FINISHED TRANSCRIPT

WORLD CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

OPENING CEREMONY

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 >> PATRICIA BENOIT-GUYOT: Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. I ask you to take your seats. The conference will begin in a few moments.

 You will need to use your headsets as this is a silent meeting.

 There will be simultaneous interpretations in the six languages of the United Nations.

 On channel 1 you will find English.

 French on channel 2.

 Spanish on channel 3.

 Russian on channel 4.

 Chinese on channel 5.

 And Arabic on channel 6.

 For any assistance with WiFi connections, please feel free to call upon the staff wearing blue caps.

 The ITU staff, of course, is available to assist you in any other matters.

 We will begin very shortly. Please take your seats. Thank you.

(Please stand by. The meeting will begin momentarily)

 >> PATRICIA BENOIT-GUYOT: Ladies and gentlemen, would you please be up standing for the national anthem.

 Thank you.

 (Music)

 (Applause)

 Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the International Telecommunications Union and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of the United Arab Emirates, it is my great pleasure to welcome you here today to the World Conference on International Telecommunications, here at the World Trade Center in the wonderful City of Dubai. We have almost 2000 delegates assembled here, from 160 of the 193 Member States of the ITU. Many old and new friends from government organizations, NGOs, and the general public, you are all truly very welcome.

 Over the preceding months, the world has expressed a great interest in the outcomes of this conference. Its collective eyes and ears are focusing attentatively on us, but I feel very confident that we will not disappoint them.

 The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, has shown a particular interest in the outcomes of this conference, and we are honored today to commence this opening ceremony with an address which we will share with you now.

 Thank you.

 >> BAN KI-MOON: Excellencies. Secretary-General Toure', Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

 I'm pleased to address the ITU World Conference on International Telecommunications. I thank the United Arab Emirates for hosting.

 Information and communications technologies are transforming our world, opening doors, educating, and empowering people, saving lives. The Arab Spring showed the power of ICT to help people voice their legitimate demands for human rights and greater accountability.

 As we strive to achieve Millennium Development Goals and shape the post-2015 development agenda, expanding the benefits of ICTs will be crucial. In the coming days, you will review the agreement that underpins how we communicate with each other across the globe. Our overall objective must be to ensure universal access to the benefits of information and communication technology, including for the two-thirds of the world's population currently not online.

 A digital divide has no place in the information age, and 21st Century knowledge economy. The management of information and communication technology should be transparent, Democratic, and inclusive. I'm gratified that you have taken steps to open the process, including the vital voices of civil society and the private sector.

 The United Nations system stands behind an open Internet. The right to communicate is essential to the ITU's mission. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees freedom of expression across all media and all frontiers.

 As the World Summit on Information Society affirmed, the free flow of information and ideas is essential for peace, for development, for human rights, and our common progress.

 These freedoms are indispensable. We must continue to work together and find consensus on how to effectively keep cyberspace open, accessible, affordable and secure for all.

 I trust that together Governments, industry and civil society will rise to this occasion.

 I wish you a successful conference.

 (Applause)

 >> PATRICIA BENOIT-GUYOT: I would like to thank Mr. Ban Ki-moon in his absence for his message.

 The United Arab Emirates has been a very generous host firstly for WTSA, which concluded last week, and now to this WCIT.

 I want to invite the Director General of the Regulatory Authority, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Nasser Al-Ghanim, to give an address on behalf of the United Arab Emirates.

 (Applause)

 >> MOHAMED NASSER AL-GHANIM: In the name of God the Merciful and compassionate; Dr. Hamadoun I. Touré, Secretary-General of the ITU; excellencies; ladies and gentlemen, peace be upon you in God's mercy and blessings.

 I wouldlike to give this speech on behalf of His Excellency Mohammed bin Ahmed Al Qamzi, Chairman of the Board Authority. It is an honor for me to welcome you to the World Conference on International Telecommunications. We are very proud to be able to welcome you here in the Middle East especially in Dubai.

 The United Arab Emirates have always been very honored to host such events. We would like to mention the fact that we hosted ITU Telecom World 2012 in October. And we hosted the World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly. And now we are meeting for the World Conference on International Telecommunications. We are very grateful for the trust that the ITU has demonstrated in us. The United Arab Emirates throughout its history has always been a living example of coexistence between different cultures and races and formed the ideal destination to embrace everyone, without exception. The foundations of the union were laid by the late His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the United Arab Emirates, who played a crucial role in resolving many issues.

