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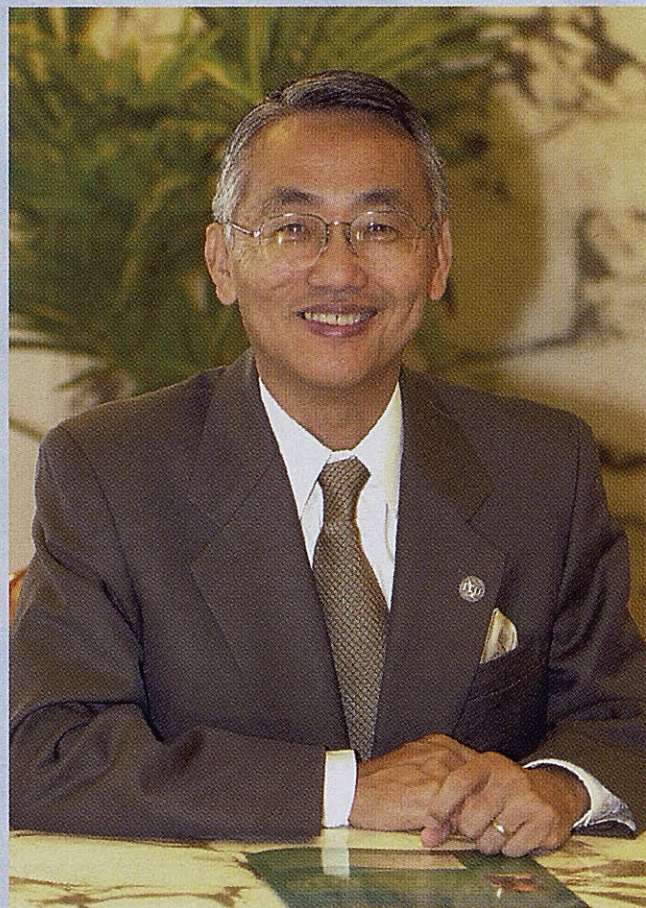
(ITU) للاتصالات الدولي الاتحاد في والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم أجراه الضوئي بالمسح تصوير نتاج (PDF) الإلكترونية النسخة هذه والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم في المتوفرة الوثائق ضمن أصلية ورقية وثيقة من نقلاً.

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World Telecommunication Day
17 May 2002

Message from the ITU Secretary-General



Dear Friends,

Information and communication technology (ICT) may be the most powerful tool for social and economic change since Gutenberg and the invention of the printing press. But we must not forget that much had to be done before people had access to books on a widespread scale. And so it is with access to ICT.

Access to information technology can help to launch small companies and groupings of artisans in the poorest and most isolated areas of the world and bring them into the mainstream of national and even global markets.

Information technology makes it possible to leapfrog poor infrastructures so that distance from markets is no longer a drawback and poor distribution channels a thing of the past.

ICT offers the possibility of delivering basic health and education services more efficiently because people can have access to them from their own homes and communities.

ICT can help in the agricultural area, with farmers and farming communities having speedy access to information on weather reports, new production techniques and markets, all of which can serve to improve productivity. Traders and entrepreneurs can also benefit from information and opportunities for promoting their businesses nationally, regionally and globally.

ICT can also be extremely effective in improving governance. It gives a voice to people in developing countries, who have been isolated, invisible and silent, and lets them speak out regardless of their gender and where they live.

But access to ICT has not been equitable. The use of the technology and the access to it varies greatly among countries, and within countries, too, between urban and rural areas, between the rich and the poor, between the educated and the illiterate, between men and women.

Much has already been done in the way of technology, but more action is needed by governments and by civil society if all humanity is to benefit from ICT. The technology is only the beginning and, in a sense, the easy part. The hard part is how the technology is used in the less tangible areas of politics, business, culture and law.

*To address this complex issue, ITU Members have chosen as this year's theme for World Telecommunication Day: **ICT for all — empowering people to cross the Digital Divide.***

Considering the enormous power of ICT for socio-economic development, it is essential that opportunities to access ICT be given to all those who have been unable to participate fully in a knowledge-based digital economy.

We must use the power of ICT in such a way that people can improve their economic, social and cultural well-being. We need strong government commitment to strategies that increase the spread of ICT. This is crucial for the success of any development initiatives and for the future of the millions of people in the world today who still have not heard a dial tone. The task is daunting, but we must overcome it if we are to keep the promise of the information society.



Yoshio Utsumi
Secretary-General
International
Telecommunication Union