

**GOVERNMENT OF TUVALU**

**COUNTRY STATEMENT**

**INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION**

**16<sup>th</sup> PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE**

**MARRAKESH, MOROCCO, 23 SEPTEMBER – 18 OCTOBER 2002**

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

May I on behalf of my Government and my delegation congratulate you and fellow distinguished colleagues who have been elected to guide us through this conference. May I also extend our sincere gratitude to your Government and people for the arrangements and hospitality extended to us since our arrival to your great country.

The importance of telecommunications for small LDC's like Tuvalu is indisputable, where distance, remoteness, small population provides challenges for social and economic development. Tuvalu is aware of the fundamental importance of the information and communication technologies (ICT) in economic and social development. As ICT evolves into a more sophisticated network of technologies, the means of human communication have changed radically for developing countries and remote populations like Tuvalu, are now plugged into the world currents of developments in all its facets.

Mr. Chairman, in facing the challenges of bridging the "digital divide" we see value in strengthening the cooperation amongst the ITU Member States. In particular, the developed countries and international financial institutions should be cognizant of the related constraints of developing countries vis a vis their financial, manpower and economic capacities, which tends to exacerbate the ICT gap and vice versa. At the same time, the governments of developing countries with the guidance and facilitating role of ITU should provide an enabling regulatory environment that allows such cooperation to take place and ensuring sustained growth in the ICT sector. The ITU in utilizing its core technical competence and policy expertise should play a pertinent role in the continued growth, development and application of technology that should bridge the digital divide and achieve the broader social and economic goals of each membership citizens.

Telecommunications services in Tuvalu is provided by the Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation (TTC). The Corporation is a state owned enterprise established in February 1994. Communications with outer islands is by satellite, possible implementation of which was through the generous assistance of the Government of Australia. With the lack of a competitive environment and limited capital injections, the industry has grown marginally. Intentions to liberalize the telecommunications industry has been adhoc and the Government regulatory controls on investments and entry of major players and strategic partners have stalled potential progress of the ICT in Tuvalu.

Recently the Internet communications have become part of our daily life. However internet cannot be delivered to the outer islands due to the incapability of the network. There are plans however to upgrade communications in the very near future which will enable delivery of internet to all the outer islands. The Government of Tuvalu would appreciate ITU's efforts in researching the appropriate standards of mobile communications and Internet technologies as well as the advise on the convergence of the computer, communication and cable networks, telephone tariffs, universal service and electronic commerce.

The Government of Tuvalu has been receiving technical assistance from ITU since it became a member. As Tuvalu have recently accessed the Internet, it is important we gain the assistance and advice from ITU in relation to the following important areas;

1. provide practical suggestions for the delivery and possible access of the all the people to Internet and increasing the technical expertise of our employees in this area,
2. to develop a set of guidelines for the government to use in creating a policy environment that fosters development of Internet infrastructure,

3. assist in assessing the possible impact, on national and international network traffic, of the establishment of the internet, and the resulting economic implications for Tuvalu.

A Policy for Tuvalu's ICT and its role in the economic development is being formulated. Parallel policies related to regulatory facets of telecommunication will be developed and promulgated to cope with the liberalization of telecommunication businesses and facilities.

Mr. Chairman, we are hopeful that the ITU may strengthen its management and coordination in the configuration of communications resources and allocate the numbering and frequency resources in a rational way. It should also actively involve itself in the management of allocating Internet domain names and addresses. As telecommunications is a dynamic sector, new innovations must filter down to reach LDC states and small island nations like Tuvalu. Nevertheless it is also equally important that we member-states, work towards ways and means of strengthening ITU, so that it in turn ITU would benefit the membership. The continuing support of ITU and our donor partners will be appreciated in facilitating our own development in the ICT sector. With the further expansion of our satellite communications and plans to introduce a mobile phone network and in particular delivery of the internet to all the nationals of Tuvalu, should improve our services both nationally and internationally.

In this sixteenth Plenipotentiary of the Union; the ITU should start to pave the way for making a physical presence in the South Pacific to ensure our full participation and collaboration in all disciplines of ICT as we start our journey in this new century. This is our solemn pledge as the Pacific Island Countries continue their quest to close the digital divide.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates of the membership, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for this opportunity to address the Union. Like my other colleagues, the Tuvalu delegation have a strong commitment to its membership in ITU and our optimism and confidence in the ITU's mission will only come to fruition if we cooperate and act on the activities that bring about better lives for our citizens.

With those few remarks Mr. Chairman, I thank you very much.

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