

Broadband Commission for Digital Development Meeting in Paris

Dr Hamadoun I. Touré
ITU Secretary-General



■ History has witnessed many declarations of independence. But in today's interconnected world we might propose a new "Declaration of Inter-dependence" — a recognition that the economic welfare of each individual country increasingly depends on access to the rest of the world through broadband Internet.

At ITU and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) we created the Broadband Commission for Digital Development in May 2010 because we firmly believed — and continue to believe — that broadband represents a unique, once-in-a-generation opportunity to drive social and economic development, and to help us accelerate progress towards meeting the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

At our third meeting in Paris in June 2011, we adopted our second report (see pages 9–13). Entitled "Broadband: a Platform for Progress", the report advocates a coordinated nationwide approach to broadband development that more closely resembles the development of national railway or electricity networks than the more laissez-faire, market-driven approach that has

generally characterized the roll-out of mobile cellular technology.

Just before our gathering in Paris, I was pleased to note that the G8 Summit, held in Deauville, France, on 26–27 May 2011, drew from the first Broadband Commission's report, delivered to the United Nations Secretary-General in September 2010, and actively recognized the importance of broadband. Article 14 of the latest G8 Declaration confirms that broadband Internet access is an essential infrastructure for participation in today's economy, and states:

"In order to benefit fully from the digital economy, we need to seize emerging opportunities, such as cloud computing, social networking and citizen publications, which are driving innovation and enabling growth in our societies."

Broadband really has risen to the top of national agendas since the Commission was formed. We have published two very powerful reports. Now it is time to move from theory into practice. We must focus on concrete projects — real on-the-ground initiatives and innovative grass-roots solutions. ■