



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION
TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

**WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT
CONFERENCE (WTDC-98)**

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OF THE
CLOSING MEETING

Wednesday, 1 April 1998, at 2005 hours

Chairman: Mr. J. MIZZI (Malta)

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1 Statement by the Acting Chairman

1.1 The **Chairman** extended his warmest thanks to Mr. E. Borg who had chaired the Conference's discussions in his absence.

1.2 The **Acting Chairman** welcomed the fact that, despite the intensity and pace of the Conference's work, participants had nonetheless been able to cultivate old friendships and start new ones. The Conference had been a unique experience in the course of which he had been able to observe that all participants had shown good will and had sought compromises in an effort to overcome any obstacles, thereby ensuring the success of the event. After thanking Maltacom and ITU for having allowed him to preside over the work of a World Conference of the Union, he paid tribute to all those who had participated in its work and called on them to implement the Valletta Action Plan without delay in order to make that vision a reality.

2 Summing-up of the work of the Conference

2.1 The **Secretary-General** expressed great satisfaction at the success of the Conference and recalled that, its purpose essentially had been to approve three basic documents, namely the Strategic Plan, the Valletta Action Plan and the Valletta Declaration. That objective had been well and truly attained.

2.2 The Strategic Plan, a fundamental document for all ITU activities and for the preparation of the Plenipotentiary Conference, set out an unequivocal framework for ITU-D's activities in the years to come. The priorities set out in the Strategic Plan were: assistance to developing countries and particularly the least developed countries, the development and mobilization of resources, collaboration with the private sector, the establishment and promotion of partnerships, the strengthening of ITU's regional presence, and improvement of the Sector's working methods. By adhering to those priorities, the Union would be able to make real progress with the limited resources available to it.

2.3 Turning to the Valletta Declaration, he said that, its main thrust could, in his opinion, be summed up in a few basic assertions which aptly reflected its intent: telecommunications were an essential factor in political, economic, social and cultural development; convergence between telecommunications, information technology and broadcasting, as well as multimedia applications, was opening up new perspectives for the sector, providing opportunities for, among other things, tele-education, telemedicine and environmental protection; new technologies had the potential to close the gap not only between developed and developing countries but also between urban and rural areas (GII and GIS); in developing countries, earnings reinvested in the sector were not sufficient to finance all new projects because networks were underdeveloped; the Conference encouraged consideration of the respective roles of men and women, youth and indigenous peoples; it was necessary to adopt an international convention on emergency telecommunications; sector reforms required human resources development; governments were urged to establish appropriate policies and regulatory structures to make access to basic telecommunications available to all.

2.4 Noting that the question of partnership between the public and private sectors and between developed and developing countries was a much-discussed one, he expressed satisfaction at the fact that the Conference, not content with merely discussing the matter, had resulted in the announcement of several new partnerships. Welcoming the catalytic role the Union had played in that regard, he recalled that the World Bank had expressed its commitment to helping developing countries to move towards a competitive environment, that WorldTel was proposing trade arrangements to bridge the development gap, that Canada was prepared to establish chairs in centres of excellence, that BT had

pledged to provide computers to developing countries, and that Brazil had offered to develop competence in the area of regulation.

2.5 He concluded by emphasizing that the points he had mentioned in his summing-up accounted for only a small part of the work done during the Conference.

3 Statement by the Director of BDT

3.1 The **Director of BDT** recalled, as the work of WTDC-98 drew to a close, that ten days earlier Sir Donald Maitland had said that the missing link had now been found and that, at the turn of the present century, it was possible to attain the lofty objective set by the Independent Commission 14 years previously, namely universal access. After retracing the road already travelled, he noted that WTDC participants had reached agreement on the strategic objectives for the next period, which were clearly reflected in the Valletta Declaration and the ITU-D Strategic Plan, and had succeeded in identifying the mechanisms needed to achieve those objectives, the Conference having for the first time adopted a series of Recommendations which were the outcome of the work done by the two Study Groups of the Development Sector on a programme of 13 Questions assigned for the period 1994-1998. It had, moreover, decided to renew the mandate of the two Study Groups for the forthcoming period and had approved a new programme of Questions which would be studied under improved procedures and working methods. The Conference had further decided to strengthen the membership and role of TDAB, in particular by setting up within it two advisory groups, one on the private sector and the other on human resources development. In the same vein, it had formally enshrined the concept of partnership for development, meaning partnership not only between ITU and other international and regional organizations, but also between the public and private sectors and between the national and international private sectors. The idea of promoting a new concept, that of "nurseries" for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, confirmed for him that the promotion and development of such enterprises was indispensable to the growth of telecommunications and other sectors of the economy in developing countries. The real challenge was to ensure that the far-reaching changes that had occurred in the telecommunication sector were turned into opportunities that benefited all partners, both large and small. Nevertheless, as was always the case with change, the beneficial effects were accompanied by certain adverse effects which were to be guarded against. The benefits should therefore flow from a will and a process that were endogenous in nature, rather than from a process that had to be undergone or was imposed by exogenous constraints.

