

Mr.Chairman

Secretary-General

Members of the Head Table

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, let me thank you for the opportunity afforded to me to express a few words on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka and the 18 Million people of our Country.

I would, at the same time express our gratitude to the Kingdom of Morocco and the I.T.U. for having us here on this important and historic occasion.

As the Minister of Mass Communication, I consider it my duty to inform this vast gathering of Professionals from the world over, the position of SRI LANKA and to pledge our FIRM Commitment to the I.T.U. Member States in the furtherance of their activities.

I will not burden this assembly with what is required by us, since most of the issues have been discussed at length. Matters such as bridging the DIGITAL DIVIDE, CONVERGENCE, De-REGULATION are a few of them. I think that we are all agreed that matters have to be looked at afresh, new strategies adopted and bold ,radical decisions be taken if we are to succeed.

As for SRI LANKA, I wish to add that, we liberalized our economy in the year 1977 and started our journey to keep up with Global changes and progressed well up until 1983 at which time the cruel war in the North and East of our Country put paid to all the plans we had.

However, we were not to be deterred. In the midst of the fighting and obstacles SRI LANKA DID NOT WAVER its commitment to her People and to the International Community. All Governments that ruled us since then, should be commended for meeting our International obligations and commitments.

At present, we have stopped the fighting that ravaged our Country for the past 20 years and are discussing peace with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, better known as the L.T.T.E. We are optimistic that we can

establish a durable peace in Sri Lanka and thereafter accelerate our development to better the conditions of our People.

Dear Delegates, at present I am on the verge of presenting to our Cabinet of Ministers, a **NEW COMMUNICATIONS POLICY** for adoption and implementation very soon. As you all are aware

Convergence of Technologies and Methods are happening all the time. We in Sri Lanka too, are conscious of these changes and are adapting to these new necessities.

This Policy, when implemented will ensure that Sri Lanka is fully compliant with international thinking on Communication which will help develop our Country to face the challenges of the present and the future.

We too, fully endorse the Secretary-General, Mr. Utsumi's view that we all have to devise ways and means to **REACH THE UNREACHED**. All those present here are erudite professionals and are fully aware of our commitment to providing **UNIVERSAL ACCESS** to all the peoples of the world.

Therefore, I would suggest that the I.T.U., while implementing the formal commitments expected of them, that they **URGENTLY AND**

EFFECTIVELY draw up SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM Strategies to address the serious issue of providing UNIVERSAL ACCESS.

Perhaps, a Special Fund could be created to assist such activities and assistance and subsidies could be provided on a NEEDS BASIS. If we succeed in our efforts, it will have a direct bearing on the well-being of the peoples of the world and a mission of the I.T.U. will be achieved.

In conclusion, Dear delegates, may I add that SRI LANKA seeks a position in the I.T.U. Council in REGION 'E', that is ASIA AND AUSTRALASIA at this PLENIPOTENTIARY and we seek your mandate to make our dream a REALITY.

In conclusion, I wish to convey my Personal commitment and Sri Lanka's unstinted co-operation to make a success of your efforts.

THANK YOU! OR SHALL I SAY IN  
SRI LANKA'S NATIVE LANGUAGE

— AYUBOWAN —