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**TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU**

**WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT  
CONFERENCE (WTDC-98)**

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**PLENARY MEETING**

TENTH SERIES OF TEXTS SUBMITTED BY THE  
EDITORIAL COMMITTEE TO THE PLENARY MEETING

The following texts are submitted to the Plenary Meeting:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Title</b>
WGVAP	217	Valletta Declaration

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Chairman of the Editorial Committee

**Annex:** 5 pages

## VALLETTA DECLARATION

- 1a) The second World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-98) held by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) since the establishment of its Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) took place in Valletta, Malta, from 23 March to 1 April 1998. It was attended by delegations from ..... Member States of ITU, headed by ministers or senior officials, ..... Sector Members and representatives of ..... organizations and agencies, as well as many private sector representatives. The purposes of the Conference were to:
- review the results of global telecommunications since the last World Telecommunication Development Conference;
  - review the current major policy issues;
  - examine technologies for the future;
  - adopt a strategic plan for ITU-D as well as a successor action plan for 1999-2002, comprising development conferences, study groups, six programmes, a special programme for LDCs and the execution of technical cooperation projects;
  - consider financing and innovative forms of cooperation;
  - take decisions on ITU-D structure and working methods;
  - set goals and objectives up to the year 2003 and define and establish a common vision and strategies for achieving balanced telecommunication development by and beyond the end of the century.
- b) The Conference was inaugurated by the Hon. Dr. Alfred Sant, Prime Minister of Malta, who praised the work of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau in advising countries on how to meet the challenges of privatization and deregulation in attaining their national goals. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of new technologies for applications such as tele-education and telemedicine in coping more effectively with problems arising from social inequalities, demographic imbalances, prejudices, misgivings and lack of trust.
- c) Speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Under-Secretary-General, said that the delegates to the Conference represented leaders who will be shaping the telecommunication industry of the next century and opening channels of communication between regions and cultures, thereby helping to promote greater understanding and tolerance among their communities. He also said that the proposal of the ITU Secretary-General to all United Nations programmes and agencies to start promoting "the right to communicate" as a fundamental human right was an outstanding and timely strategic initiative which calls for a coordinated approach from the international community.

- d) In his opening address, Dr. Pekka Tarjanne, Secretary-General of ITU, highlighted the real challenge to project a future which is not simply the sum of trends that have transformed telecommunications, but one which moves the work of telecommunications to an even higher level of development, a future which adds human value to these trends, a future which transforms how the world views the telecommunication industry, and how the telecommunication industry views the world.
- e) Mr. Ahmed Laouyane, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, talked of a new form of civilization which the Conference was called upon to launch: that of information and communication to which small countries can make a key contribution.
- f) The keynote address was delivered by Sir Donald Maitland, Chairman of the former Independent Commission for World-Wide Telecommunications Development. He said that the information society raises questions about the international division of labour, about the structure of cooperation, the future of work, the nature of human society, the individual's sense of identity, systems of governance and the meaning of sovereignty in an interdependent, interconnected world.
- g) The Conference was chaired by the Hon. Joseph Mizzi, Minister responsible for telecommunications in the Republic of Malta. He thanked the delegates for entrusting Malta with the task of chairing the Conference, which was expected to prepare the telecommunication community for the next millennium. He also said that history will judge the success of the Conference by how much it paves the way for reducing the gap between developed and developing countries and facilitates telecommunication development in the least developed countries, including access to online information and interactive services.
- h) The Conference was addressed by many ministers responsible for telecommunications and other senior representatives of governments, the private sector and international and regional organizations. They stressed the importance of translating the indisputable potential of telecommunications into tangible results to improve the lives of all people of the world, especially those in developing countries. They recognized that, in the prevailing environment of converging technologies and globalization, the time is ripe for restructuring the telecommunication sector in order to stimulate private sector investment and accelerate the pace of expansion and modernization of telecommunication networks in developing countries.
- i) The Conference expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Malta for hosting the Conference and providing the conditions which contributed to its success.
- [j) The Minister of Transport and Communications of ..... extended an invitation to host the next WTDC in the year 2002. This proposal was gratefully accepted by the Conference.]

- 2 The Conference was the culmination of a process including:
- a) The resolutions and recommendations of the first World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 1994) and in particular the Buenos Aires Action Plan and Buenos Aires Declaration.
  - b) The resolutions and recommendations of the second cycle of regional telecommunication development conferences:
    - AF-RTDC-96 (Abidjan, 1996) for Africa;
    - AR-RTDC-96 (Beirut, 1996) for the Arab States;and the regional preparatory meetings for WTDC-98 held at:
    - Manila, August 1997, for Asia and the Pacific;
    - Santa Margarita, September 1997, for the Americas;
    - Geneva, December 1997, for Central and Eastern Europe;
    - St. Petersburg, January/February 1998, for the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic States.
  - c) The input provided by the Telecommunication Development Advisory Board, in particular the report on "Partners for Development: New Opportunities for the Telecommunication Development Sector".
- 3 Taking note of the above and with a view to setting goals and objectives for the future, the Conference **declares** that:
- a) Telecommunications, including sound and television broadcasting, is an essential component of political, economic, social and cultural development. It fuels the global society and economy and is rapidly transforming our lives and promoting better understanding among peoples. It also plays an important role in protecting the environment and in the mitigation of natural and other disasters. All stakeholders are urged to make their contribution to extend these benefits to all peoples.
  - b) New technologies have a significant impact on the expansion of telecommunications and have the potential to close the gap not only between developing and developed countries but also between urban and rural areas within a country.

