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Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States

FINAL REPORT



Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)
International Telecommunication Union





REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT
CONFERENCE FOR THE ARAB STATES
(AR-RTDC-96)
Beirut (Lebanon), 11-15 November 1996

FINAL REPORT

**TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU
INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION**

FINAL REPORT

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Summary

1 Introduction

The second Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Beirut from 11 to 15 November 1996, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Lebanese Republic. This report gives an account of the work and results of the Conference. The documents examined by the Conference are contained in a second volume.

The Conference was opened by the Prime Minister of Lebanon, H.E. Mr. Rafik Hariri, in the presence of Mr. Pekka Tarjanne, Secretary-General of the ITU, Mr. Ahmed Laouyane, Director of the BDT and H.E. Mr. Imad Al-Falouji, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications of the Palestinian Authority. The opening speeches are attached in Annex 2.

2 Agenda of the Conference

The provisional agenda, drawn up in advance and approved by the ITU Council at its 1996 session, was adopted (see Annex 1).

3 Participants

The Conference was attended by 181 persons, including delegates and observers from 26 countries, representing administrations, recognized operating agencies, scientific or industrial organizations, and eleven international organizations. The list of participants is attached in Annex 3.

4 Designation of officers and structure of the Conference

Dr. Abdul Monem Youssef, Director-General of Telecommunications (Operation and maintenance) of Lebanon was elected Chairman of the Conference. Mr. Sami K. Al-Amer (Kuwait), Mr. Sidi Abdallah Ould Kerkoub (Mauritania) and Mr. Makram Obeid (Syria) were elected Vice-Chairmen. The Conference set up three committees to deal with the different aspects of telecommunication development, an editorial committee, a steering committee and an ad hoc working group of the Plenary, as shown in the table on page 5.

5 Proceedings of the Conference

The Conference reviewed the work of the Telecommunication Development Sector since the first Regional Conference (Cairo, 1992). It also examined the many proposals put forward by Member States and Members of the Development Sector, as well as three other key documents: the report of the Preparatory Meeting for the Conference (Damascus, 3-5 June 1996), the report on the Arab States Telecommunications Finance Colloquium (Amman, 1-4 September 1996) and the contribution submitted by the Telecommunication Development Advisory Board (fifth meeting of TDAB, October 1996). Finally, Mr. Robert Jones, Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau, and Mr. Theo Irmer, Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, reported on the work of the Radiocommunication and Telecommunication Standardization Sectors. The list of documents of the Conference is reproduced in Annex 4.

OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE

	Chairman of the Conference	Dr. Abdul Monem YOUSSEF (Lebanon)
	Vice-Chairmen of the Conference	Mr. Sami K. AL-AMER (Kuwait) Mr. Sidi Abdallah OULD KERKOUB (Mauritania) Mr. Makram OBEID (Syria)
Committee 1 (Policies, strategies and related issues)	Chairman	Mr. Omar MSEDDE (Tunisia)
	Vice-Chairman/ Rapporteur	Mr. Abdullah Rashed A.S. AL-HAS AL-ZAABI (United Arab Emirates)
Committee 2 (Network and service management and development)	Chairman	Mrs. Belkais EL-SAID SABA (Egypt)
	Vice-Chairman/ Rapporteur	Mr. Abdelghani LOUFI (Morocco)
Committee 3 (Finance, economics and tariffs)	Chairman	Mr. Sami S. AL-BASHEER (Saudi Arabia)
	Vice-Chairman/ Rapporteur	Mr. Riadh MOUMTAZ (Lebanon)
Committee 4 (Editorial)	Chairman	Mr. Fuad ABBAS (Qatar)
	Vice-Chairman/ Rapporteur	Mr. Mohamed KAMIL ALI (Djibouti)
Committee 5 (Steering)	(composed of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Conference and the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of other Committees)	
Ad hoc Working Group of the Plenary	Chairman	Mr. Nabil KISRAWI (Syria)

After the relevant documents had been introduced in the Plenary Meeting, the Committees and ad hoc Working Group met to discuss proposals and formulate conclusions in the form of draft resolutions or recommendations (see below). The drafts were edited by the Editorial Committee and approved in Plenary Meeting after discussion and further refinement. All the texts which were approved are reproduced in this report. The main decision taken by the Conference was to approve the *Arab Book*, which is published separately. The publication entitled *Arab States Telecommunication Indicators (1996)* was also examined and highly commended.