 This conference of the World Conference of International Communications is held at a timeline when we are celebrating the 41st anniversary of our beloved country. We celebrate this under the spirit of our father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the spirit which establishes our close ties and enabled unity and solidarity and has reflected peace and love in our relations with the world. And we hope this spirit will prevail in the work of this conference. We aspire today that the same spirit of union will facilitate the work of the World Conference of the International Telecommunication Union and contribute as much as possible to play the role of consensus between the parties.

 The UAE was among the first countries in the region and in the world investing extensively in ICTs. We would like to provide the best possible services in this area, and we believe that the time has come today to take opportunities before us to ensure that we build a sound knowledge-based economy.

 We organized a forum on Next Generation Networks in order to accelerate the process of turning the telecommunications sector in the country into a very solid sector and to improve the communications systems and provide enterprises with the next-generation technology.

 In this context and in support of the development plans for the state to support the knowledge-based economy, it was announced by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, to further develop intelligent networks which will depend on the technical skills to acquire knowledge and exchange information using fourth generation networks based on IP, which represents the backbone of the initiative.

 Ladies and gentlemen, we would like to share with you this recording about where this conference is being held, where the last conference was held in 1988, in Melbourne, Australia.

 So this conference will be a new starting point to redefine our responsibilities. And all the people of the world are looking at what we are doing today, governments, service providers, and users, and we must rise to this challenge and assume our responsibilities.

 Ministers, decision makers, and experts have all come together here to discuss the most important ICT issues, which are the very backbone and life blood of the world economy. This will enable us to build on our achievements so far.

 The United Arab Emirates are hosting this conference as a stakeholder in this development. And I would like to welcome you yet again to our country.

 I hope we will be able to make this into a better world with the tools at our disposal. And I hope that society will not be disappointed. I hope the global community will not be disappointed in us. I hope we are successful in our work to further prosperity and well being for our people.

 Thank you.

 (Applause)

 >> PATRICIA BENOIT-GUYOT: I now call about Mr. Fadi Chehadé, President and CEO of the ICANN, to address the delegates. His presence embodies the multi-stakeholder spirit of greater collaboration and coordination between ITU and ICANN and of the Internet ecosystem in general. We really thank him for accepting the Secretary-General's invitation as well as the UAE invitations to join us here today. Mr. Fadi Chehadé, please.

 (Applause)

 >> FADI CHEHADE: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al-Ghanim, Dr. Touré, excellencies, ministeres, and heads of delegations, ladies and gentlemen. I am deeply honored to address your distinguished conference today, responding to a truly most gracious invitation from Mr. Mohammed, the Chairman of the conference, and the ITU Secretary-General Dr. Hamadoun Toure'. Thank you.

 I sincerely thank both of them on behalf of myself and Dr. Steve Crocker, Chairman of the board of ICANN, who is here with us today for their invitation to this historic opening ceremony.

 I am here because I believe in the power of engagement. Engagement starts with listening, and I'm here for that. It's a new season of engagement at ICANN and it's a new season of cooperation between ICANN and the ITU, which started recently at a meeting with Dr. Toure' at the IGF in Baku. I recognize the ITU's deep impact on the development of the telecommunications industry and the broadband infrastructure of which we all benefit every day especially in the developing world, the world I come from.

 The ITU and ICANN have complementary roles, and moving forward we shall cooperate in good spirit while clearly respecting our distinct roles. I therefore join my fellow organisations, the ISOC, the IETF, the Regional Internet Registries in our continued deep commitment to service the world's needs for Internet governance.

 Allow me to address you now in my mother tongue, Arabic.

 When we initiated cooperation with colleagues and brothers in the Arab world, I was delighted to meet the leaders of the Arab delegations here. It was a very fruitful meeting. And we committed ourselves to a period of cooperation and coordination on my own name and on behalf of ICANN. I would like to thank you all for that cooperative spirit, which is extremely positive.

 And I should, too, like to take this opportunity to express my satisfaction and pride to see such an important conference being held in an Arab country, this brother country, the UAE. It is certainly a matter for great pride for all of those of us working in ICTs.

