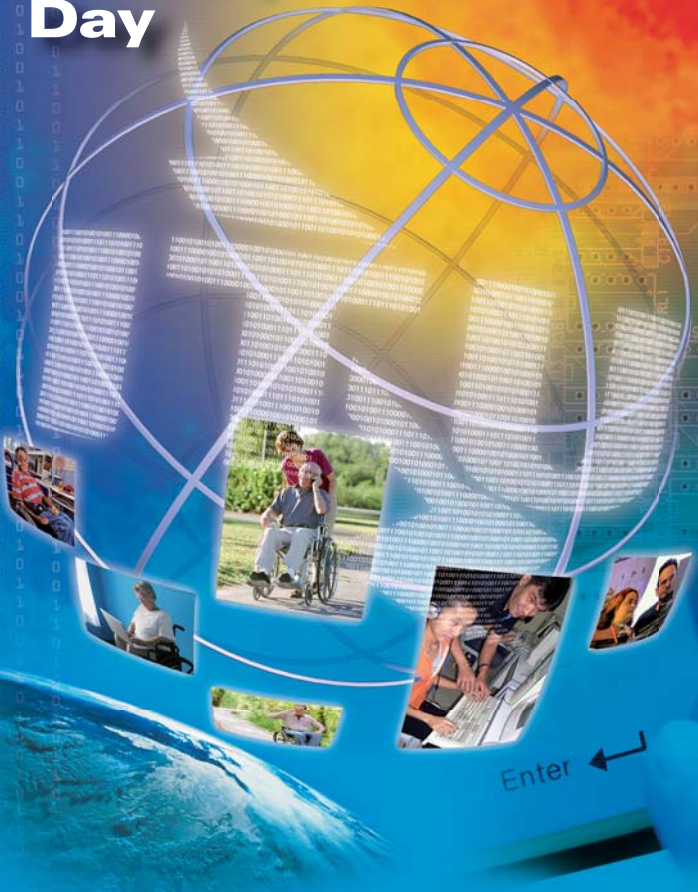


World Telecommunication and Information Society Day



17 May 2008

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2008



Connecting Persons
with Disabilities



International
Telecommunication
Union



Message from Mr Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General

Starting with the earliest drum beats, telegraphy – “writing in distance” – has been with us in dynamic, evolutionary motion. The ability to relay important information quickly across vast distances, closing the gaps of time and space, has expanded exponentially all manner of human activity, from sending out personal messages to completing complex financial transactions to engaging critical matters of war and peace. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day heralds the enabling and transformative role of communications and information in societies, and the universal need to communicate and cooperate across borders.

It is also the day in 1865 when the International Telecommunication Union was founded. At the time, the idea to transmit electronic signals across wires had already set forth a dramatic chain reaction of competing technologies. ITU was formed to address the growing need for international standards. From these early days, ITU has played a key role in connecting the world, a challenge which continues today with 3G mobile and broadband technologies.

Yet the reach of communications technology is not universal, its benefits have not been shared equally. The World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005, linked information and communication technology (ICT) with human development and called on Member States to build a global “inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented information society” through the sharing of information and knowledge.

The Summit also urged Member States to address the special requirements of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The theme of this year's observance, "connecting persons with disabilities", highlights the importance of making ICT equipment and services accessible to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. There are an estimated 650 million persons living with disabilities worldwide. Including their families, there are nearly two billion persons who are directly affected by disability, almost a third of the world's population. It is important to remember that anyone can become disabled at any moment.

It is vital that we change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities, ensuring that all fundamental rights and freedoms are honoured, including the right to fully participate in the information society, and bring forth input, ideas and effort from the disability community.

This is a significant development challenge. But we must find creative solutions, including the development of new assistive technologies, and facilitate a broader access to ICT. I urge policy-makers and industry leaders to accelerate scientific and technical research aimed at developing technologies that will be inclusive and accessible to all.

