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Date: 25.01.2010 Time: 16.15 Page 1/3 Ref: Circular Letter/SPM/EACC/188
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Subject: World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2010 (WTISD):
"Better city, better life with ICTs"

Dear Sir/Madam,

17 May marks the anniversary of the signature of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865 and the creation of the International Telecommunication Union. In 1973, this occasion was recognized as World Telecommunication Day. Following the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2005 and the 2006 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, 17 May was designated as World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

On 17 May 2010, ITU will celebrate its 145th anniversary. The global celebration of this landmark event will be held in Shanghai at World Expo 2010, which runs from 1 May until 31 October.

As the leading specialized agency of the United Nations for ICT, ITU looks towards its Members to raise awareness of the role of information and communication technologies in creating the opportunities for a better life through long-term, sustainable development, not least among the most vulnerable sections of our society. In the urban context, ICTs have increasingly dictated lifestyles and behaviour patterns and contributed to the growth of trade and commerce, improved governance and municipal services, and revolutionized entertainment through the development of rapid communications, both mobile and fixed.

At its 2009 session, ITU Council adopted the theme: "*Better city, better life with ICTs*" to mark World Telecommunication and Information Society Day in 2010.

The WTISD-10 theme is juxtaposed with that of the Shanghai World Expo, which is dedicated to promoting "Better Cities, Better Life" and which will showcase a number of initiatives aimed at achieving greener, safer, healthier, prosperous, inclusive and well-managed cities – where over half the world's population resides.

ICTs provide solutions to many of the problems facing cities even as they become magnets for migrating populations as well as contribute to making them more eco-friendly and economically viable. For many city dwellers, it is nearly impossible to imagine life without ICTs. From television to mobile phones and the Internet, ICTs have reshaped the world, helping billions of people to live, work and play. ICTs present innovative ways of managing our cities – smart buildings, intelligent traffic management, new efficiencies in energy consumption and waste management, and not least exchanging information and knowledge and communicating on the move in an increasingly converged information society.

While the world's cities are undoubtedly endowed with many advantages, the disparities between the haves and the have nots among urban populations is often a vivid reminder that the vast majority is left out of the reach of development. It is ironic that even in densely populated urban centres countless

millions are deprived of access to the means of communication and information that are taken for granted by others. Along with this growing digital divide, the lack of safe drinking water, sanitation, food, shelter, health care and education are basic needs that are addressed by the Millennium Development Goals, which calls for the significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

By tapping into the huge potential of ICTs to improve the lives of people and by providing affordable and equitable access to information and knowledge to empower everyone to achieve their aspirations, administrations can contribute towards meeting the rising expectations of an ever-growing population in the world's cities. Acting as catalysts for a more productive and better life, ICTs open the door to a myriad solutions that help achieve harmony among the spatial, social and environmental aspects of cities and among their inhabitants.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which met in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, called upon countries to consider establishing national mechanisms to achieve universal access in both underserved rural and urban areas in order to bridge the digital divide. ITU is committed to connecting the world and to ensure that the benefits of ICT reach the remotest parts of the world, including the dark spots that leave millions unconnected in our teeming cities.

The theme of this year's WTISD aims to ensure that ICTs will contribute to a better future for the growing populations of urban centres.

During this year's WTISD, ITU calls upon all stakeholders (policy makers, regulators, operators and industry) to promote the adoption of policies and strategies that will promote ICTs in urban areas to contribute towards a better life in cities. Please see my **Call for Action** in annex.

We invite you to consider organizing programmes in your country to mark WTISD 2010 with a focus on the theme: *Better city, better life with ICTs*. It would be useful to involve all sections of society to formulate awareness and consensus on the issues underlying the theme. We would appreciate it if you send us your reports or supporting material, including photographs and videos to be posted on ITU's WTISD website through the online form at www.itu.int/wtisd/2010/form.

This year, the theme for World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, "*Better city, better life with ICTs*" will influence our work not only on the Day but throughout the year and in the future as well.

The global event will be showcased at World Expo 2010 in Shanghai and will be marked by a high-profile ceremony to present the World Telecommunication and Information Society Award to eminent personalities who have contributed to using ICTs in providing a better life in cities. Forums will be organized 15-18 May in Ningbo and Shanghai, China on issues related to ICTs and Urban Development. The WSIS Forum aimed at reviewing the implementation of the Summit objectives will be held in Geneva, 10-14 May 2010.

ITU will post all promotional WTISD-related material for downloading at: www.itu.int/WTISD/2010. The information and material will help you organize activities and events on 17 May. In particular, it will include messages from UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon and from me along with high-resolution files of a poster in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish that you are invited to reproduce locally. A neutral poster will also be available for use with other languages.

With respect to the theme of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2010, let us resolve to use ICTs to make our cities better and more sustainable and in harmony with the lives of their residents.

I join you in celebrating the 145th anniversary of ITU and wish you a very successful World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2010.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed)

Dr Hamadoun I. Touré
Secretary-General

ANNEX

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2010: Call for Action

In order to address issues related to a better life in cities, ITU calls upon Member States to:

- **Promote** sustainable urban policies with ICTs at the national level.
Call for action: ITU Member States and Sector Members are encouraged to actively participate in ITU events to enhance policies that will promote smart cities of the future, increase investment and capital flows in support of such policies, and provide experts and resources in order to share experiences and best practices for mainstreaming sustainable urban policies.
- **Support ongoing work** aimed at developing standards that will help facilitate Smart Cities, such as intelligent transport systems and improved traffic control and efficiency aimed at reducing carbon emissions, smart grids, and energy-efficient buildings. In addition, support ITU's activity in UN Habitat's World Urban Campaign.
Call for action: ITU Member States and Sector Members are encouraged to establish global standards on intelligent traffic systems (ITS), participate in ITU activities by hosting events, identifying thought leaders in the area and offering expertise in support of ongoing work.
- **Support ongoing work** on the use of ICTs for Emergency Communications in Public Protection.
Call for action: Invite Member States to promote ITU's work with information to develop the ITU international database and themes of frequency use for Emergency Communications (WRC-07 Resolution 647)
- **Identify priority areas** to utilize ICTs to achieve equitable sustainable urban development for the benefit of the millions who lack adequate shelter and basic services in urban areas.
Call for action: ITU Member States and Sector Members are encouraged to partner with ITU, share experiences and contribute experts and resources to develop practical tools to establish a framework plan of action.
- **Connect all institutions, in particular schools, in urban areas.** Schools are community hubs, a place of learning and accessibility. By connecting schools we connect youth as well as others in the community to knowledge and information, leading to employment and social and economic development. Connected schools can serve as a point of service for underserved groups in the community, including women, persons with disabilities and aboriginal peoples.
Call for action: ITU Member States, Sector Members and partners are urged to help connect all schools by 2015:
 - Make connecting schools a priority or formal requirement in the disbursement of Universal Service Funds
 - Include school connectivity requirements directly in Universal Service Obligations
 - Allocate radio-frequency spectrum for school connectivity and reduce or eliminate spectrum fees for schools.
 - Include school connectivity a condition to obtain operator licenses to ensure that a given percentage of schools are connected by a specific date.
 - Provide incentives for operators to connect schools and to offer special tariffs for schools, such as reduced Universal Service Funds, contribution levies and tax breaks