 I want to finish by saying the following. When I started at ICANN, I said we can build organisations either as fortresses or as oases. I invite you to join me in making our organisation an open oasis. The Oasis is welcoming. It's open. It's vital. And that's what I intend to do, remove the walls, open the Windows, so that we can all participate together in building organisations that are welcoming, that are transparent, and I'm committed to that in front of all of you.

 I wish you the best with your conference. Thank you.

 (Applause)

 >> PATRICIA BENOIT-GUYOT: And thank you to Mr. Fadi Chehadé for sharing his wishes of transparency and working together for the success of the conference.

 On this very special time as we celebrate the 41st anniversary of the Union of the Arab Emirates, let's take a few minutes to learn something about the history of the union.

 Thank you.

 (Video)

 >> On December 2, 1971, the true States gave way to the newly born United Arab Emirates. Meeting in what was known as the guest palace, the rulers of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajmin, Umm Al Quiwain, and Fujairah established the independent state of the UEA. Ras Al Khaimah joined in February of the following year. The ruler of Abu Dhabi was elected President of this new country.

 Sheikh Rashid bin Zayed Maktoum, ruler of Dubai, was appointed as the UAE's first Vice President and Minister. Together the dignitaries and guests gathered under the world's newest national flag. Today Union House stands as a reminder of this successful federation, with a much larger national flag now flying over this historic landmark.

 Looking back, it's amazing how far the United Arab Emirates have progressed in such a short space of time.

 It began with pearls. The pearl industry was a major source of income for communities on the Arabian peninsula. Tribesmen would migrate to the coast during the pearling season to work on the fleets putting to sea. The pearling Dows would spend many weeks and months gathering oysters from the sea bed. The industry collapsed in the 1930 due to the artificial pearls. Coastal communities dependent on fishing and pearling had to find new sources of income. It was shortly after this that the first air links to the region were established. Sharjah became a stopover for aircraft en route to Great Britain, India and on to Australia. Passengers stayed overnight in the Almahata Fort. The fort was practical; necessary to protect against occasional raids by Bedoin. Today the site is an aviation museum, displaying aircraft that served the region.

 And Sharjah has grown from its humble beginnings into a major city. This original dusty air strip evolved into gleaming modern airports, linking the UAE to every major city in the world.

 Oil was discovered in commercial quantities in 1958. Development of this abundant resource began shortly thereafter. In 1962, the SO Dublin loaded the first cargo of crude oil.

 In addition to exporting oil, the need to be self-sufficient led to the opening of the Ryaz Oil Refinery. Onshore and offshore oil production continued to develop throughout the 1960s.

 The oil wealth was put to use improving infrastructure. The City of Abu Dhabi embarked on a wave of construction that saw the island's shoreline dramatically change. The city's oldest building, Al Hosn, or the White Fort, erected in 1798, was the most prominent landmark in the city. Today the fort now undergoing restoration is surrounded by the sky scrapers of Abu Dhabi. The city is still growing, worthy of its place among the world's capitals.

 With pearls now no longer able to supply vital income, the resilient City of Dubai turned to trade to restore its fortunes. It became a base for commerce throughout the Gulf region. The Dubai creek, traditionally the centre of business, was dredged in the early 1960s to allow larger Dows to navigate the waterway. This allowed the city to continue to grow as an important commercial hub. Dows ladened goods are still seen, and an historical link between the old and new.

 Increasing demand led to the world's largest manmade port being created. The docks are a testament to the valuable role it now plays as the centre of regional trade.

 These successful commercial links brought great change to the City of Dubai. Once crowded narrow alleyways, hardly wide enough to accommodate camels and donkeys, have turned into highways. And there are record breaking sky scrapers and developments that are the icons of the city.

 Inland, in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi lies the oasis of Laine. It was the base for the Omani scouts who set out on camel to police the area. They were based at the Al Jehili Fort which was used by Sheikh Zayed the First. Surrounding the fort, the houses were made from mud brick or palm fronds. Today the fort stands restored and is a popular tourist attraction.

 The modern City of Laine and surrounding district expanded to be home to over 380,000 people.

 Throughout the country, constant reminders of these links with the past can be found sitting side by side with modern wonders. Practical has given way to recreational. Forts stand restored as museums. Construction methods have changed.

 Some things, however, remain the same. The people of the UAE still remember and honor their past as they move into the future. A reminder of how much has been achieved in such a short space of time.

