



2nd PLENARY

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is certainly a great honor to be addressing you today. It is an honor because the Summit is a historic occasion, the first ever high-level global meeting to discuss one of the most important topics of the new millennium, the information society. The results achieved by this Summit will have far-reaching implications on how the citizens of the world live in the 21st century. Thousands of people from all parts and segments of the world, have gathered in Geneva and after a successful first day, I am pleased to see so much enthusiasm.

I am also proud to be here today. As the lead agency, ITU has been deeply involved in the Summit preparations and it is rewarding to finally see the

results of the energy, ideas and staff effort. Indeed, the Summit has its roots in a resolution from the 1998 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, formally endorsed by the UN General Assembly in December 2001. Despite being strongly affected by the recent downturn of the ICT sector, the ITU has made enormous sacrifices and devoted considerable resources towards organizing the Summit in collaboration with the Swiss Confederation, sister international organizations and other partners.

As the UN specialized agency for telecommunications, the ITU is firmly committed to the principles of the Summit. Communication technologies have had a major impact on the way people exchange information for over one hundred years. However the pace at which communications has changed over the last decade is remarkable. New communication technologies, particularly the mobile phone and the Internet, have radically transformed today's world. The ITU has played a vital role in this transformation through promotion of global inter-operability of networks management of the spectrum and by assisting countries to make informed policy decisions.

Together the three sectors of ITU, Radiocommunications, Standardization, and Development, help to bridge technological disparities and promote broader diffusion of rapidly evolving technologies. This includes:

- ensuring equitable, and efficient use of the radio frequency spectrum by all radio communication

services. This is the work of the Radiocommunication Sector which among other things also develops and adopts the *Radio Regulations*, the set of rules which serve as a binding international treaty governing the use of the radio spectrum by all countries and some 40 different services around the world;

- the standardization of new products and services to ensure that technologies can be offered to as wide a range of people, at as low a price as possible and work across borders. This is the work of ITU-T, the standardization arm of the Union. Simply put, you would not be able to make a telephone call from one side of the world to the other without global standards from the ITU;
- identifying development gaps and creating digital opportunities. From Albania to Zambia, ITU-D is involved in helping countries bridge the digital divide, through regulatory reform, human resource development, development of e-applications and by attracting investment.

Every day millions of people around the world are in one way or the other benefiting from the work of the ITU, for example, when they talk on the phone, send a mobile text message, or check their email.

The Summit is a testimony of the critical and fundamental importance of Information and Communication Technologies to modern society and reinforces the ITU mandate as we enter a new century. But it is equally an opportunity for the ITU to

observe, listen and learn. The Summit's Plan of Action will help us identify new challenges and opportunities and will concentrate on tangible measures of progress. To this end the second phase of the Summit, to be held in Tunis in 2005, will be particularly important.

Until then, the ITU will continue its assistance towards a global information society, not only through its day-to-day work but also by integrating the goals and objectives defined by the Summit into its existing mission.