In addition to the resolutions and recommendations, the Conference adopted the *Beirut Declaration* reproduced on page 9, and issued a message to the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-98) which will be held in 1998 in Valletta (Malta). The text of the message is reproduced on page 10.

6 Committee 1 - Policies and strategies and related issues

Under the chairmanship of Mr. Omar Mseddi (Tunisia), Committee 1 examined all the documents on policy and strategy issues, namely:

- restructuring;
- regulatory issues and the introduction of new technologies;
- infrastructure and service development;
- policy impact of the GATS Agreement on Arab telecommunication administrations;
- special action plans (assistance to Palestine, Somalia and other Arab LDCs);
- international and regional cooperation;
- modalities for monitoring, evaluation and progress review of the Conference's resolutions;
- the opinions of the first World Telecommunication Policy Forum on global mobile personal communication systems (GMPCS).

The Committee submitted three draft resolutions and two draft recommendations to the Plenary for discussion and approval.

The following points were emphasized:

- more active participation of Arab countries in the ITU study groups and, in particular, the two ITU-D study groups;
- strengthening information exchange and consultations among Arab countries with the aim of regional integration;
- identification of a strategy for multilateral and bilateral cooperation in order to derive maximum benefit from the resources and opportunities available in the Arab region;
- the need to coordinate efforts to intensify the dissemination of information and relevant studies on developments in the negotiations on basic telecommunications and the MoU on GMPCS and their impact on the telecommunication sector in the Arab countries.

7 Committee 2 - Network and service management and development

Under the chairmanship of Mrs. Belkais El-Said Saba (Egypt), Committee 2 examined the 35 documents that were submitted to it. The documents for action were discussed at length sometimes in small ad hoc groups, leading to the formulation of five resolutions and five recommendations.

With respect to the regional development projects identified by AR-RTDC-92, an order of priority was set, in particular for revitalization of the MODARABTEL project (Phase II). Resolution 13 concerning the ITU Glossary of Telecommunication Terms in Arabic also remains valid. Some other AR-RTDC-92 resolutions are to be cancelled, either because they are replaced by some of the new resolutions/recommendations mentioned above or, as in the case of Resolution 9 on the Interregional Project of the Arab and European Governments bordering the Mediterranean Sea (INMARTEL), because they have lesser priority.

With respect to telecommunication indicators, the Committee expressed its appreciation to ITU/BDT for the elaboration of the Arab States Telecommunication Indicators 1996, which took into consideration all the comments and views expressed at the Preparatory Meeting for AR-RTDC-96 in Damascus. In order to enhance this important document, the Arab States are urged to continue updating their indicators and put forward their comments and requirements.

Furthermore, ITU/BDT is requested to include analysis of incoming and outgoing traffic in the document¹.

With regard to broadcasting, the Committee urged that effect be given to the recommendations formulated in Document 21 (ITU support activities for public service broadcasting in the developing countries) and in draft Recommendation 7.

8 Committee 3 - Finance, economics and tariffs

Committee 3 met under the chairmanship of Mr. Sami Al-Basheer (Saudi Arabia), and studied a large number of documents on telecommunication financing issues, primarily Documents 19 and 40 submitted by Kuwait and Syria on call-back, Document 28 setting out the recommendations of the Amman Telecommunications Finance Colloquium, Document 11 by Syria on the activation of regional telecommunication projects, Document 59 introducing WorldTel and a document on the Information Society and Development Conference (ISAD) held in South Africa in May 1996.

The Committee adopted three draft resolutions and two draft recommendations.

The Chairman stressed the importance ITU/BDT attached to the issues associated with alternative calling procedures (call-back) and their impact on telecommunication service revenue and operation.

The Committee, when adopting the draft resolution on the financing of regional projects, stressed the importance of strengthening the capacity of the ITU Regional Office in Cairo, and called upon the BDT to give the matter due attention.

