

**OPENING STATEMENT BY
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CHAIRMAN OF THE UNITED STATES
DELEGATION 2006 PLENIPOTENTIARY
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary-General, Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is an honor to address this Conference on behalf of the Government of the United States of America. We wish to thank our hosts, who have greeted us with great warmth and hospitality. We would also like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election. We pledge our support to assist you in ensuring this Conference establishes a solid foundation for a productive next four years.

The ITU is to be congratulated for its role in the successful completion of the United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society. WSIS gave us a view of the future that is embodied in the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Commitment. During that Summit, global leaders declared the "common desire and commitment to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling . . . peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life . . ." This goal was embraced by all, but to be realized, governments must pursue policies that allow telecommunications and ICT networks to continue to evolve, while providing services that will advance development and social well-being, as well as the free flow of information. At the Summit, the ITU, consistent with its core competencies, was identified as the international

organization uniquely suited to apply its expertise to activities related to network infrastructure and security.

Innovative telecommunication technologies have created new economic opportunities and brought benefits unimaginable just a few years ago. These technologies can bring educational, cultural, political, medical, scientific and commercial achievements to all. It is the responsibility of all governments to ensure that their domestic policies foster an enabling environment conducive to the deployment of these technologies, and to ensure the ability of their citizens to access and use them. Only through the actions of each government can an environment be created which would allow the promise of ICTs to become reality.

Consistent with this important mission, over the past three years, the United States has contributed over \$250 million dollars directly to projects in developing countries aimed at expanding access to ICTs and promoting the free flow of information. For example, the President's Digital Freedom Initiative has brought together the U.S. government, the private sector, non-profits and universities to build technical capacity, empower people, and spur economic growth through greater use of ICTs. In 2007, it will expand to focus on increasing broadband connectivity, connecting rural areas and universities to allow voice and data transmission across nations.

The 2006 Plenipotentiary Conference presents us with both challenges and opportunities. In the four years since the Marrakesh Plenipotentiary, the world of telecommunications has changed dramatically with the ongoing development of Next Generation Networks, major consolidations in the telecommunications industry, and the rapid growth of wireless telecommunications in developing countries. To face successfully

the challenges of the future, we must envision what we want our organization to be. For us, it is critical that the ITU continue to perform its vital functions in the area of Radiocommunication and Standardization. It is also essential that we establish enabling environments that foster predictable, transparent, pro-competitive regulatory policies for telecommunication to advance global economic development. We also place great emphasis on promoting institutional reform, preserving the role of the private sector and providing sufficient resources to support efficient operations for the Union.

To meet these challenges at this critical time, it is essential that qualified, effective, and forward-looking ITU leaders be elected. We congratulate all of the candidates who have offered to serve the Union for the next four years and pledge to work closely with other ITU Members to ensure that our new leadership will have the necessary support.

We wish to join all Members in making the ITU more accountable, efficient and effective to facilitate the development of advanced telecommunications services. We believe this reform can be brought about through continuing in the work of modernizing the ITU's internal operations through enhancing the overall efficiency of ITU activities, including the establishment of results based budgeting.

Equally important, we need to meet the financial challenges that face the ITU. The United States believes it is incumbent on Member States to maintain a budget ceiling that reflects zero nominal growth and at the same time to promote transparency in the ITU budget process. To live within budgetary realities, priorities must be established, and activities must fall

squarely within the Union's core competencies. It is imperative to identify resources before new activities are started.

We must adopt a Strategic Plan that will allow the ITU, along with Member States and Sector Members, to engage in international cooperative efforts to globally advance telecommunications. Priorities in the Union's work must be established in order to link the Strategic Plan, operational plans, and the financial plan to focus resources and energies towards the strategic goals that are agreed by the Membership.

To conclude, it is our mutual responsibility to ensure that the ITU continues to work within its core competencies facilitating the fundamental communications needs of all people. Over six decades ago, it was written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that, "Everyone has the right to information, to freedom of opinion and expression. And this includes the right to freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers." It is our responsibility to see that these words --- and this promise --- is brought into reality. Telecommunications and ICTs are essential to fulfilling this promise.

We look forward to joining with all delegates, and with you Mr. Chairman, in making the 2006 Plenipotentiary a success. Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.