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Editorial

fourth world telecommunication day

17 may 1972

message from the secretary-general of the itu

This is the fourth time we are celebrating together World Telecommunication Day, instituted—you need no reminder—to commemorate the creation of the International Telecommunication Union, 107 years ago today.

For the fourth time therefore we are pausing to consider to what degree we have been able to preserve or strengthen the spirit of international co-operation which is the very basis of our Union and which, I am convinced, is still as alive as ever in all the 141 countries which are Members of the ITU.

On looking back like this we can perceive, with some satisfaction, that there is a certain and growing awareness throughout the world of the need for speedier and more harmonious development of the world telecommunication network.

It is not so long ago when, in planning industrial and agricultural development or the improvement of public health conditions of a given country, the fact was too often ignored that these vital needs depend on the prior existence of appropriate means of telecommunication and must perforce go hand in hand with the expansion of these facilities, which in any case must be commensurate with the number and scope of the national projects being carried out.

Fortunately we are beginning to realize the adverse repercussions of such an erroneous approach to planning. We are gradually coming round to a more realistic view and in various parts of the world the highest authorities are now giving to telecommunication projects the priority they deserve.

This widespread appreciation of the situation is a new and most encouraging factor which merits attention, particularly when it manifests itself in the new or developing countries, precisely where the ITU's responsibilities have grown considerably in recent years.

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Since its inception the Union has consistently offered all its Members a kind of permanent technical assistance. However, with our increasingly active participation in the United Nations Development Programme, this action has broadened in scope and its benefits are beginning to be felt throughout the countries of the Third World.

This action, conducted with perseverance and effectiveness on the world scale, is

stipulated in the International Telecommunication Convention, Article 31 of which is entitled " The right of the public to use the international telecommunication service ".

" Members (of the Union) ", it states,
" recognize the right of the public to
" correspond by means of the international
" service of public correspondence. The
" services, the charges and the safeguards
" shall be the same for all users in each
" category of correspondence without any
" priority or preference."

Furthermore, a pertinent recommendation of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Montreux, 1965),

" *conscious of*
" the noble principle that news should be
" freely transmitted;

" *recommends*
" that Members (. . .) of the Union facili-
" tate the unrestricted transmission of
" news by telecommunication services."

Naturally enough, numerous technical and, even more, economic difficulties are met with in striving to attain the ITU's objectives, as defined in Article 4 of the Convention:

" To promote the development of tech-
" nical facilities and their most efficient
" operation with a view to improving the
" efficiency of telecommunication ser-
" vices, increasing their usefulness and
" making them, so far as possible, gener-
" ally available to the public."

Happily, concerted efforts based on an active desire for international co-operation with no ulterior motives, have always enabled satisfactory progress to be made in this direction.

* * *

Higher governmental circles have already been affected by the general awakening of consciousness I mentioned earlier and which we heartily welcome; one of the foremost of its multiple causes is this World Telecommunication Day which the great majority of ITU Members celebrate every year with increasing enthusiasm.

By making judicious use of all the information media at their command and acting in

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concert, countries are realizing that they are in a position to channel and reinforce a vast current of opinion in favour of the installation of a world telecommunication network which is in line with the sought-after level of economic and social development.

The theme proposed by the Administrative Council of the ITU for this Fourth World Telecommunication Day is "The world telecommunication network"— a theme which without doubt provides the most appropriate stimulus to us to redouble our efforts in pursuing the cause we have set ourselves, bearing constantly in mind the growing mutual dependence which binds us one to the other and the absolute necessity of ever more intense international co-operation.

As will be evident to you, the world telecommunication network largely consists of national networks, juxtaposed and interconnected.

If the general world network is to fulfill its role effectively, all its component parts without exception must be of comparable quality. In this way, forced as we are to rely one upon the other, we are completely bound together. Hence this general interdependence which is in course of performing the miracle of forging the unity of the international community.

* * *

Nevertheless, this conception of international solidarity in the sphere of telecommunications is confined to a very limited circle and is not yet familiar to the general public which knows very little, too little, about the admirable work being performed every day behind the scenes in the world of telecommunications. This imperfect understanding is perhaps due to the fact that the public takes the use of telecommunications for granted and is far from suspecting the complexity of the problems involved in their successful operation.

It may also result from a lack of information about the capacity and diversity of the telecommunication facilities which can be put at their disposal.

This Fourth World Telecommunication Day thus offers us an outstanding opportunity to strengthen the sense of international solidarity among the general public and to bring home to it the need for ever more vigorous co-operation throughout the world. In so doing it also serves the cause of peace.

M. MILI