The Syrian delegation suggested that the title of Document 29 be altered to "Telecommunication Finance Guidelines" (instead of "Handbook").

Finally, the Chairman of Committee 3 suggested that the draft resolutions on the Agreement on Trade in Services submitted by Committees 1 and 3 should be merged to form a single resolution.

9 Ad hoc Working Group of the Plenary

The terms of reference of the ad hoc Working Group of the Plenary on the Arab Book, chaired by Mr. Nabil Kisrawi (Syria), were to review the draft Arab Book (Document 10 of the Conference) and prepare an appropriate resolution for consideration by the Conference.

The Working Group reviewed Document 10 and made a number of amendments to Chapters II (Telecommunication networks and services), III (Legal and regulatory aspects), VI (Economic and financial policy) and VIII (Conclusion).

The Working Group recommended that BDT should incorporate the amendments in the Arab Book, once they had been considered in Plenary; that the English version is to be considered as the master and reference copy for the purposes of translation into Arabic and French; and that, after publication (immediately following the Conference), the Arab Book should be periodically updated to take into account any developments affecting its content. Finally, the Working Group adopted draft Resolution 1.

¹ Note by the BDT: A report entitled "Direction of traffic" has recently been published.

10 Telemedicine

Two telemedicine demonstrations were organized during the Conference. The first demonstrated a videoconference linking Beirut and Toulouse during which the medical file and x-rays of a patient treated by Dr. Issam Elouzeir at Alsahel Hospital were examined with Professor Lareng in Toulouse, who provided advice.

The second demonstration involved live transmission of pictures of an open-heart operation carried out by Dr. Elouzeir at Alsahel Hospital. Professors Lareng, Fournial and Glock and Dr. Salvodelli of the Toulouse Telemedicine Hospital were able to follow the operation and give advice to Dr. Elouzeir.

Following the adoption of Recommendation 5 on telemedicine, the Director of the BDT announced that a world telemedicine symposium is to take place in June 1997.

11 Closing ceremony

After thanks had been expressed, in particular by H.E. Mr. Imad Al-Faloudji, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Makram Obeid (Syria), Mr. Fuad Abbas (Qatar), Mr. Sami Al-Basheer (Saudi Arabia) and Mr. Abdul Rahman Al-Ghunaim (WorldTel), Mr. Henry Chasia, ITU Deputy Secretary-General, delivered the closing address reproduced in Annex 2 (page 50).

Mr. Ahmed Laouyane, Director of the BDT, delivered an address during which he pointed out in particular that three of the vital ingredients for telecommunication development in the Arab world are already there, namely human resources, financial resources and technological tools. Only a fourth essential component is missing, namely peace. The extraordinary reconstruction of Lebanon bears full witness to the importance of this last ingredient, and it is therefore the responsibility of all those who wish to work with the Arab world to make every effort to promote the establishment of peace in the region. He then thanked the Lebanese authorities, commended the participants on the quality of their contributions and addressed his thanks to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Committees and of the ad hoc Group of the Plenary. Particular thanks were extended to the Chairman of the Conference who had played a large part in the success achieved.

Mr. Pekka Tarjanne, ITU Secretary-General, then presented the Chairman with a Swiss watch and a Chairman's gavel as a souvenir of the Conference.

The Chairman thanked the previous speakers, the members of delegations and representatives of companies, in particular for the confidence shown in Lebanon at what was a highly opportune moment in the current period of reconstruction. Lebanon, a country aspiring to peace and freedom, whose wealth lay in its human resources, could only develop by opening up to and cooperating with the rest of the world - whence the great importance of the Conference and its results. The fact that the Prime Minister had made a point of opening the Conference in person was a measure of that importance. The success of the Conference had been due to the contributions of all participants, but also to the substantial although less visible work carried out by the Director of the BDT, and to coordination between the three ITU Sectors under the Secretary-General. After reiterating his sincere thanks to all participants, the Chairman declared the Conference closed.