3.2 The Valletta Declaration and Action Plan, the various Resolutions and Recommendations and the ITU-D Strategic Plan were undoubtedly the most visible and hence most publicized results of the Conference. However, beyond those excellent results, during the ten days of the Conference, valuable ties had been created among men and women who had come from all over the world to discuss development. A veritable network had thus been established for communication and dialogue among the representatives of the elite of the telecommunication world whose task it was to construct the global information infrastructure, which had to be truly global. Lastly, he thought that he had detected a new spirit, the spirit of Valletta, which had enabled participants to overcome their differences over issues which were sometimes very sensitive and to agree that only together, as partners who respected one another, would they be able to attain that lofty goal.

3.3 In conclusion, he thanked the Chairman of the Conference and his deputy as well as the Maltese authorities, the Vice-Chairmen of the Conference, the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Committees and Working Groups of the Plenary and the members of the secretariat for the valuable contribution they had all made to the success of the Valletta Conference.

4 Address by the Secretary-General

4.1 The **Secretary-General** gave the address reproduced in Annex 1. Then, as a mark of the appreciation of all the participants, he presented the Chairman and the Acting Chairman with a Swiss watch and a chairman's gavel.

5 Closing address by the Chairman

5.1 The **Chairman** gave the address reproduced in Annex 2.

6 Closure of the Conference

6.1 The **representative of the United States** expressed great satisfaction at the success of the Conference and said that he had no doubt that its work would benefit all countries. After paying tribute to the Acting Chairman for his conduct of the discussions and to the Prime Minister of Malta and to Maltacom for their hospitality, he extended thanks to all the staff of the Union and BDT who had contributed to the smooth running of the proceedings. Lastly, he urged all participants to ensure that the objectives set became a reality, and said that he was looking forward to seeing them again in Minneapolis for the forthcoming Plenipotentiary Conference.

6.2 The **representative of Barbados**, after congratulating all those who had participated in the work of the Conference, said that she was deeply touched by the actions undertaken to improve the lot of the most deprived, namely children, women, indigenous peoples and the sick, and to combat poverty in general.

6.3 The **Chairman**, after thanking participants once again and wishing them a safe journey home, declared the Valletta World Telecommunication Development Conference closed.

The meeting rose at 2045 hours.

The Secretary-General
P. TARJANNE

The Chairman:
J. MIZZI

Annexes: 2

ANNEX 1

Address by the Secretary-General

Original: English

Mr. Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

When we began our work ten days ago, I proposed that this Conference aspire to start a new telecommunications revolution - a revolution focused on human values, a revolution whose goal would be universal access to basic communication and information services: the right to communicate.

Today as we come to the end of our work, I would like to modify my original proposal. Following the good example of so many delegations, I would like to issue a "Rev.1" to my original call to action.

I believe that we should change the original aspiration to achievement.

I believe that this Conference has achieved what we set out to do, Valetta and Valetta's achievements.

Long live effective telecommunication technology applications!

Meaning affordable links to all!

How was this achievement possible?

Mr. Minister,

First of all, I want to assure you that it was the result of a lot of hard work by delegates under the very, very capable leadership of your deputy as Chairman, Mr. Edgar Borg, and the other members of the Conference Steering Committee.

In the best tradition of ITU, delegates were able to solve even the most difficult issues through good communication, mutual respect, common sense and a willingness to compromise.

This task was not easy.

The issues facing the Conference were many and complex. One obvious measure of this complexity was the volume of documents submitted. It exceeded our forecasts, strained our production system, complicated the work of the Conference and almost led to the collapse of our pigeon holes!

This is a first, as far as I know, in the long history of ITU. Perhaps it should be a warning to all of us to write less and communicate more.

Mr. Minister,

Under these conditions, we were able to succeed only because of the excellent support provided by the Maltese Administration. If you will forgive a small play on words, I should like to say that all the arrangements were impeccable!

Let me begin by referring once again to this wonderful conference centre. It is certainly the most unusual building ever to host an ITU meeting. I am sure that all of us came to appreciate its special warmth - even during the first days of the Conference, when the weather outside was somewhat chilly.

What made it warm, of course, was the warmth of the Maltese people. They were always friendly, always helpful and remarkably efficient. This is a most unusual combination of attributes - a melding of southern, northern, eastern and western virtues.

Having only been here of course, I do not know if all Maltese are like the people who helped us with the Conference. If they are, you truly are a fortunate people.

