

# Pekka Tarjanne remembered

Secretary-General of ITU from 1989 to 1999



*His ready smile and incisive intellect will be much missed by all*

■ Dr Pekka Johannes Tarjanne, former Secretary-General of ITU, died in Finland on 24 February 2010, at the age of 72.

Dr Tarjanne was elected Secretary-General of ITU by the 13th Plenipotentiary Conference, held in Nice, France, in 1989. He took office on 1 November 1989, was re-elected by the Kyoto Plenipotentiary Conference in 1994, and served until 31 January 1999.

Born on 19 September 1937 in Stockholm, Sweden, Pekka Tarjanne became at the age of 24 the youngest doctor of technology in Finland. After his doctorate, he devoted himself to research and teaching in Denmark and in the United States. Returning to Finland in 1965, he became professor of theoretical physics at the University of Oulu, then at the University of Helsinki.

Dr Tarjanne was elected to Parliament, and served on the Constitutional and Foreign Affairs Commissions, as well as the Nordic Council Transport and Communications Commission.

From 1972 to 1975, he was Minister for Transport and Communications, serving also as Minister responsible for Nordic cooperation. He was President of the Finnish Liberal Party from 1968 to 1978.

From 1977 until his election, Dr Tarjanne was Director-General of the Finnish Posts and Telecommunications, where he presided over the restructuring of the telecommunication sector, the

## *Message of Condolence*

*“It is with a heavy heart that I learned of the sad and untimely passing of former ITU Secretary-General Dr Pekka Tarjanne. Dr Tarjanne was a passionate believer in the power of ICTs to change the world, and was a leading advocate of the Right to Communicate as a fundamental human right. He was not only a tireless campaigner for ICT development and international cooperation, but a scientist who took a keen interest in the work of ITU in standards development and radio-frequency management. He presided over ITU during an era of unprecedented growth, and charted a sure and steady course for the organization through a period of immense change and upheaval.*

*He was a close personal friend, and will be warmly remembered by staff, ITU delegates and colleagues throughout the industry. His ready smile and incisive intellect will be much missed by all.”*

*Dr Hamadoun I. Touré, ITU Secretary-General*

deregulation of telecommunication and terminal equipment services, and the conversion of Posts and Telecommunications into a commercial company.

### **The right to communicate**

Dr Tarjanne brought ITU closer to developing countries, spearheading efforts to promote widespread access to new information technologies. He believed that access to information should be recognized as a basic human right, saying "I see this principle in the same way I perceive another theme which is very close to my heart: the right to communicate, a right those of us living in richer countries of the world often take for granted."

### **The "new ITU"**

One of Dr Tarjanne's legacies as Secretary-General was the restructuring of ITU. The Nice Plenipotentiary Conference created a High-Level Committee on institutional reform. Dr Tarjanne then led work to match the Union's structure to the demands it faced. In 1992, an Additional Plenipotentiary Conference created the "new ITU" by streamlining the Union into three Sectors: Telecommunication Standardization; Radiocommunication; and Telecommunication Development.

Speaking of this reform Dr Tarjanne said: "Throughout its long history, ITU has shown an

amazing capacity to adapt — not only to technological change, but also to changing economic, social and political circumstances. I like to think that this resilience is due to the fact that ITU really is, in the words of the High-Level Committee, a 'unique and irreplaceable' part of the international community."

*Dr Tarjanne was a leading advocate of the right to communicate as a fundamental human right*

Dr Tarjanne saw the need to strengthen the rights and obligations of the private sector in the work of the Union as fundamental to ensuring its responsiveness and relevance to the telecommunication industry. After the Kyoto Conference, he continued to play a key role, supporting the work of Council groups for further reform. These efforts paid off when the Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis in 1998 accorded wider rights and obligations to private sector members.

In addition, his work to develop the TELECOM exhibitions helped bring together companies and governments from around the world, to pool ideas and build partnerships, thereby contributing to global development.

### **Dr Tarjanne's time in office: a period of firsts**

During Dr Tarjanne's watch as Secretary-General:

- The first strategic plan for the ITU was adopted by the Kyoto Plenipotentiary Conference, setting out the ambitious goal "to establish the Union as the international focal point for all matters relating to telecommunications".
- The first World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF) in 1996, on the theme of global mobile personal communications by satellite systems, heralded the dawn of a new era of hand-held devices.
- ITU led the way in drafting the first global treaty on the role of communications technology in humanitarian crises, the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Relief and Mitigation and Relief Operations, adopted in 1998 in Tampere, Finland.
- The 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis decided on the holding of the first World Summit on the Information Society.

### **Honorary citizenship**

In 1998, Geneva's State Council granted honorary citizenship to Dr Tarjanne and his wife, Aino, recognizing their "major contribution to enhancing Geneva's reputation as an international centre".