

Foreword

This report, entitled "*digital.life*" is the eighth in the series of "ITU Internet Reports", originally launched in 1997 under the title "Challenges to the Network". This edition has been specially prepared for ITU TELECOM WORLD, to be held in Hong Kong, China, from 4-8 December 2006.

Today's digital world has transformed individual lifestyles the world over. The computing industry has long been all-digital, the telecommunications industry is almost fully digital and the broadcasting sector is well on the way to becoming digital. Always-on internet access has become the norm, with people spending more and more time consuming digital media than any other medium. Daily lives from China to Croatia are brimming with SMS, e-mail, chats, online dating, multiplayer gaming, virtual worlds and digital multimedia. Although these technologies mean added convenience and enjoyment for many, regulators and users alike are often a step behind fast-paced innovations in this field. Concerns over privacy and data protection are important examples, as is the role of regulation in relation to content convergence and distribution. Moreover, as the number of channels for service delivery diversifies, the sector's traditional and less traditional businesses face a number of new dilemmas.

The first chapter of the report, *Going digital*, explores the meaning and importance of being digital. Chapter two, *lifestyles.digital*, examines the key technologies and services enabling new digital lifestyles, including higher-speed networks and content distribution. Chapter three, *business.digital*, considers the challenges and opportunities facing businesses in adapting to fast-paced innovation, before addressing whether a fresh approach to policy-making might be required in light of rapid media convergence. Chapter four, *identity.digital*, explores the changing nature of the digital individual and the need for greater emphasis on the creation and management of digital identity. Chapter five, *Living the digital world*, concludes by examining the social impacts of digital technologies and imagining how lifestyles might further evolve in the digital age. The Information Society Statistics in the annex present the latest data and charts for some 206 economies worldwide in their use of digital technologies.

ITU, the United Nations specialized agency for telecommunications, is committed to playing a positive role in the development of the information society and to extending the benefits of advances in telephony and information and communication technologies (ICTs) and embracing the opportunities for telecommunication development that arise from the growth of IP-based services. The ITU Internet Reports are one contribution towards this commitment.