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“Telecommunications play a key role in the protection of the environment, human rights or efforts to eradicate poverty...”
Carlos Menem

“Creating a global information infrastructure offers the promise of enhanced prosperity and enhanced democracy in all of our countries...”
Al Gore

President of Argentina opens first World Telecommunication Development Conference

“Telecommunications have been instrumental to the hopes of mankind for a better world. The phenomenal explosion of communications systems, with first and foremost radio and television, contributed to people's aspirations for democracy”, said Mr Carlos Menem at the inaugural ceremony of the first World Telecommunication Development Conference which opened in Buenos Aires on 21 March last. US Vice-President Al Gore as well as Argentina's Minister of Economy, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Under-Secretary of Communications also took part.

Giving a panorama of the achievements of Argentina in the development of its telecommunications, Mr Menem also hailed the role of the ITU in bringing not only technical proposals but also political and economic solutions to the problems of telecommunication development.

Telecommunications are not only important for economic and social purposes but “they are also indispensable to effectively control sea and land pollution, to inform of human rights violations and to improve the efficiency of food production in our permanent fight against hunger”, the President also said.

In a keynote address, Vice-President Gore singled out telecommunications and the creation of a global information infrastructure (GII) as a prerequisite for sustainable development, economic growth without damage to the environment and for the promotion of democracy around the world.

“Information superhighways, or more accurately networks of distributed intelligence, will allow us to share information, to connect and to communicate as a global community. From these connections, we will derive robust and sustainable economic progress, strong democracies, better solutions to global and local environmental challenges,

improved health care, and, ultimately, a greater sense of shared stewardship of our small planet”, Mr Gore said. “But the power of the global information infrastructure will be diminished if it cannot reach large segments of the world population”. He urged the Conference to set an ambitious agenda that will help all governments, in their own sovereign nations and in international co-operation, to build this GII. Having outlined the US plan for their national information infrastructure, Mr Gore indicated that the principles that underlie their domestic development could also inform and aid the GII development.

The need for top-level leadership and commitment to foster investment in telecommunications and adopt policies that would ensure the rapid deployment and widespread use of the information infrastructure was also underlined. He outlined the five principles on which will rest the US plan for the national information infrastructure (NII): private investment, competition, flexible regulatory framework, open access and universal service. Given the general applicability of these principles, Mr Gore advocated their inclusion in the Buenos Aires Action Plan guiding the next four years of telecommunication development.

“The commitment of all nations to enforcing regulatory regimes to build the GII is vital to world development and many global social goals”, Mr Gore also said. “The countries that will flourish in the twenty-first century will be those that have telecommunication policies that give their citizens access to a wide choice of information services”, he added.

ITU Secretary-General, Pekka Tarjanne, highlighted the fact that the Buenos Aires Conference was the culmination of a process of evolution over the last forty years during

which the Members of the organization had focused their efforts on extending the benefits of telecommunication technologies to all peoples of the world.

Dr. Tarjanne stated: "The challenge before us is to ensure that telecommunication remains a central concern to policy-makers long after the conclusion of the Conference".

He also recalled a conclusion of the Brandt Commission Report which argued over a decade ago that the best way to fight unemployment and sluggish growth in the rich North is by stimulating economic demand in the poorer South and pointed out that this argument was even more relevant today.

"While there is no blueprint for success", he said, "there are common elements which are essential and which can be adopted by most developing countries, provided there is sufficient political will". He added, "that it was the developing nations themselves that must play the major role in changing the situation through the establishment of new regulatory frameworks, through sector reform, and through accelerated investment programmes. But the development gap is a problem which affects us all" concluded Dr Tarjanne.

The Conference brought together well over 800 policy-makers from 135 countries. The first objective was to adopt an Action Plan which contains a far-reaching strategic plan on integrated rural development to provide new opportunities for small-scale business activities, particularly in rural areas.

The second objective is to raise public awareness of the benefits of investment in telecommunications to society as a whole.

Finally, it is to listen with open minds, learn and share experiences on the successes and failures of the past decade, to establish a dialogue between countries, between private and public sector and between telecommunication professionals and specialists in other areas, to provide guidance on how best to structure the sector.



Under-Secretary of Communications of Argentina, Chairman of the Conference

The first Plenary meeting of the Conference elected by acclamation Mr Oscar González, Under-Secretary of Communications of Argentina, as its Chairman. The structure was also adopted and the chairpersons of committees elected.

After an overview presented by the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the ITU on the evolution of telecommunication development in the past ten years, the Conference undertook to analyse the global goals

"... we have a unique opportunity to send a clear message to the world on the immense potential that telecommunications can offer in promoting economic, social and cultural development..."
Pekka Tarjanne

and objectives for telecommunication development up to the year 2000 and beyond.

Malta invites WTDC-98

While addressing the Conference, the Minister for Transport and Communications of

Malta, Francis Zammit Dimech, announced his country's invitation for the second World Telecommunication Development Conference to be held in 1998.

Dr Zammit Dimech's invitation was accepted by acclamation.

The following missions have recently been undertaken by ITU experts

• Barbados (Bridgetown)

Murthy K. M. S. (India)
Consultant in satellite earth stations
(6.2.94–13.2.94, UNDP)

• Benin (Cotonou)

Dalmaz K. (Turkey)
Consultant in economic and financial studies for telecommunications
(17.2.94–20.3.94, ITU)
Turan O. (Turkey)
Consultant in telecommunication network planning
(17.2.94–13.3.94, ITU)

• Bhutan (Thimphu)

McDonald J. D. (Australia)
Senior technician in outside plant maintenance
(1.2.94–15.7.94, UNDP)
Immonen M. (Finland)
Consultant in data communications and networking
(27.2.94–26.4.94, ITU)

• Botswana (Gaborone)

Helling H. (Sweden)
Consultant in tariffs (policy formulation, costing and pricing of services)
(9.2.94–8.5.94, FT)

• Brazil (Brasilia)

Passerini R. (Italy)
Consultant in signalling system No. 7
(19.2.94–6.3.94, ITU)

• Brazil (Campinas)

Kendall T. (United States)
Consultant in basic support system for Sagre development (development of GIS applications)
(19.2.94–26.2.94, UNDP)

Abi-Aad A. (Canada)

Consultant in support environment for software development, telecommunication and information systems
(20.2.94–26.2.94, UNDP)

Thortensen G. (United States)

Consultant in setting up electronic design automation — EDA tools (Mentor graphics software)
(27.2.94–10.3.94, UNDP)

• Cambodia (Phnom Penh)

Adjie S. (Indonesia)
Specialist in switching
(7.2.94–6.4.94, ITU)
Mariasa I. (Indonesia)
Specialist in satellite systems (VSAT and DAMA)
(7.2.94–6.4.94, UNDP)

Pranoto I. (Indonesia)
Specialist in transmission
(7.2.94–6.4.94, ITU)

Pavliouk A. (Russia)
Senior expert in frequency management
(9.2.94–5.3.94, UNDP)

• China (Beijing)

Ying R. (United States)
Chief technical adviser
(12.2.94–19.3.94, UNDP)

• Costa Rica (San José)

Anzola M. (Colombia)
Consultant in PLANITU
(27.2.94–12.3.94, ITU)

• Libya (Tripoli)

Jansson H. (Sweden)
Senior expert/project coordinator in telecommunication planning and financial analysis
(12.2.94–11.5.94, UNDP)