Beirut Declaration

The States participating in this Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) convened in Beirut at the invitation of the International Telecommunication Union from 11 to 15 November 1996 and graciously hosted by the Lebanese Government,

considering

the Cairo Declaration and reaffirming all provisions thereof,

declare

that the most important achievement of this Conference is the adoption of the Arab Book concerning telecommunication development in the Arab world,

adopt

the following supplementary goals to those established by the Cairo Conference and invite the Arab States and relevant regional organizations to take steps to achieve them:

- 1) promotion of the use of telecommunications in the following fields:
 - telemedicine;
 - distance education;
 - environmental protection;
- 2) support to the Palestinian Authority, Somalia and the least developed Arab States for telecommunication development;
- 3) revitalization of priority regional projects and establishment of appropriate funding mechanisms;
- 4) accelerating the introduction of digital technology into radio broadcasting production;
- 5) adoption of common positions on call-back and refile services;
- 6) obtaining the necessary information to tackle the consequences of the entry into force of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS);
- 7) securing financial resources for telecommunication development with private-sector participation;
- 8) establishment of the Arab integrated information infrastructure network, including GMPCS systems, for use in the technical, economic and social fields and in computing.

**Message from AR-RTDC-96 to the World Telecommunication
Development Conference (WTDC-98) (Valletta, Malta, 1998)**

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996), in full awareness of the importance of the second World Telecommunication Development Conference, is of the opinion that:

- 1 the results of both AF-RTDC-96 and AR-RTDC-96 are good reference inputs to WTDC-98;
- 2 the regional telecommunication policy books and papers should be used as basic material for the development of a worldwide book for development strategies;
- 3 the following themes and issues are expected to be considered by WTDC-98 in Valletta:
 - 3.1 BDT to act as a clearing house in the collection, analysis and dissemination to developing countries of information on the experience of the other developing countries for those issues of particular concern to the sector and in particular on the GMPCS introduction of and increased provision of rural telecommunication services;
 - 3.2 how to facilitate integration of the developing countries in the GII;
 - 3.3 how to assist developing countries in facing the challenges of the GATS Agreement and its economic consequences;
 - 3.4 how to assist developing countries in adapting to the constantly changing environment.

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference wishes WTDC every success in its work.

Resolutions

RESOLUTION 1

THE ARAB BOOK

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96)
(Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

recalling

- a) that Resolution 2 of AR-RTDC-92 urged countries to study and propose appropriate national information and telecommunication policies that cover the regulation and operation of the sector;
- b) that, in accordance with that Resolution, a Regional Working Group on Telecommunication Policies and Strategies (WG-POL) was established to study specific issues related to policy and to elaborate a policy paper for the Arab States (*Telecommunication Policies for the Arab States - the Arab Book*),

noting

- a) that *the Arab Book* incorporates and synthesizes contributions from countries in the region and that it is of utmost importance to make it available to the Member States in the region;
- b) that *the Arab Book* emphasizes the importance of a well-conceived telecommunication policy and a sound regulatory framework, mindful of national circumstances and attentive to the advancement of technology;
- c) that a common reference framework facilitates policy harmonization and network integration;
- d) that any reference document on telecommunications, such as *the Arab Book*, requires regular updating in view of the rapid evolution of the sector,

considering

- a) that the restructuring of the telecommunication sector is happening at the same time that the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is entering into force, which is opening up new challenges but also new opportunities for all countries in the world, including the Arab States;
- b) that the rapid and continuous development of the telecommunication environment and the convergence of telecommunication, computer and broadcasting technologies will call for new policies,

conscious

- a) that *the Arab Book* should be considered as a tool to assist the Arab States in facing the many challenges encountered in reforming the telecommunication sector;
- b) that the recommendations of *the Arab Book* offer full flexibility to each country to implement them as it sees fit, given its prevailing situation and objectives, and in accordance with its own public policy and juridical, administrative and social framework,

resolves

- 1 to approve *the Arab Book* as amended by AR-RTDC-96;
- 2 to consider *the Arab Book* as a dynamic instrument to be reviewed and updated by the countries of the region with the help of ITU/BDT, as required by the evolution of the telecommunication sector,

instructs ITU/BDT

- 1 to incorporate the changes recommended by AR-RTDC-96 in *the Arab Book*;
- 2 to circulate *the Arab Book* to all Arab States and the concerned international, regional and subregional organizations.

