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ITU honours Tarja Halonen, Sam Pitroda and Kristin Peterson

ITU marked its 146th anniversary and World Telecommunication and Information Society Day on 17 May 2011 by honouring three contributors to the digital revolution.

Announcing the Awards, ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun I. Touré lauded the dedication of the three eminent laureates in promoting ICT as a means of

providing a better life for humanity, particularly in rural communities. "As we focus on extending the reach of ICT to the remotest rural communities, it is my pleasure to honour those who have dedicated themselves to harnessing the full potential of ICT so that we can all enjoy a more productive, peaceful and better life," Dr Touré said.



President Tarja Halonen of Finland is co-chairman of the High-level United Nations Panel on Global Sustainability, supporting sustainable sourcing, access to education, and improving maternal health in low-income countries. President Halonen has helped to make Finland a centre for ICT innovation and productivity, especially in the mobile phone sector.



Telecommunication innovator Sam Pitroda is Adviser to the Prime Minister of India on Public Information Infrastructure and Innovations, and Chairman of the National Innovation Council of India. He is largely responsible for India's telecommunications revolution and has campaigned for bridging the global digital divide. Mr Pitroda has linked technology with better delivery of services for the underprivileged.



Kristin Peterson is CEO of Inveneo, a non-profit social enterprise that takes computers, Internet access and telephony to rural and underserved communities in the developing world. Inveneo offers cost-efficient and sustainable solutions that include ultra-low-power computing and long-distance wireless connectivity, partnering with local entrepreneurs for in-country deployment.



Tarja Halonen

President of the Republic of Finland

Tarja Halonen is the 11th President of Finland and the country's first female Head of State. She acceded to office on 1 March 2000, and was re-elected in 2006.

Ms Halonen was born in Helsinki on 24 December 1943. She graduated from the University of Helsinki in 1968 with a Master of Laws degree. From 1970 and throughout her political career (which began in 1974) she worked as a lawyer for the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions.

Tarja Halonen joined the Social Democratic party in 1971, and in 1974 was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. She was elected to Parliament in 1979, and subsequently re-elected four times. In Parliament she served as Chair of the Social Affairs Committee (1984–1987),

Deputy-Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee (1991–1995) and Chair of the Grand Committee (1995). In parallel, Ms Halonen served five terms on the Helsinki City Council (1977–1996).

Tarja Halonen served as Minister of Social Affairs and Health (1987–1990), Minister of Justice (1990–1991), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1995–2000) and Minister responsible for Nordic cooperation (1989–1991). During her time as Foreign Minister, Finland held for the first time the Presidency of the European Union from July to December 1999.

Tarja Halonen has also played an active role at the Council of Europe, first as Deputy-Chair of the Finnish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly (1991–1995) and later in the Ministerial Committee. She was also a member of the Council

of Europe's Committee of Wise Persons (1998–1999).

She has served as co-Chair of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (2002–2004) following her appointment by the International Labour Organization (ILO). She has chaired the Council of Women World Leaders since March 2009. And in August 2010, she was appointed co-Chair of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability.

Tarja Halonen has built her political career on promoting human rights, social justice and equality. Under her presidency, Finland became the first country in the world to make broadband access a legal right.



Sam Pitroda

Adviser to the Prime Minister
Public Information Infrastructure and Innovations

■ Sam Pitroda is an internationally respected development thinker, policy-maker, telecom inventor and entrepreneur who has spent over four decades in ICT and related human and national developments initiatives.

Credited with having laid the foundation of India's telecommunications revolution in the 1980s, Mr Pitroda has been a leading campaigner to help bridge the global digital divide.

During his tenure as Adviser to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980s Mr Pitroda headed six technology missions related to telecommunications, water, literacy, immunization, dairy and oil seeds. He was

also the founder and first Chairman of India's Telecom Commission. In these roles, he helped revolutionize India's development policies and philosophies with a focus on access to technology as the key to social change.

Mr Pitroda was Chairman of India's National Knowledge Commission (2005–2009), an advisory body to the Prime Minister of India, set up to provide a blueprint for reform of the knowledge-related institutions and infrastructure in the country.

In his current role as Adviser to the Prime Minister of India on Public Information Infrastructure and Innovations, he is undertaking

several initiatives focused on open government, democratizing information and inclusive growth. He also chairs the country's National Innovation Council, the Smart Grid Task Force set up under the aegis of the Ministry of Power and the Expert Committee on the use of ICT in Railways. He has also been appointed a founding Commissioner of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, established by ITU and UNESCO with the backing of the United Nations Secretary-General.

He holds close to 100 worldwide patents and has published and lectured widely in the United States, Europe, Latin America and Asia. ■



Kristin Peterson

Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Inveneo

■ Kristin Peterson is the Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Inveneo, a non-profit social enterprise focusing on information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas throughout the developing world. With more than 18 years of experience in developing business and new markets, primarily in the technology and communications industries, Ms Peterson has been responsible for strategy, partnership and support development since Inveneo's inception in 2004. She has led Inveneo's efforts to provide ICT to deliver education, health care, economic development and relief projects in Haiti and in

25 countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, touching the lives of more than 1.5 million people.

Before Inveneo, Ms Peterson founded Velocity Consulting, an organization providing go-to-market guidance to a range of networking, wireless and voice over the Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology start-ups. Her other previous roles include Vice-President of Marketing at an enterprise IP services technology start-up, and Executive Director responsible for business development at GoRemote through initial public offering (IPO). She has also worked for AT&T in international

product management and market development. She has a BS in Civil Engineering from New Mexico State University and an MBA in International Marketing from Pepperdine University.

Kristin Peterson was named a CNN Principal Voice in Innovation and Technology for 2007 and is a member of the HUB Social Enterprise Leadership Forum. Through Inveneo she has been a featured speaker on ABC News, at the Clinton Global Initiative and Global Philanthropy Forum annual meetings, and for various United Nations and bilateral agencies, advocating for access to technology in developing countries. ■