

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 17 May 2007

"Connecting the Young: the opportunities of ICT"

Message from Dr Hamadoun Touré
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In an increasingly networked world, the young are not only the beneficiaries but often the driving force behind the latest innovations and practices, and for many, the dependence on information and communication technologies (ICT) has come to determine their choice of lifestyle. It is clearly our duty today to provide the opportunities of ICT to all children and youth, particularly to those who remain unconnected from the ongoing digital revolution.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) recognized young people as the future workforce and earliest adopters of ICT and called for their empowerment. In order to achieve this critical objective, national e-strategies must address the special requirements of children, especially the disadvantaged and marginalized, and ensure their full inclusion in the Information Society. ICT are powerful tools to empower children and other vulnerable groups with information and knowledge and act as a catalyst in ensuring their rights within the comity of nations.

Marking its inception on 17 May 1865, ITU is the oldest international organization in existence. Yet the Union is young at heart and remains at the cutting edge of global communications. As world leaders declared at WSIS, ITU is committed to developing ICT infrastructure and facilitating interoperability, interconnection and global connectivity of networks and services, strengthening the development of an enabling environment, and instilling confidence in the use of ICTs by promoting cybersecurity. The Union is also committed to extending the benefits of ICT to people any time, anywhere.

This year, we focus on integrating youth issues into ITU's development activities as a means of offering the young more opportunities and better choice of options for the future. On the one hand, ICT must be utilized to enhance capacity building among the young by improved e-learning and education. On the other hand, we are committed to promoting their capabilities in utilizing ICT towards the advancement of a better, more peaceful and productive world.

As we celebrate World Information Society Day, we invite all our stakeholders as well as international organizations, non-governmental organizations and public policy-makers to give children and young people around the world every possible assistance in accessing ICT. This is critical for the young as a means of learning, sharing information and knowledge, improving their health and nutrition, and communicating with other children and youth.

The key to achieving the development aspirations of the world's inhabitants lies in investing in the future generation, especially by improving access to communication among today's children and enhancing their capacities.

Hamadoun Touré
Secretary-General