RESOLUTION 2

**IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL PROJECTS AND
REVITALIZATION OF THE MODARABTEL PROJECT**

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

recalling

- a) Resolutions 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 of the first Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States, (Cairo, October 1992) promoting the implementation of specific Arab regional telecommunication development projects including, in particular, Phase II of the MODARABTEL Project (RAB-89-001);
- b) Recommendation 4 of the second meeting of AR-RDC-CC (Damascus, March 1995), calling for an update and implementation of the decision of AR-RTDC-92, reaffirming the importance of regional development projects for the Arab region and defining an order of priority for their implementation,

considering

- a) that telecommunications is one of the most vital elements for the reconstruction of national economies;
- b) that the existence, at the regional level, of coherent telecommunication networks and services is essential for development and integration of the Arab economies;
- c) the need to coordinate and harmonize Arab efforts to develop the telecommunication infrastructure in the Arab region;
- d) the vital importance of the regional telecommunication development projects endorsed by AR-RTDC-92, in terms of sectoral impact and quality;
- e) that it has not been possible, so far, to implement all these projects because of lack of necessary funds;

f) the satisfactory and encouraging results achieved by the MODARABTEL Project (Phase I) which helped, among other things, in the creation of cooperation networks between, on the one hand, the Arab experts themselves and, on the other hand, the Arab national operators, training establishments and research centres,

noting

- a) the outcome of the first meeting of AR-RDC-CC (Rabat, October 1993), identifying and defining the networks of the MODARABTEL Project Phase II;
- b) the express wish of the participants of the Preparatory Meeting for AR-RTDC-96 (Damascus, June 1996) that BDT, with the help of Member States and the partners for development, should find a possible solution for funding the implementation of the Arab regional telecommunication development projects;
- c) the recommendation of the Arab States Telecommunications Finance Colloquium (Amman, September 1996) that ITU/BDT evaluate different ways and means of implementing the Arab regional projects,

resolves

- 1 that ITU/BDT should evaluate different ways and means of implementing regional projects (activities) making the utmost use of available BDT resources and in particular those of the Regional Office, as well as possible use of expertise from the region;
- 2 that the ITU/BDT regular budget for the Arab region should be used to cover part of the costs envisaged²;
- 3 that Arab Member States should contribute in kind and/or in cash to the budget foreseen for these projects;
- 4 that ITU/BDT should explore possible partnerships with Member States and Sector Members of the Development Sector in order to sponsor any activities within these projects of mutual benefit to the partners;
- 5 that regional cooperation should be strengthened;
- 6 that the MODARABTEL Project Phase II is to be reactivated;
- 7 that the remaining regional projects resulting from AR-RTDC-92 resolutions should be updated and implemented in the following order of priority: MODARABTEL, GLOSSARABTEL, TRAINTEL, RURETEL,

appeals

to international and regional financial and development institutions, the Member States and the Development Sector partners to participate in Arab regional development projects and support them financially.

² Note by the BDT: This request may apply within the limits of the Financial Regulations and taking into account the other needs of the region.

RESOLUTION 3

TELECOMMUNICATION POLICY IN RURAL, REMOTE AND POORLY SERVED AREAS

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

- a) that the Report of the Maitland Commission (The Missing Link) highlighted the fact that populations in many parts of the world have inadequate access to basic telecommunication services;
- b) that the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 1994), reaffirming the important and urgent need to provide access to basic telecommunication services for everyone, adopted Programmes 9 (Integrated rural development) and 12 (Telematics and computer networks) of the Buenos Aires Action Plan, as well as the Special Programme for the least developed countries (LDCs),