 (Applause)

 >> PATRICIA BENOIT-GUYOT: Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is as always a very great pleasure for me to invite the gentleman whose untiring energy has brought us all here together today, the International Telecommunication Union Secretary-General, Dr. Hamadoun Toure', to give his inaugural speech.

 Dr. Touré, please.

 (Applause)

 >> HAMADOUN TOURE: Thank you. Good morning to you all.

 Excellencies, my dear brother Mohamed Nasser Al-Ghanim, distinguished Ministers, delegates, my colleagues, elected officials of the union, the Deputy Secretary-General Houlin Zhao, Directors of BDT and BR Mr. Brahima Sanou and Francois Rancy; Director of TSB Mr. Malcolm Johnson; ladies and gentlemen.

 What a great history we have seen here today. I would like to congratulate our host for all they have achieved in this 41 years of great history.

 Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, welcome to the official opening of the World Conference on International Telecommunications, WCIT-12. We are very grateful to be here in Dubai and I would like to thank the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of United Arab Emirates for the tremendous facilities and efficient staff and support that they have provided to us.

 Dubai is one of the most modern cities in the world, a city which has grown to become a wonderful symbol of Emirati culture and progress, and a city which can rightly claim to be one of the greatest symbols of human achievement in the modern world.

 So let me congratulate the United Arab Emirates on the 41st anniversary, yesterday, on its foundation on 2 December 1971.

 Let me take the opportunity to again thank my good friend Fadi Chehadé, President and CEO of ICANN, and Dr. Steve Crocker, Chairman of ICANN, who have accepted my invitation to come here. I have invited Fadi to recognize here the impact of ICANN on the development of the Internet, and I've said this this morning in our Heads of Delegations meeting that I believe we should be reaching out, and them accepting here means that they are on the same road. I think if you help us, we can walk the talk and I believe I can count on you. And the words that I received when I heard of the acceptance of Fadi Chehadé to this meeting was a testimony of everyone here, believing that it's time to start working together to be complementary and to work together. And I believe we have started the first step of that.

 And I would like to count on you here to help us continue in that direction. I believe it's the right direction. I believe it's the direction that will help us achieve great things for humanity. The users out there in the world are not waiting for fights among us here. They are looking for results, so that we can help them be together in this knowledge society that we are all dreaming of.

 On that note, I would like to take the opportunity to thank my good friend Minister and Senator Steven Conway, Minister of Telecommunications in Australia, for his presence. Why I'm singling out Senator Conroy is not only because of the achievement he made in his country, not only because of his contribution to the Broadband Commission for the Digital Development Conference, but also because Melbourne was the place for the last conference of this nature. 1988.

 I would like to tell Senator Conroy way that the Melbourne conference has served its purpose. Thanks to the ITRs in 1988, the stage was set. The foundations were laid for the information society we are in today. Because thanks to the ITRs in 1988, the deregulation, privatization, competition, and innovation and growth that came in the 1990s, ways were founded, and therefore I would like to thank Australia for being the host of such a big conference.

 This event, the WCIT-12, will bring to a close a most important year, ladies and gentlemen, for ITU. A year which has proved that consensus is the very foundation of harmony. It was a year we started with the World Radiocommunication Conference in Geneva; an event which achieved consensus on a whole range of issues vital to the continued advancement of the global ICT sector.

 And it was a year which just last week wrapped up in the World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly here in this room, an event which also successfully demonstrated the true might and power of consensus.

 WCIT-12, starting today, will fulfill the promise not just of this year, but of the entire century and a half of consensus-building which makes ITU's history so unique.

 Distinguished Delegates, we are here to explore the best ways to ensure that all the world's people can benefit from affordable, equitable access to ICTs.

 I will take more time this afternoon, of course, to discuss this in more detail, but let me just list a few of the most important subjects for discussion where I can see in the proposals made that it is a great promise of being able to achieve compromise based on those proposals made here.

 It includes broadband investment; we need to make sure that there is enough investment in the infrastructure to carry the traffic that we see that is growing in an exponential way: Voice, video and data, including the Internet.

