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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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MESSAGE ON WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION & INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY

17 May 2007

Since the advent of the telegraph in the mid-19th century, the International Telecommunication Union has been among the key players in helping the world to communicate. Today, from traditional telecommunications to the latest advances in cyberspace, ITU continues to provide Governments, the private sector and civil society with expert guidance and assistance in addressing issues related to information and communication technologies. Following the successful conclusion of the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society, the entire UN system is committed to the Plan of Action strongly linking ICT with development.

The theme of this year's observance is "connecting the young". Young people are among the most prolific and knowledgeable users of ICT. But the digital revolution is out of reach for many of them, especially young girls and women and people living in remote and underserved regions.

I therefore urge policy-makers and industry leaders to put their minds together, and to work cooperatively with children and youth to produce suitable technologies, applications and services to facilitate access to information and communications technologies. Young people with access to ICT often surge ahead in their quest for knowledge, and find it possible to "leapfrog" communication barriers with considerable ease. In many instances, young people are the driving force behind innovation in the development and use of new technologies. But the digital chasm leaves others out of this picture, and unable to capitalize fully on the benefits of globalization. Young people everywhere must have equal opportunities to rise out of poverty and illiteracy and to realize their full potential.

So let us promote visionary public policies, innovative business models and creative technological solutions that will empower young people and engage them in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Let us use to maximum effect the Global Alliance for ICT and Development, the Internet Governance Forum, the Digital Solidarity Fund, ITU's Doha Action Plan and other important mechanisms for carrying forward the results of WSIS. On this World Day, I encourage all stakeholders to do their part to connect young people and to create a truly open, inclusive and development-oriented information society.