noting

- a) that very little progress has been made towards implementing the Maitland Commission's recommendations that everyone worldwide be brought within reach of basic telephone services;
- b) that the clear correlation between the availability of telecommunication services and economic and social development has been firmly established;
- c) that, in the economic climate prevailing in the 1990s, there are very few opportunities for external financial support at the international level and only limited opportunities at the national level, in order to support telecommunication services in rural, remote and poorly served areas of developing countries;
- d) that the provision of telecommunication services generates significant income and offers increasing potential, which might serve as the basis for the extension of telecommunication services to rural, remote and poorly served areas of developing countries,

recognizing

- a) that spectacular progress has been made in some developing countries through universal access to telecommunication services in rural and isolated areas countrywide, thereby demonstrating the economic and technical feasibility of projects to provide this type of service;
- b) that, in some areas and some developing countries, there is convincing evidence of the overall profitability of telecommunication services in rural and remote areas,

recognizing further

- a) that the provision of telecommunication services in rural and remote areas has to be profitable for the service provider, if the services in question are to be sustained;
- b) that there are several state-of-the-art technologies which may help to make the provision of telecommunication services to rural and remote areas more profitable;
- c) that access to telecommunication services in rural and remote areas can only be achieved through judicious choice of technological options allowing access to and maintenance of good quality and economical services,

resolves

to support the following principles recommended by ITU-D Study Group 2 as a basis for providing access to telecommunication services in rural, remote and poorly served areas:

1 Universal access

Universal access to telecommunication services should be offered at a convenient location in each community. The type and quantity of services must fully meet the community's needs, and the scope and volume of services should increase as demand grows and new applications emerge.

2 Rural telecommunication programme

Rural telecommunications must be introduced through a well-structured, rigorous and ordered programme covering several years, which develops and draws on local experience and expertise.

3 Regulatory framework

The regulatory body must monitor the sustained provision, quality and financial viability of telecommunication services, under the terms of the obligation to provide universal service, which requires that some attention be paid to commercial principles in the provision of telecommunication services.

4 Financial resources

In addition to public financial resources (with or without subsidies), the two other sources of financing are the service provider's own funds and national and international private-sector investments. In the first case, the funds are managed by the service provider for reinvestment purposes; in the second case, the provision of the rural telecommunication services has to be organized or regulated in such a way as to ensure its profitability.

5 Commercial approach

The operator providing rural telecommunication services must adopt a commercial approach, with the service operating on a commercial basis and with the aim of maximizing revenue and minimizing costs.

RESOLUTION 4

SPECIAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

recalling

Resolution 32 of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto 1994),

recalling further

the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and UNESCO on 9 December 1993 in Grenada, and the Cooperation Agreement signed between ITU and UNESCO,

considering

the ITU's policy of assistance to the Palestinian Authority for the development of its telecommunication sector,

considering further

that a developed telecommunication network is of the utmost importance for the future of Palestine economically and socially,

noting

the Action Plan involving the General Secretariat and the three ITU Sectors,

noting further

the BDT's long-term technical assistance to Palestine for the development of its telecommunications, pursuant to Resolution 32 of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994), and the urgent need for assistance to be provided in the various fields of information, informatics and communication,

requests the Director of the BDT

- a) to continue and enhance the technical assistance provided to the Palestinian Authority for the development of its telecommunications;
- b) to assist in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of BDT projects for the development of the telecommunications;
- c) to provide a periodical report on various experiences in liberalization and privatization of telecommunications and their positive and/or negative impacts on the development of the sector;
- d) to request the Director-General of UNESCO to continue to take all possible measures to develop human resources and information, informatics and communication infrastructures for the benefit of social, economic and cultural development of the Palestinian people, in close collaboration with ITU/BDT,

calls upon the ITU Members

to cooperate with the Director of BDT in assisting the Palestinian Authority, financially and technically, for the implementation of BDT projects for improvement and development of the Palestinian telecommunication network, as well as training of the Palestinian staff,

requests the Secretary-General and the Directors of the BR and TSB

to continue to give consideration to the following aspects:

- a) ITU membership;
- b) obtaining an international country code;
- c) notification of frequency assignments;
- d) obtaining radio call signs.

