



Andorra Telecom

Participants on the opening day of the meeting

## Europe sets development goals ahead of WTDC-10

■ Delegates from around Europe gathered in the Principality of Andorra on 1–3 December 2009 to discuss regional priorities for the development of information and communication technologies (ICT). Their conclusions will be presented to the ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference 2010 (WTDC-10), which takes place from 24 May to 4 June in Hyderabad, India.

The meeting, held in the capital city of Andorra La Vella, was chaired by Jaume Salvat Font, CEO of Andorra Telecom. In opening remarks, Vicenç Alay Ferrer, the Principality's Minister of Territorial Planning, Environment and Agriculture, highlighted the importance of ICT in job creation and raising the quality of life. For Andorra, he added, ICT constitute a very important component of national economic development, and they must be innovative, affordable and available to all. Mr Alay promised that Andorra will continue to contribute to the assistance and activities that ITU coordinates with the aim of helping developing countries to deploy ICT and related services.

ITU Deputy Secretary-General Houlin Zhao noted that "in spite of the global downturn, ITU has seen over the last year that our Member States continue to recognize the essential role that ICT play in all areas of our daily lives and how important they are for

social and economic development." The European region has its own characteristics and its own needs, he said, and the meeting was "a great opportunity" to assess those needs in order to determine future work plans for ITU.

The Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid, said that "WTDC-10 is a landmark, global conference which will provide our Members and other stakeholders with an opportunity to assess the progress that has been made since we met in Doha in 2006 for the last WTDC". Since then, there have been many changes and new developments, and Mr Al Basheer invited participants at Andorra "to embrace this opportunity and get your voice heard." He added that as well as identifying the needs of the European region, the meeting could "go beyond to look at global issues that may help shape the global ICT landscape, which can help the world develop and reduce poverty."

### Priorities for ICT

The meeting reviewed the 2006 WTDC "Doha Action Plan" and its implementation, and endorsed the proposal in a document presenting a "fresh look" at how BDT's activities might be organized and consolidated so that resources can be allocated in a



more efficient way. The next task was to establish priorities for future development of ICT, under the proposal's headings. It was decided that emphasis should be placed on promoting the following areas:

#### ICT infrastructure

Fixed, mobile, broadband network development (including broadcast networks and spectrum management); rural communications, and emergency telecommunications and disaster relief.

#### Cybersecurity and ICT applications

Applications such as e-government, e-health, and e-environment; promotion of cybersecurity, including the protection of young people and children.

#### Enabling environment

Improving telecommunication and ICT policy and regulations, through such means as market analysis and cost modeling, as well as compiling statistics and indicators.

#### Capacity building and other initiatives

Facilitating access to information and knowledge for all, in particular to engage women, young people and children, indigenous people, underserved communities and other disadvantaged groups.



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*Vicenç Alay Ferrer,  
Andorra's Minister of Territorial  
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Agriculture*

#### Regional initiatives

For the first time, the WTDC preparatory meeting for Europe proposed a set of key regional initiatives, under which projects will be implemented through partnerships.

#### Accessibility for the visually impaired

The meeting considered contributions on this topic from Bulgaria and Romania, which proposed a regional initiative focusing particularly on Central and Eastern Europe. The goal is to provide assistance to ITU Member States in enabling blind people to use the Internet. It is envisaged that specialized national and regional libraries will be created of resources for those with visual impairments, and facilities established to train instructors.

#### Digital broadcasting

Also in Central and Eastern Europe, ITU Member States will be assisted to make a smooth transition from analogue to digital broadcasting. Policy and regulatory frameworks for digital terrestrial broadcasting (including mobile television) will be reviewed, and help will be given in deploying interactive multimedia services and applications.

## E-health

It was agreed that best practice should be shared across Europe in using e-health applications. The objective is faster and easier storage, transmission and access to medical data and health advice, alongside reduced operational and administrative costs in implementing healthcare services, particularly in rural and remote areas.

## The information society in Europe

In conjunction with the meeting, ITU released a new report entitled *Information Society Statistical Profiles 2009: Europe\**. It shows that while Europe has around ten per cent of the global population, by 2009 it accounted for more than 18 per cent of the world's mobile subscriptions, 21 per cent of fixed telephone lines, 22 per cent of Internet users

and 31 per cent of fixed and mobile broadband subscriptions.

"The majority of European countries have surpassed the 100-per-cent mobile penetration mark, and close to two out of three Europeans are using the Internet," commented Mr Al Basheer. "This region has for a long time developed, as well as embraced, new technologies before many others. It was the first region to adopt a uniform standard for mobile telephony in the early 1990s, and to introduce next-generation mobile networks in 2000," he continued. "The influence and leadership of the European region in promoting universal access is in no doubt," said Mr Al Basheer. "I am ready, and so is my team, to work with you all and take the experience of Europe to other regions, so that ICT can become a truly globalizing engine of our times," he concluded.

\* The report can be read online at [www.itu.int/publ/D-IND-RPM.EUR-2009/en](http://www.itu.int/publ/D-IND-RPM.EUR-2009/en).