 Energy efficiency; accessibility; security; the consequences of unsolicited content, or spam; misuse of numbering; roaming; reducing taxtation. How can this industry continue to be heavily taxed while it's the basis for all other industries in times of economic crisis? Price transparency; the fostering of competitive and liberalized telecommunications markets; and Freedom of Expression that has been mentioned that was a risk of blocking the Freedom of Expression. So we made sure that we are addressing this issue in the very beginning of this conference, so that everyone understands that nothing can stop Freedom of Expression in this world today. And nothing in this conference will be about that.

 On the contrary, what we do today here in this conference will enable the access to those people who want to express their Freedom of Expression.

 Ladies and gentlemen, what you will notice in this list is that I have not mentioned one thing: Controlling the Internet. I did not mention that. Indeed, we have heard this morning from the President and CEo of ICANN, Fadi Chehadé, who was invited as a special guest, along with the Chairman of the board. And I'm pleased that they are here so that we can start working together.

 I'm very pleased to see that all stakeholders are very represented here with national delegations comprising representatives from Government, industry, and civil society, as well as technical and legal experts and others, making this a fully inclusive conference.

 Distinguished Delegates, this is a historic occasion and it is a historic opportunity. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "The future depends on what you do today."

 Gandhi also said "You must be the change you want to see in the world."

 In our debates and deliberations here in Dubai, let us remember the opening words of the charter of the United Nations. "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind...and for these ends, to practice tolerance and to live together in peace with one another as good neighbors and to unite our strength to maintain peace and security."

 And we heard from Ban Ki-moon, whose work is to ensure that there is peace and stability in this world, we share our desire for security for our society, peace for all peoples of the world, and prosperity for our children and future generations.

 Everyone here has a vital role to play. The Member State delegations include representatives of all stakeholders. There are some very large delegations here and some very small ones. To those smaller delegations, let me remind you of an old African proverb. "If you think you are too small to make a difference, then you have never spent a night with a mosquito."

 Ladies and gentlemen, this is the most important two weeks in the history of ICTs, and it's time for us to work together; and we can. Over the past six years, as Secretary-General of ITU, I have had the chance, the privilege, to travel widely across the globe. I have visited countries large and small and I have visited countries rich and poor. And everywhere, everywhere I have traveled, I've discovered that we all share the same hopes, dreams and aspirations. We are united, wherever we are, wherever we were born, or whenever we came from, by a desire for progress. We want to grow. We want to develop. We want to innovate, to aspire to a better life for ourselves, certainly, but even more so for our children and our children's children.

 And someone like me, who is lucky to be a grandfather, can dream more, better, than the good life for my grandchildren.

 We plant the tiny seeds that will grow into mighty trees. We walk on the earth, but we look up to the stars. "When you see," you know, there is a saying, "when you see a beautiful flower up there, the roots of the tree are in the mud." Someone needs to do the work. And these are the laws of progress, and it's part of what makes us human.

 So, Distinguished Delegates, we are here in Dubai to chart the course toward a better future. We are incredibly fortunate to have such a great membership bringing together great minds, to a great meeting.

 We are also incredibly fortunate to be working in a sector, the Information and Technology Sector, that does so much to improve the lives of people across the world and which drives sustainable social and economic development.

 It is true, in the 21st Century, access to communication and information is essential and invaluable. And this is true in the developed world and it is true in the developing world as well.

 I traveled to some of the world's most underserved countries and I have seen what ICTs really mean for the lives of those who have so little -- and the opportunities it can create for their children and for future generations. ICTs give people the power to totally transform their lives through education, healthcare and everything else the online world can deliver.

 We have linked accessible broadband to Millennium Development Goals, to sustainable growth.

 ICTs also deliver clear macro- and microeconomic benefits. At the macro-economic level, we know that increasing mobile teledensity leads to additional GDP growth. This is even more true for increases in broadband penetration which deliver a multiplier effect.

 At the micro-economic level, we have seen the extraordinary difference that can be made by mobile banking in Africa, for example, or to the lives of people in Southern India, where fishermen's profits rose by 8 percent on average, and consumer prices fell by 4 percent on average, once the fishermen had mobile phones.

 When you transform individuals, you also transform whole societies and whole economies.

 Seventy-five years ago, during his second inaugural address, President Franklin D. Roosevelt put it very wisely when he said: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

 Ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to the successful outcome of this conference in 12 days' time. I look forward to knowing that we have done the right thing and created an enduring framework to ensure that all the world's people have access to ICTs.