The little touches helped too - the fresh flowers in the hallways, the original works of Maltese art hanging on the walls: all of this has made for a wonderful ambience, no matter how intense the discussions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference is only one in a series of important events taking place in ITU this year.

We have already had the second World Telecommunication Policy Forum, another success story.

In May, we will celebrate Africa TELECOM 98 in Johannesburg, where I am sure we will make further progress in defining the role of telecommunications in economic and social development. After an important Council session in late May, an International Conference on Emergency Telecommunications will take place in June in my home country, in the city of Tampere. Although not an ITU event, the subject of this Conference is very important for ITU members and I would urge all delegations present here to consider participating.

Finally, in October we will gather in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference, and set our course for the twenty-first century.

I wish all of you a safe journey home and look forward to seeing you in Johannesburg, in Tampere and in Minneapolis.

Mr. Minister,

Without the assistance of your Administration we could not possibly have succeeded. I should now like, with your permission, Mr. Minister, to invite you and your deputy, as Chairmen, our two hosts, to step over here.

(presentation of awards)

As a small token of our appreciation, I should like, on behalf of all of us, to present you with something that should help you to continue making timely and efficient decisions. The timeliness aspect is reflected in a good Swiss watch, and the decision-making aspect in this Chairman's gavel.

ANNEX 2

Closing address by the Chairman

Original: English

Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In just a few minutes, I shall in my capacity as Chairman of this second World Telecommunication Development Conference, be bringing to an end ten days of deliberations, exchanges, negotiations and decisions. Ten days that have brought together over one thousand delegates, among whom a number of Honourable Ministers. This Conference has given me the opportunity to work closely with many representatives in the search for a better world for all our peoples.

For Malta, this Conference has been an important milestone. The Government of Malta is extremely proud that Malta has once again served as a place where peoples of different race, culture and religions are able to meet in a tranquil and relaxed environment to discuss and deliberate on strategies that will influence and have a direct impact on the future of their societies. In our humble way, we have tried to give the Conference a human dimension, ensuring that our traditional hospitality and friendship would contribute towards understanding and cooperation.

As I listened to the various interventions, I was struck by the strong determination of governments and administrations to maximize the synergistic benefits of telecommunications. I can state without any hesitation or doubt that ITU's message that telecommunications are a strategic and key factor for national social and economic development has been echoed by all those that have participated in this Conference. The reverberating call made by the majority of delegations to be given the necessary tools to be able to develop their telecommunication capacities and infrastructures cannot go unheeded. I feel that it is important that ITU-D as well as the more advanced countries should extend a helping hand to those countries which, because of their geography and size, and for political, economic, cultural and financial reasons, have so far been unable to obtain the benefits accruing from the rapidly evolving development of the telecommunication sectors.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Malta's readiness and commitment to continue to work in close cooperation and collaboration with all Member States and with the International Telecommunication Union in order to develop and enhance the capacities of developing countries in the telecommunication field. It is my hope that Malta's contribution to ensuring in practical terms that this Conference attains its aims and objectives is replicated by all Member States and administrations, particularly in the transfer of know-how and exchange of information relating to the telecommunication sector.

It is in this context that I would like once again to state my Government's intention to set up a regional telecommunication training centre, at which point I would like to express Malta's sincere appreciation to ITU for agreeing to assist in this venture. I strongly believe that this practical and joint endeavour will not only strengthen our resolve to adopt a networking approach to collaboration in human resources development and training, but will also open new avenues for a more concerted and progressive partnership among and between our neighbouring regional counterparts and even beyond.

The Valletta Declaration and the Valletta Action Plan adopted earlier today are an achievement of which this Conference can be proud. I am sure that these two documents give us the necessary mandates to direct our attention and efforts towards those issues that will sustain our work over the coming four years. The documents also allow us to build on what has been achieved in the past and to look with optimism to the future.

It is my hope that the enthusiasm and vitality with which all participants have tackled the various items of the agenda of this Conference will continue when all of you return to your own countries.

I cannot conclude this Conference without expressing my sincere thanks to all heads of delegations and to you, the participants, for honouring us with your presence here in Malta. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General of ITU, Dr. Pekka Tarjanne, and to all his staff for the excellent manner in which they have coordinated our efforts. I must likewise express my appreciation to Maltacom p.l.c. and to all the Maltese delegates and supporting staff that have contributed to the preparatory organization and successful conclusion of this Conference. To all interpreters, précis-writers, translators, typists, technicians, and to all those who have, in one way or another, made a contribution, I would like to extend my warmest gratitude.

We shall leave with the firm knowledge that we have together given our peoples well-defined mechanisms that will see us into the new millennium and beyond. The commitments which we, governments and administrations, have agreed upon during this Conference must now be put into effect through the direct involvement and participation of our citizens.