Convergence between telecommunications, computing and broadcasting, and multimedia applications, is opening up new perspectives for the sector, providing opportunities for tele-education, telemedicine, environmental protection and many other applications which are highly beneficial for social and economic development.

The emergence of innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to providing a rural service, and more cost-effective technologies, may provide the opportunity for telecommunication services in rural and remote areas to be profitable.

The global information infrastructure (GII), of which the Internet is a precursor, and the global information society (GIS) are evolving and should be responsive to the interests of all nations including developing countries.

The opportunities offered by modern technologies should be fully exploited through research, development and innovative technological applications for the ongoing betterment of our lives.

- c) The environment of the telecommunication sector is undergoing significant changes. The combined forces of "demand pull" and "supply push" have made telecommunications one of the leading growth sectors of the world economy. The telecommunication sector has a high profit potential in every country of the world. However, experience suggests that in developing countries retained earnings in the sector are not sufficient to finance all new projects because networks are underdeveloped and do not generate enough cash flow. Further, ITU-D is committed to encouraging gender issues in its programmes as well as ways to reflect the needs of other aspects of global society such as youth and the needs of indigenous peoples.

WTDC-98 drew the attention of all ITU Member States and Sector Members to a number of pressing issues. These included the importance of emergency telecommunications and the need for an international convention on this subject and the need to address, as a matter of urgency, the "Year 2000" problem. It also pointed to a number of mechanisms for the Development Sector to advance the goals of telecommunication development including Opinion B of the World Telecommunication Policy Forum (Geneva, 1998) and the opportunities provided by the centres of excellence funded by the surplus funds from the ITU TELECOM exhibitions.

- d) Sector reforms leading to greater private sector involvement and competition are new forces shaping the development of telecommunications. These new challenges of the information society and the new trade environment place even greater pressure on policy-makers, regulators and operators to acquire the necessary skills to manage the new environment. In this respect, human resources development becomes a key success factor.
- e) Governments play a key role in the development of telecommunications, and are urged to establish appropriate policies and regulatory structures to promote reasonable and affordable access to basic telecommunication services for all.

The regulatory framework should also create a stable and transparent environment, promote fair competition while protecting network integrity and guarantee the rights of users, operators and investors. Policies and strategies for the development of telecommunications should reflect the trend towards multi-services utilizing a common infrastructure platform.

- f) Global, regional and national financing and investment agencies are urged to attach high priority to the growth of telecommunications, particularly in developing countries.
- g) ITU has a special role to play in advising policy-makers on the options available in tailoring policies and regulatory structures to fit a country's unique requirements. ITU should work in collaboration with regional telecommunication organizations and international, regional and national development and financing agencies, as well as with the private sector, to bring about appropriate sector reform.

ITU's regional presence and synergy and collaboration between the Standardization, Radiocommunication and Development Sectors of ITU will be highly beneficial in instilling dynamism and vitality in the process of transferring knowledge and technology.

ITU should be urged to promote the development, expansion and operation of telecommunication networks and services, particularly in developing countries, taking into account the activities of other relevant bodies, by reinforcing capabilities for the implementation of new services and technologies including the Internet, mobile and other wireless technologies, human resources development and management, planning, management, resource mobilization and research and development.

- h) ITU-D is urged to provide expert knowledge, information and advice to developing countries to enable them to make significant advances in the telecommunication sector.

WTDC-98 reaffirmed the ITU-D commitment to focus its activities on the major facets of telecommunication development, including among other things sector and regulatory reform, accounting rate reform, management of technologies, finance and investment and human resources, giving special attention to the least developed countries (LDCs). ITU is urged to encourage and support universal service, global access and fair pricing.

- i) Significant achievements have been accomplished since the first World Telecommunication Development Conference in 1994. The implementation of the Buenos Aires Action Plan (Chapters II and III) has been largely satisfactory thanks to the collaborative efforts of all the parties involved. It is noteworthy that the key to this success was the considerable effort made by the countries themselves and the catalytic inputs of their development partners, including public, private and intergovernmental organizations. The ITU-D study groups also made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge which has been placed at the disposal of the telecommunication community.

The successes of the past are a great encouragement to all stakeholders in the sector to sustain these efforts in the upcoming period from 1999 to 2003. These initiatives will be a key factor for the success of the Valletta Action Plan.

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