

MINISTER'S POLICY STATEMENT TO THE ITU PP02

On behalf of my government, I would like to thank the Kingdom of Morocco for its generosity in hosting this conference, and the warm hospitality of its people in welcoming us to the beautiful city of Marrakesh.

The United Kingdom is proud of its long association with the ITU and its contribution to the continuing efforts to ensure that the organisation is efficient, effective and able to meet the considerable challenges it will face in the future. We are very pleased with the progress that has been made, and we are confident that this Conference will take another significant step towards this goal. The ITU undoubtedly has the potential to fulfil an important role in bringing the benefits of the information and communication technologies to all 189 Members of the Union. It will be important that the ITU has an efficient and effective management. The United Kingdom wants to help and that is the reason the UK is standing for re-election to the Council, and, most importantly, is offering the candidature of Malcolm Johnson for the Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau. He has a distinguished track record in the ITU, having been involved in the work of the Radio Sector over many years. He has also been intimately involved in the other sectors, especially the Development Sector, and the work of the ITU Reform Group. And he has proved an excellent and forward-looking manager.

The United Kingdom is particular keen to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Union, to ensure that the organisation provides a value-for-money service to the whole membership. The United Kingdom made several contributions to the work of the Reform Group, and we are pleased that many of the Reform Group recommendations are based on United Kingdom proposals.

In recognition of the progress made on ITU reform and in expectation of further reform, and the importance the United Kingdom places on the future role of the ITU, the United Kingdom is committed to increase its financial contribution to the ITU to 23 units in 2003, and intends to increase to 30 units from 2007 representing an expected annual contribution of approximately CHF 9.5 million. This is a clear indication of the commitment the UK is prepared to make to ensure the ITU plays a major role in the future development of efficient and effective world-wide telecommunications to the benefit of all.

The World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) will be high on the agenda in the next Plenipotentiary period, and could have major implications on the future role of the ITU. The early preparations for the WSIS have highlighted just how many diverse organisations and bodies are involved in extending the benefits of the information society to all. Since this is one of the main purposes of the Union, the ITU needs to reconfirm and consolidate its place in bridging the digital divide. WSIS provides an opportunity, which the ITU should not miss.

During the next 4 year period it will be necessary for the ITU to give serious consideration to the implications of digital convergence on the structure of the Union, as well as the changing roles and responsibilities of Member States and Sector

Members. National regulatory frameworks covering broadcasting and telecommunications are changing. In the United Kingdom we are in the process of bringing together the five regulatory authorities dealing with telecommunications, spectrum management, and broadcasting including content, into one regulator. That independent regulator will act as the UK administration in the ITU.

To conclude, I would like to emphasise, the commitment of the United Kingdom to an efficient and effective ITU serving the needs of all its members, in all regions of the world, and I can assure you Mr Chairman that this delegation will make every effort to ensure that this conference goes down in ITU history as the event which set the ITU on the road to meet the challenges it faces.