



ITU at Copenhagen

Getting the message across

ITU is an active participant in the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2009, being held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 7–18 December. An ITU delegation at the highest level will be present, indicating the great importance the Union attaches to meeting the challenge of climate change.

As the specialized United Nations agency for information and communication technologies (ICT), ITU has been asked by its Member States to raise awareness of the critical role of ICT in addressing climate change. This was decided unanimously by ITU's governing body, the Council, in October 2009 (see the November 2009 issue of *ITU News*).

The digital revolution and the proliferation of ICT worldwide have dramatically changed many people's lives, providing new opportunities and boosting economic growth. Because of this, ICT themselves are a growing contributor to greenhouse-gas emissions. But ICT are also an essential part of the solution. Some estimates suggest that reductions of over

40 per cent in global emissions can be achieved by 2050 — five times as much as the sector itself will contribute.

This message about the vital nature of ICT is one that ITU is determined to see included in the negotiating texts at Copenhagen. There should be reference to the ICT industry among the other industrial sectors that must take action on mitigating and adapting to climate change. And ICT must be included in national, regional and global plans, giving the sector an incentive to invest in meeting this major challenge of our age.

Raising awareness

Already, ITU has achieved some success in having the role of ICT recognized in documents to be considered at Copenhagen. And there will be continuing efforts to make sure that the huge potential of these technologies is understood by all stakeholders.

▶ As part of its role in raising awareness, at Copenhagen ITU will take part in the “iSeeT@theKiosk”, an exhibition organized by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). There is a programme of talks by business leaders in the ICT sector, from both developing and developed countries.

ITU is also organizing a side event, in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), on 10 December at the Copenhagen Congress Centre. Under the theme “The effective use of ICT and the intellectual property system for mitigating climate change,” top decision-makers from governments, international organizations and industry will share their views, with a special focus on how the intellectual property system can promote the development of new technologies and improve access to them.

Climate change and the digital divide — a call to action

ITU is fully engaged with the climate change issue. Taking environmental concerns into consideration is part of the process of developing ITU standards for ICT equipment and networks. And together with more than 20 organizations and major companies, ITU is creating a common methodology for measuring the environmental impact of ICT throughout its lifecycle, both in terms of its own emissions and in the savings to be made through using these technologies. If the ICT sector is recognised at Copenhagen, this methodology could be offered to the UNFCCC to create a further incentive for the ICT industry to invest in developing countries

ITU wants to make sure that ICT is a clean technology that helps to clean the planet.

ITU helps developing countries by assisting with the transfer of such technology and with training to strengthen human resources. Assistance is also provided with designing emergency communications and warning systems to deal with the effects of climate change. And in collaboration with its membership, ITU is identifying the necessary radio-frequency spectrum for climate monitoring and disaster prediction and relief.

Within the broad area of ICT applications, ITU promotes implementation of services such as e-government, online education and e-health. These not only reduce the carbon footprint, they make a significant contribution to people’s welfare and the closing of the digital divide.

Bringing the benefits of the information society to all citizens of the world is one of ITU’s fundamental priorities. But it can only be achieved sustainably if climate change is tackled effectively — and ITU will continue to work towards ICT playing their full and essential role in that critical work.

