ITU Telecom… coming up 40!

A History of Telecom

As a service to the ITU's members, a decision was taken by ITU's Administrative Council to hold an exhibition of telecommunication equipment to promote the benefits of telecommunications, and demonstrate recent technological advances. Telecom was born to the International Telecommunication Union in 1971, presenting a "window on the world of technology."

With its convening powers of member states, sector members and associates, ITU was uniquely positioned to organize events both global and regionally. Offering industry a showcase for latest product and service offerings, and coupling the exhibition with a forum, created an ideal set of opportunities for the industry, and all under one roof. The exhibition presented exciting technological developments, and the Forum served in pinpointing industry trends and information exchange, including knowledge and technology transfer to less developed countries.

With its not-for-profit nature, one of the principle objectives of Telecom is to support specific telecommunication development projects, primarily in the UN-designated least developed countries (LDC). This is achieved through the donation of a significant part of any surplus resulting from Telecom events. These funds are increasingly important to the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), which executes development projects for the ITU.

Portfolio of Events

For coming up 40 years, ITU has organized trade shows and conferences under the Telecom umbrella. Starting from one event held in Geneva, the portfolio grew to encompass regional events in Africa, the Americas, Arab States, and Asia. A global event draws the entire industry together under one roof every few years, and attracts leading authorities the world over. Over the years the events have gained renown for their success, becoming key meeting places for the industry and government to come together. Few other gatherings at the international level surpass its breadth and diversity. The most recent events include Asia 2008 (Bangkok, Thailand), Africa 2008 (Cairo, Egypt) and World 2006 (Hong Kong).

Telecom has become one of the most prominent public faces of the ITU, and successfully embodies one of the principal statements expressed in Article 1 of its constitution, indicating the role of the Union: "…to promote the extension of the benefits of the new telecommunication technologies to all the world's inhabitants".

ITU Telecom Celebrates 40 years

In 2011, ITU Telecom celebrates 40 years from the initial event held in June 1971. To mark its 40th anniversary, special ITU Telecom celebrations will take place in Geneva. Please be sure to follow our newsroom for details on this key event!