

WORLD TELECOM WORLD 2003 YOUTH FORUM DECLARATION

RES, NON VERBA

The world we live in is not fair at this moment. Some of us benefit daily from the empowering force of ICTs while others, to whom simple communication could mean the difference between life and death, hope and downheartedness, a sparkling future and stagnation, do not have access to any form of ICTs.

This is not our destiny. Young people have united and urge you to join them in building the fundamentals for the digital bridge.

Yesterday we faced many problems but today we face many challenges. We, the youth, present to you the issues that we consider pertinent:

Education

Education should play a crucial role in the life of all people. ICTs should be an integral part of today's education; and we advocate the improvement of education worldwide.

Governments and companies should be encouraged to support ICT centers in order to teach those who have not yet had the opportunity to immerse themselves in ICTs. ICT learning centers, which should contain useful equipment donated by private companies, should be opened to the public. This equipment must also be used to entertain children, thus introducing them to the concept of the computer and ICTs. Efforts should also be made in the training of ICT trainers.

In addition, those who have been educated through scholarships or other funds shall then be obliged to help overcome the digital divide in their country, by sharing the knowledge acquired to public schools, universities or acting as a community or social worker. This would also help fight illiteracy, which still adversely affects many countries.

Access and infrastructure

All governments should ensure that basic, affordable, ICT infrastructure, such as the connection through radio transmitting stations, be placed in the rural areas.

The critical challenge is about distribution of technology and deployment of infrastructure to all areas within the countries themselves. ITU is requested to assist developing countries that have a solid plan for distribution of these technologies.

Local action

The local population of developing countries should be made aware that they are the ones to provide solutions to overcome the technological challenges they face. They should be made confident in this knowledge through inspiration from their leaders. Promotional campaigns should also be undertaken in the countries to gain full support of the population.

In order to bridge the Digital Divide within a country, there should be community service initiatives spearheaded by the youth in collaboration with the private and public sectors. These actions will educate the communities on the use of ICTs, erase illiteracy and ensure that local, applicable and affordable ways of providing ICTs to rural areas are obtained.

The population should be made aware of the desirability and value of ICTs in their daily lives and that it is not simply a luxury. Therefore, ICT content should be derived from its users to reflect their needs and services, should be user-friendly, simple, and overcome the language barrier.

Regulation

The youth realize that effective regulation of ICTs is key to development and that it should be focused on users' needs. We recommend that nations create a healthy regulatory environment through the actions of an independent and effective regulatory body that makes ICTs accessible and affordable to consumers. We believe that the future of ICTs depends on market liberalization, coupled with universal access policies, that encourage investment in developed and developing nations.

Investment and finance

ITU should act as a facilitator: for bringing together investors, viable projects, especially micro projects and private initiatives; and, promote the financing of those that are feasible and sustainable.

To permit the success of Small to Medium Scale Enterprises (SME), governments should offer incentives, such as, micro-credit at low interest rates with repayment extended over long periods of time. In addition, governments should be transparent so as to encourage foreign investors.

Aid and funding given to support ICT technologies should be provided with no 'strings attached' so that the funding is channeled to the relevant context. The only conditions made should be those that ensure that projects meet their aims.

Youth Action Plan

Actions speak louder than words!

Education is not only about educating young people. We recognize that the elderly in the community could benefit from ICTs. We as the youth commit ourselves to introducing our grandparents to the Internet by letting them send an e-mail to all youth forum participants.

Considering the success of previous Regional Youth Fora such as Africa 2001 and Asia 2002, we believe it is necessary to continue those initiatives already established by the ITU, including a similar event of a Youth Forum orientated to Europe as well as the Americas. We also urge that ITU continue to organize World Youth Fora.

We the youth, shall furthermore strengthen the Digital Bridge by promoting the re-use of ICT equipment. Youth fellows promise to contact at least one company or organization within their local network for collecting abandoned ICT equipment that can be valuable to developing countries. The Youth Fellows from the developing countries will also contact their governments, to draw their attention to this project. In so doing, youth will be giving a strong positive signal to their communities. The global network of World Youth Fellows will together help in distributing the equipment.

With the passage of time an opportunity lost is lost forever. We, as youth, should refresh our minds, seize our ideas and make a difference. We recognize the extreme importance of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) for achieving the goals that have been identified by all people, and most particularly the Youth. We hope our voices will be heard and our Declaration will be accepted as a sign of youth commitment. Moreover we ask all players at WSIS to implement the WSIS Action Plan.

Actions, not words, how wonderful our lives will be if we all play our part.