

**ADDRESS BY  
HON. IVY MATSEPE-CASABURRI  
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS REPUBLIC OF SOUTH  
AFRICA**

Chairperson  
Secretary General Yoshio Utsumi  
Honorable Ministers  
Your Excellencies  
Dear delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow us to join the voices of those who have most eloquently thanked our hosts for the excellent preparations for this conference and the warm welcome with which they received us.

We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Secretary General Utsumi, the elected officials, management and staff of the ITU for their professional. Their tireless and often thankless service to this Union is, however, much valued by all of us.

It is about forty years ago that former President Nelson Mandela, then a very young person, was welcomed in this country as he traveled through North Africa seeking support for our struggle against apartheid.

It is my singular honour to be here today, leading a delegation of a South Africa that has taken its rightful place as an equal in the global community of nations, thanks to a great extent to the support that we received then from the people of Morocco.

Although we are now a free nation, we still live in a world in which many of the challenges we faced then are still with us, be it in our country, our continent or the world at large.

One of the curious factors about the challenges that confront us today is that we are all in agreement that poverty eradication, peace, security and development are the most important issues that we have to address

This would lead us to the assumption that a common solution should not be difficult to arrive at, but somehow we seem to be unable to act decisively and with the urgency that these challenges demand.

Our collective conscience can surely not rest at peace even for one day more while millions of people sleep hungry everyday while we could achieve greater food security using the application of ICTs;

Our collective conscience can surely not rest at peace even for one day more while millions of children and innocent citizens whom we see on our television screens daily are victims of war while we could make better use of ICTs to create conditions of peace, better understanding security, recognition and respect for our diversity of culture, language, religion, gender and ideas.

Our collective conscience can surely not rest at peace even for one day more when there is no doubt that millions of our young people who are today studying very hard to gain a profession are already deemed illiterate due to their lack of access to the skills that today's knowledge economy demands.

Chairperson

This Conference will be discussing the important issue of the reform of the ITU. Our contribution to this debate is to emphasise that Africa needs the ITU as this is the only intergovernmental structure in this sector in which most of us can participate.

Africa however needs an ITU that can play a role with respect to the challenges of meeting the Millennium Developments Goals that we have set for ourselves.

We need an ITU that can harness all of the worlds resources, public and private, to bridge the ever increasing digital divide and build a better life for all.

In this context, as we prepare for the World Summit on the Information Society, we need to continue the global dialogue that took place in Johannesburg earlier this month, making sure that ICTs also play their role in ensuring development that is sustainable on our common planet.

This conference, being the last event of our sector at this level before the WSIS has a critical role to play in its preparations.

Chairperson,

As reflected in our continental development programme NEPAD, our continent is not only optimistic but also confident about the inevitability of its ability to rise out of its current marginalisation.

We started our input by recalling our recent history when former President Mandela, came to this beautiful country, the land of that ITU stalwart, Mr Berrada.

We will conclude by stating that as Africans we pledge ,in the words of President Thabo Mbeki when he addressed our Parliament in February 2000 that "... no African child should ever again feel ashamed to be African".

In conclusion we take this opportunity to thank you all for the support we received as members of the Council, a role that with your support we hope to continue playing.