On this day, let us pledge to adhere to the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and work together to connect all humankind equally to the present opportunities and those yet possible in our ever-evolving world.

Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary-General



Message from Dr Hamadoun I. Touré, ITU Secretary-General

Connecting Persons with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All

The key to the information society is universal access. Everyone must have equal opportunity to participate in the digital age. And no one should be denied the potential benefits of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), not least because they are hampered by their disabilities. As ICTs bring a range of innovations in the workplace, at home and in every facet of our lives, these benefits must also be harnessed for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

This year, ITU has adopted the theme: “Connecting Persons with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All” to mark World Telecommunication and Information Society Day. The World Summit on the Information Society urged Member States to address the special requirements of persons with disabilities along with other marginalized and vulnerable groups in their national e-strategies. A further call was made to encourage design and production of ICT equipment and services adhering to the Universal Design Principle and the use of assistive technologies for research and development to facilitate accessibility to ICTs for all, including persons with disabilities.

The last World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-06) held in Doha, Qatar, in 2006, created a new Special Initiative on “Access to telecommunication services for persons with disabilities”. The Doha Plan of Action endorsed the Tunis Commitment of building ICT capacity for all, including persons with disabilities, through the promotion of universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICTs. It encouraged the adoption of universal design and assistive technologies to ensure that the benefits are evenly distributed within societies as well as to bridge the digital divide by creating digital opportunities to harness the full potential for development offered by state-of-the-art ICTs.

During this year's WTISD, ITU calls upon all stakeholders (policy-makers and regulators as well as operators and industry) to raise awareness on the need to adopt policies and strategies that would meet the ICT needs of persons with disabilities by ensuring that both equipment and services are accessible. This would not only ensure an inclusive information society, but would also enable Member States to meet their obligations under Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006.

Our focus this year on meeting the ICT needs of persons with disabilities is aimed at empowering every citizen with information and knowledge, improving the lines of communication to the remotest and most vulnerable groups, and building an inclusive information society geared towards the advancement of a better, more peaceful and productive world. It is clearly our duty today to provide the opportunities of ICTs to all, especially to those of us with disabilities.

As we celebrate World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, we invite all stakeholders — manufacturers, service providers, international organizations, public and non-governmental organizations as well as policy-makers — to join us in our endeavour to connect everyone, especially the 650 million or so people around the world who live with disabilities, to the remarkable digital opportunities offered by ICTs.

Dr Hamadoun I. Touré
ITU Secretary-General



world summit
on the information society
Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005

CLUSTER OF WSIS-RELATED EVENTS

For the third time since the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), representatives of governments, private sector and civil society will gather in Geneva in May to take stock of and advance the implementation of the WSIS outcomes.

In conjunction with the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, to be celebrated on 17 May, several meetings will be held, including:

- The Internet Governance Forum Open Consultations
- 12 Action Line Facilitation meetings
- The third meeting of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS)
- The third meeting of the WSIS Action Line Facilitators
- The 11th session of the ECOSOC Commission on Science and Technology for Development

Pursuant to the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society which assigned to ITU a leading facilitating role (along with UNESCO and UNDP), the Union is coordinating the organization of this third cluster of WSIS-related events and will host most of the events.

