

International Telecommunication Union 150th Anniversary Statement
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The world will witness a precious occasion on 17 May 2015, when we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the oldest United Nations (UN) agency, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). As the UN specialized agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), ITU has an ongoing mission and commitment to connect all of the world's people.

The ITU was founded in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union. Over the years, the Union's activities have expanded to include the entire ICT sector, as well as digital broadcasting, the Internet, mobile technologies and high-definition (HD) TV. These global technological advances have been accompanied by the development of standardization frameworks, and ITU has played a pivotal role in shaping these frameworks since its inception. The ITU's roles and objectives have been centered at the heart of the ICT sector as a mediator to facilitate access to new technologies and the distribution of global resources, including radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbital positioning, among other important resources, in order to create a seamless global communication system characterized by strength, reliability and continuous innovation.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is pleased to be among the ITU's Member States that has left a clear mark through solid participation and representation in the Union and its activities. The UAE joined ITU in 1972, after its independence on 2 December 1971, and has supported the ITU's activities ever since. At the 2006 Plenipotentiary Conference, the ITU's highest decision-making conference, held in Antalya, Turkey, the UAE was represented by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), marking a new chapter of mutual cooperation upon the UAE's accession to membership of ITU Council (the ITU's governing body between Plenipotentiary Conferences) for the very first time. This was a formidable endeavour for the UAE, considering that the TRA had been established only two years earlier.

Since then, the UAE Administration has not looked back, and has taken the mutual relationship with ITU to new heights. In 2012, the UAE succeeded in hosting and chairing a series of important international ICT conferences, including: ITU Telecom World 2012; the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly 2012 (WTSA-12); the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12); and the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014 (WTDC-14).

These Conferences have resulted in a number of outputs and important decisions that have contributed to the identification of the ITU's future strategies. They have also devoted a primary role in the leadership of the telecommunications/ICT sector towards becoming ever more refined and progressive by providing services for Member States to further the principles of collaboration on which the ITU was founded.

The UAE successfully hosted the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014 (WTDC-14), which achieved its purpose in developing the necessary plans to expand and utilize the telecommunications/ICT sector to reach those who need it most. Along a similar note, and in line with the Dubai Action Plan, the UAE has been an active partner and sponsor of the ITU at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) activities, both in terms of stocktaking and in forum-related matters.

Building on the successes of 2012 and 2014, the UAE actively participated in the work of the last Plenipotentiary Conference, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 20 October to 7 November 2014, and was successfully re-elected to the ITU Council for the third time in a row to join the 48 Council Member States. In addition, the UAE was also elected to the membership of the twelve-member Radio Regulations Board. Another milestone was the ITU's membership support for the United Arab Emirates to host the next Plenipotentiary Conference, to be held in 2018.

The United Arab Emirates, represented by the TRA, continues to support ITU and its work by contributing actively in the organization's initiatives and activities, as well as entering into bilateral partnerships in a number of leading projects and endeavours. Our desire to host a celebratory event for the ITU's 150th anniversary, as well as our active role on the ITU Council 150th Anniversary preparation committee, is testimony of our sincere commitment.

We wish a prosperous future for the International Telecommunication Union and another successful and bright 150 years to come, filled with intense support from all Member States for the ITU's projects and activities. This organization has offered countless opportunities to individuals all over the world to take advantage of modern digital communications and set objectives to achieve the goals of sustainable development.