 Last week, I made the statement when the telecommunications mobile infrastructure and Internet work were cut off in Syria, I condemned those actions. I demanded that the Government restore those back immediately. For some of the opponents of this conference, I received from some of them, I received a nice, for the first time, a nice note saying: Hamadoun, thanks for saying what you said about the Internet. They ignored what I said about the telecommunication and the mobile infrastructure. It was a nice gesture from them, their side, to understand that we are worried about that.

 I did the same message a year ago when it happened in Egypt. And four years ago, when it happened in Myanmar. I was first to do that.

 But what's -- what they have not noted is the fact that there was -- in Syria, the mobile penetration was close to 70 percent. But the Internet penetration is 20 percent. For the 80 percent of the people in Syria, Internet was not cut off because it was simply not there. And two-thirds of the human population don't have access to the Internet. And that access, the people here are involved in ensuring that we have that access. That's what this conference is about.

 Thank you.

 (Applause)

 Ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to sharing with you in the knowledge that we can hold our heads up high for the future generations. Distinguished Delegates, I firmly believe that there are three keys to the success of this conference. They are: Consensus. Consensus. And consensus.

 Just last month, I was reminded that while elections are by definition win-lose, successful negotiations are always win-win. And that's what this conference is about, win-win, in the true tradition of ITU.

 I look forward to seeing how the spirit of consensus, the spirit of compromise, and the spirit of multi-stakeholderism will come together to deliver that win-win solution. And I'm confident that each one of us here will do our best to ensure security for our society, peace for all nations, and prosperity for our children and future generations.

 Let me close with a quote from Nelson Mandela: "The time for the healing of wounds has come. The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come. The time to build is upon us."

 Indeed, the time to build is upon us. We shall succeed.

 I thank you very much.

 (Applause)

 >> >> PATRICIA BENOIT-GUYOT: Thank you very much for that uplifting speech.

 Our final presentation today will bring to the forefront the global advances made possible by the ICT industry. I hope you enjoy this presentation. Thank you.

 (Video)

 Information and communications has come a long way since the first message sent over the Atlantic in 1844 by Samuel Morris. The need to be in constant touch with our family, colleagues and friends and business associates across the globe has accelerated technology development.

 The digital revolution has made the telephone, Internet and social networking an integral part of modern life. Today 86 percent of the global population uses mobile phones. It's interesting that developing countries are fueling the drive for this uptake. There are more than 1.1 billion mobile broadband subscribers now. One-third of the world's population is online. That's a staggering 2.3 billion people. 45 percent of them are below the age of 25. What turns me on about the digital age is that you have closed the gap between dreaming and doing. Bono of YouTube said that "Information and Communications Technology, ICT, helps individuals and organisations at different levels." In fact, ICT has purveyed all facets of our personal and business life.

For starters, it keeps us connected. ICT enables effortless exchange of ideas. It facilitates learning at one's own pace, place and time.

 Networking is yet another benefit. It makes shopping and eCommerce possible.

 Travel is easier than ever before. Entertainment is virtually at your finger tips.

 Businesses are able to function more efficiently and profitably, fueled by timely information.

 Even fields such as healthcare, banking, security, transportation, and ecoconservation have benefited from ICT. The UAE has always been an early adapter of technology. It has built a vibrant communications environment by providing infrastructure, competitive service providers, and set up a regulatory authority, the TRA, since 2003.

 The UAE currently has 2 million fixed lines and that figure is increasing. Mobile subscriptions total 13 million subscribers. Information and communications technology, ICT, has played an important part of the average growth and development. The United Arab Emirates is proud to be heralding in the information and communications realm. It's why we're bringing the world together, to define the future of ICT in the last quarter of 2012.

 Welcome to the future! Welcome to the UAE. Welcome to Telecom World Dubai 2012.

 (Applause).

 >> PATRICIA BENOIT-GUYOT: Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the opening ceremony is coming to a close. Before taking leave, I would like to remind the press that there is a press conference at 12:30 in room D. That is room D for Dubai.

 At 2:30 we will invite everyone back to this room for the first plenary session.

 And, finally, we look forward to seeing you all this evening at Jumeirah Beach Hotel for the welcoming reception

 Honorable Minister, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the ITU and TRA, I would like to wish you all a very successful conference.

 Thank you ever.

 (Applause)

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