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day

17 May 2008

Connecting Persons with Disabilities

2008



Development Assistance
for People and Countries



International
Telecommunication
Union

CLUSTER OF WSIS-RELATED EVENTS

GENEVA, 13-30 MAY 2008

	Organizer	Event	Venue	Participants	Time
Tuesday 13 May					
	IGF	Open Consultations	Palais des Nations, room XIX	All WSIS stakeholders	10:00-13:00 15:00-18:00
Wednesday 14 May					
	IGF	Advisory Group meeting	Palais des Nations, room XXVII	Members of the Advisory Group	10:00-13:00 15:00-18:00
	UNDESA, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament	Parliamentary Forum: "Shaping the Information Society: the role of parliaments and legislators"	Palais des Nations, room XI	Members of Parliament and all WSIS stakeholders	10:00-13:00 15:00-18:00
Thursday 15 May					
	IGF	Advisory Group meeting	Palais des Nations, room XXVII	Members of the Advisory Group	10:00-13:00 15:00-18:00
	UNDESA, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament	Parliamentary Forum: "Shaping the Information Society: the role of Parliaments and legislators"	Palais des Nations, room XI	Members of Parliament and all WSIS Stakeholders	10:00-13:00 15:00-18:00
Thursday 15 May					
	ITU	World Telecommunication and Information Society Day Ceremony	Cairo	All WSIS stakeholders	13:00
Monday 19 May					
	ITU, UNDP	3rd Action Lines C2, C4 and C6 meeting: Information and communication infrastructure; Capacity building; Enabling environment.	ITU, room K	All WSIS stakeholders	09:00-12:30 14:00-18:00
	UNESCO	3rd Action Line C3 meeting: Access to information and knowledge	ITU, room C2	All WSIS stakeholders	15:00-17:00
Tuesday 20 May					
	ITU, UNDP	3rd Action Lines C2, C4 and C6 meeting: Information and communication infrastructure; Capacity building; Enabling environment.	ITU, room K	All WSIS stakeholders	09:00-12:30 14:00-18:00
	UNESCO	3rd Action Line C8 meeting: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content.	ITU, room C2	All WSIS stakeholders	14:30-17:30
Wednesday 21 May					
	ITU, UNDP	3rd Action Lines C2, C4 and C6 meeting: Information and communication infrastructure; Capacity building; Enabling environment.	ITU, room K1	All WSIS stakeholders	09:00-12:30
	ITU, UNEP	2nd Action Line C7 meeting: e-Environment	ITU, room C2	All WSIS stakeholders	09:30-12:30
	ITU	Information session on ITU Open Consultation on the Participation of all Relevant Stakeholders in the Activities of the Union related to WSIS	ITU, room C2	All WSIS stakeholders	13:00-14:00
	UNESCO	3rd Action Line C9 meeting: Media	ITU, room C1	All WSIS stakeholders	10:00-13:00
	UNESCO	3rd Action Line C7 meeting: e-Science	ITU, room K1	All WSIS stakeholders	15:00-17:00

CLUSTER OF WSIS-RELATED EVENTS

GENEVA, 13-30 MAY 2008

Organizer	Event	Venue	Participants	Time
Wednesday 21 May				
UNESCO	3rd Action Line C10 meeting: Ethical dimensions of the Information Society	ITU, room C1	All WSIS stakeholders	14:30-17:30
UNESCO, <i>infoDev</i> – World Bank	Open consultative meeting: low-cost devices for education	ITU, room B2	All WSIS stakeholders	09:00-12:30 14:00-17:30
ITU	Second meeting of the High-Level Expert Group of the Global Cybersecurity Agenda	ITU, room K2	Members of the HLEG	09:30-12:30 14:00-17:00
Thursday 22 May				
ITU	3rd Action Line C5 meeting: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs	ITU, room K	All WSIS stakeholders	09:30-13:00 14:30- 17:30
UNDESA	3rd Action Lines C1, C7 and C11 meeting: The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development; e-Government; International and regional cooperation.	ITU, room C1	All WSIS stakeholders	10:00-13:00 14:30-18:00
ITC, ILO, UNCTAD, UPU	3rd Action Line C7 meeting: e-Business	ITU, room C2	All WSIS stakeholders	10:00-13:00 15:00-18:00
UNESCO, <i>infoDev</i> – the World Bank	3rd Action Line C7 e-Learning meeting including low-cost devices for education	ITU, room A	All WSIS stakeholders	14:30-17:30
FAO	3rd Action Line C7 meeting: e-Agriculture	ITU, room B2	All WSIS stakeholders	14:30-17:30
Friday 23 May				
ITU	3rd Action Line C5 meeting: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs	ITU, room K	All WSIS stakeholders	09:30-13:00 14:30-17:30
ITU, UNDP, UNESCO	WSIS Action Line Facilitators meeting	ITU, room C2	Action Line Facilitators and all WSIS stakeholders	10:00-13:00
UNGIS	Third meeting of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS)	ITU, room E	UNGIS members	15:00-18:00
UNECE/CoE/APC	Stakeholder Consultation on Public Participation in Internet Governance: “Towards a code of good practice building on the principles of WSIS and the Aarhus Convention	ITU, room C2	All WSIS stakeholders	14:00-17:00
Monday 26 May – Friday 30 May				
CSTD	Eleventh Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)	Palais des Nations, room XVIII	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member States and Non-Member States of the CSTD; Inter-governmental Organizations; NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC; NGOs, civil society and business entities that were accredited to WSIS. 	10:00-13:00 15:00-18:00
Tuesday 27 May				
ITU/CSTD/GAID	CSTD session-Multistakeholder Panels on Broadband Technologies and Cybersecurity	Palais des Nations, room XVIII		10:00-13:00
Tuesday 27 May – Thursday 29 May				
Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development	2008 Global Event on measuring the Information Society	Palais des Nations, room XXVI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Statistical Offices; ICT Ministries, Regulatory Authorities; WSIS Stakeholders. 	10:00-13:00 15:00-18:00

