

Remarks by His Majesty King Juan Carlos I of Spain

on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the holding in Madrid of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference

/// This event today [the joint celebration in Madrid on 10 October 2007] helps to underscore the importance of the International Telecommunication Union, without question one of the oldest and most renowned of the international organizations. Indeed, the roots of international cooperation in the field of communications trace back to 1865, when 20 European countries convened in Paris to establish what was then known as the International Telegraph Union.

From that time forward, the need to strengthen and expand international cooperation, in response to the demand for a regulatory framework to guide ongoing technological development in this field, gave rise to new international agreements and institutions, which were eventually restructured and brought together around ITU.

As part of that long historical record, the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference held in Spain 75 years ago is of particular importance. We pay tribute today to the telecommunication pioneers from 90 countries that met in Madrid to restructure the International Telegraph Union, giving it the name and mission that it has today.

During the 75 years since, ITU has carried on an important effort to fulfil its mission and achieve its objectives. It is a mission that consists of expanding international cooperation to make the best use of all

communication media and promote assistance to developing countries so that all the world's citizens can have access to information and communications.

In this work, ITU has shown itself to be highly responsive and able to move quickly to keep pace with society's demands in this rapidly evolving sector which is so critical for economic and social growth. At the same time, it is important to highlight ITU's current efforts in support of achieving the Millennium Development Goals at the international level, and, in particular, pursuing the objectives of the Millennium Declaration.

The development of the information society has been shown to be one of the key instruments of cooperation and development assistance in support of the least advantaged countries. Modern information, education, health and management systems are becoming more efficient day by day in promoting the benefits of progress, knowledge, and research and innovation.

In this regard, mention has already been made of initiatives being mounted within regional frameworks such as the European Union, and the World Summit on the Information Society held under United Nations auspices and organized by ITU. That summit helped give momentum to developing countries' use of information and communication technology tools.



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H.M. King Juan Carlos I of Spain



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In the context of the Millennium Development Goals, one of the key efforts aimed at narrowing the digital divide is ITU's "Connect Africa" initiative, which represents a first step within the even more ambitious "Connect the World" initiative. Spain will do its utmost to promote the use of information technology in Africa as a means of furthering the continent's development, paying particular attention to the needs and problems of many African countries.

Initiatives such as these make it possible, within a common framework, to harness efforts by the public and private sectors, by telecommunication administrations and enterprises alike, to create a world that is continually better connected and more highly developed.

Today, ITU's membership consists of 191 Member States and more than 700 Sector Members, all focused on achieving progress that will benefit everyone equally in this sector which is worldwide in scope. All ITU members are committed to promoting development, serving our societies and strengthening the international web of connections that make up the global telecommunication network.

It is a network that binds us together and has the mission of promoting growth and fostering mutual respect and understanding however the network may be accessed, whether from fixed, radio or satellite connections or via mobile telephony or the Internet.

As I said at the opening of TELECOM 2003, organized in Geneva four years ago by ITU, the proper use of information and communication technologies must increasingly be to serve as a tool of integration, peace and harmony. It is such an enormous task that I reiterate to ITU my greatest wishes for success.

It is an endeavour in which your Secretary-General can count on the full and enthusiastic support of a Spain which is modern, dynamic and collaborative, and which today is distinguished by the highly advanced level, in both European and international terms, of its professionals, companies, and services in the area of information and communication technologies. //