

**In the Name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful**

Mr. President,

Honorable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I would like to express our deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting this sixteenth Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunications Union in this beautiful and historic city of Marrakech. I thank the Secretary General and other officers of the ITU for organizing this magnificent conference, and wish to warmly congratulate you upon your election as the president of this conference. I trust that under your competent and wise leadership, this conference will meet with success.

Mr. President:

We are all gathered here to discuss important issues that will shape the future of our Union, and to make appropriate decisions on those issues. We firmly believe that a comprehensive discussion will lead us to better decisions that would provide our Union with clear directions to evolve and necessary means to form an effective framework for

further developments of telecommunications infrastructure, systems and services. The ultimate goal of all of these should be to make this world a better place for all, and in particular, enable the developing nations to reduce the gap with the developed nations speedily. We believe that on the whole, the Union has been relatively successful in accomplishing its mission, and thus, we have to decide with foresight and caution, and avoid making decisions that would result in entering uncharted waters that may destabilize our Union. Now, it is time for me to thank the secretary general, the deputy secretary general, as well as the director of development bureau, the director of standardization bureau, and the director of radio communications bureau for their relentless efforts, as well as their harmony in undertaking their responsibilities.

Mr. President:

I wish now to take advantage of this opportunity to inform the conference of major restructuring that is underway in the telecommunications sector in my country. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, faced with the challenges of the twenty first century, has decided to carry out a comprehensive and fundamental overhaul of its information technology and telecommunications sector. Such reform has become necessary to ensure that the Iranian economy is competitive, provision of services is diversified, and past shortcomings are dealt with effectively. On these basis, the strategic objectives for information and telecommunications sector are as follows:

1. Improvement in telephone density in all regions of the country, both urban and rural areas, so that demands for new services are met immediately and the applicable rates are appropriate and reasonable. Presently, in excess of fourteen

million fixed and mobile telephone lines are operational, and will reach to thirty million lines in three years.

2. Improvement in the quality of services by employing advanced technologies to satisfy the expectations of the customers.
3. Expansion of telecommunications services in rural and remote areas.
4. Implementation of a national data network to satisfy the ever-increasing needs of the nation. At present, more than 1,700,000 users are connected to the Internet, and the necessary infrastructure would be in place to provide service to 15,000,000 customers within three years.
5. Fundamental changes in the tariff structure to remove cost obstacles for universal use of the services by the public. In order to start on this path, collection rates for international services will be reduced by more than 50 percent as of next month.
6. Separation of operation, regulation, and policy making by establishing an independent regulatory authority. With ITU's assistance a framework for restructuring of the incumbent operator as well as establishing the regulatory authority is prepared. I am pleased to inform you that I have appointed a deputy minister specifically to establish an operational regulatory authority within a period of two months.
7. Competition in the provision of telecommunications services. To this end, with ITU's assistance, we are finalizing the selection of an international financial advisor that would help us in the issuance of the license for the second countrywide GSM mobile operator. We expect that the advisor start its activities within two months.

Mr. Chairman:

Now I would like to announce that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully prepared to engage in effective and constructive cooperation with the Union for a more active presence in regional and international projects for the development of telecommunications. We believe that honest international cooperation is an absolute necessity for peace and stability in the world. We hope that this important conference in the early years of the third millennium, where its very first year was dedicated to the dialogue among civilizations by consensus in the general assembly of the United Nations as suggested by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran succeeds in taking effective steps for the development of telecommunications in the world, and in particular, in the developing countries that would lead to a better life based on peace and justice for all.

Mr. Chairman,

Dear Colleagues:

My country was among the first nations to join the Union, and now after a long time, is hopeful that with your decision would become a member of the ITU's Council. Your positive votes enable us to allocate more resources to the Union, and participate more effectively in a spirit of partnership in its activities that would strengthen international cooperation on a broad scale. In addition, we put forward the candidature of a highly qualified expert on matters of radio regulations, Mr. Arasteh, for the post of the director of radio communications bureau. I look forward to your support on this issue as well.

I thank you for your attention.