ITU and Accessibility

It is estimated that about 10 per cent of the world's population – or around 650 million people – live with a disability. With current trends in population growth, medical advances and an increasingly greying population, this number will only grow. Clearly, this represents a significant communication challenge.

ITU has been active in promoting greater accessibility for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. ITU's aim is to ensure that people with a disability enjoy the same opportunities in life as everyone else. ITU's activities around this subject include:

- Promoting telecommunication standards that address accessibility issues, such as the well-known "tactile identifier" standard requiring the middle key (#5) on a keyboard to be easily identified by the visually impaired
- Promoting the development of products and services aimed at increasing accessibility, such as the "Total Conversation" service, a flexible interface which merges voice, video and text telephony

- Helping Member States meet their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006
- Establishing outreach programmes such as the joint coordination activity on accessibility and human factors, and the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disabilities within the Internet Governance Forum
- Encouraging the exchange of best practice on a wide range of accessibility issues
- Promoting, and helping develop, Guidelines for policymakers and regulators
- Creating greater awareness through conferences and publications

ITU World Telecommunication and Information Society Award

Programme of the Ceremony

Thursday, 15 May 2008

At 13h30 in the Cheops Auditorium of the Cairo International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Cairo, Egypt

Invited guests to be seated by 13h00

13h00	Arrival of Guests
13h15	Musical interlude
13h30	Arrival of Officials
13h35	Address by ITU Secretary-General
13h45	Presentation of awards and address by laureates

About World Telecommunication and Information Society Day

In recognition of ITU as the UN specialized agency for telecommunications and information and communication technologies, the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, November 2005, called upon the United Nations to declare 17 May as World Information Society Day. 17 May, long recognized as World Telecommunication Day, marks the establishment of ITU in 1865. The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2006 endorsed the celebration of 17 May as World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

Celebrating the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, a series of events related to the implementation of the WSIS action lines will take place from 13 to 30 May 2008.

About the ITU World Telecommunication and Information Society Award

The ITU World Telecommunication and Information Society Award has been created to honour individuals or institutions that have made a significant contribution to promoting, building, or strengthening a people-centred, development-oriented and knowledge-based information society. Achievement may take the form of social accomplishment, mobilization of public opinion, or a key technical innovation.

On this important occasion, ITU will present ITU World Telecommunication and Information Society Awards to outstanding laureates for their exceptional contribution towards building the information society. The theme for 2008 is "Connecting Persons with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All".

With the support of

