into effect on 1 January 1934, was chosen to reflect the full scope of ITU's responsibilities, which by this time covered all forms of wireline and wireless communications.

Host country, Spain, regarded the ground-breaking conference as a great success. With the 75th anniversary, it wished to mark an event of such importance for Spain and for world telecommunications. His Majesty the King addressed the commemorative event, noting the significance of the celebration and affirming that Spain would do its utmost to contribute to the fostering of information technologies (see article on pages 37–38).

Dr Touré commented that "the Madrid Telecommunication Convention laid a strong foundation for today's ITU. We will continue to build on this foundation, whether to bridge the digital divide or ensure peace in cyberspace. We will remain grateful to Spain for its historic contribution."