RESOLUTION 5
**SPECIAL MEASURES FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED
COUNTRIES IN THE ARAB STATES REGION**

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

recalling

Resolution 12 of the Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (Cairo, 25-29 October 1992),

recalling further

Resolution 1 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 1994) and Resolution 30 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994),

noting

the very wide diversity of the state of telecommunication development in the various LDCs in the Arab States region,

concerned

that a number of LDCs in the Arab States region, such as Somalia and Sudan, are afflicted by civil strife which disrupts telecommunications and other development,

instructs the Director of the BDT

1 to continue to review the state of telecommunications in the Arab LDCs with a view to adopting strategies designed to bring about genuine improvement in telecommunication development and services;

2 to continuously review the five priority areas adopted by WTDC-94 with a view to revising them at WTDC-98. As an interim measure, to include sector reform and restructuring as an additional priority area for the Arab LDCs,

requests the Secretary-General

to request the next Plenipotentiary Conference to create a specific budget for LDCs from the regular budget and to increase the funds allocated to LDCs from all sources,

calls upon the ITU Members

to cooperate with the BDT in assisting the Arab LDCs in implementing special projects for the improvement of their telecommunication networks,

and, as far as Somalia is concerned,

considering

Resolution 34 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994), as well as Resolution 30 of the same Conference for LDCs in general,

further requests the Secretary-General

to establish a detailed action plan for the rehabilitation and restructuring of the telecommunication network as soon as the situation permits, having regard to guidelines issued by the United Nations.

RESOLUTION 6

ALTERNATIVE CALLING PROCEDURES (CALL-BACK)

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

recalling

- a) Resolutions 21 and 22 of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994);
- b) the recommendation of the Working Group on Tariffs of the Arab States Telecommunications Finance Colloquium (Amman, September 1996),

noting

the reports that ITU-T Study Group 3 submitted to the 1996 Council with a view to:

- a) requesting the adoption of a resolution on alternative calling procedures;
- b) informing it on the progress of a study on the apportionment of revenues in providing international telecommunication services,

noting also

Resolution 1099 of the Council on alternative calling procedures on international telecommunication networks,

taking into account

Resolution 29 of the World Telecommunication Standardization Conference (Geneva, 1996) on alternative calling procedures on international telecommunication networks, which calls upon, *inter alia*, ITU-T Study Groups 2, 3 and 11 to continue studies on the matter,

recognizing

the need to introduce tariff reforms in order for tariff and accounting rates to be more cost-orientated,

resolves

- 1) to invite all the ITU Members to cooperate in eliminating the harmful effects of alternative calling procedures;
- 2) to encourage the Arab operators to adjust accounting rates between them and with other foreign operators and carriers so as to be more cost-orientated, within the framework of their tariff rebalancing policies;
- 3) to encourage Arab administrations to continue adopting a unified position towards harmful and unauthorized alternative calling procedures;
- 4) to encourage Arab administrations through collaborative efforts to build a unified position during the meetings of relevant study groups of both ITU-D and ITU-T;
- 5) to request the ITU Sectors concerned to discuss jointly the refile issue in order to achieve results based on the spirit of Resolution 21 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994);

6) to request the ITU-D to play the lead role regarding the implementation of Resolution 22 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994), and Resolution 23 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Nice, 1989) regarding the apportionment of revenues to the benefit of developing countries, in particular the LDCs, taking into account, in particular, the foreseen development of GMPCS which may have a significant impact on the accounting rate system and practices.

RESOLUTION 7

TARIFFS

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

- a) that in most Arab countries international tariffs have been high;
- b) that competition, both direct and indirect, is now increasing. Practices such as call-back and refile - which have been declared illegal in most Arab countries - are having a negative impact on telecommunication revenues in the region, which threatens international cash generation for future investment in the network;
- c) that even though rebalancing of accounting rates will lead to lower international tariffs, and may thus reduce these practices, it will not eliminate them,

resolves

- 1 to request ITU/BDT to assist administrations in developing their tariff policy based on:
 - implementation of analytical accounting;
 - establishment of cost-based tariffs;
 - provision of knowledge on how to deal with tariffs in an inflationary environment;
- 2 to encourage administrations to consider rebalancing of their tariffs;
- 3 to encourage administrations to participate more actively in the work of ITU-T Study Group 3;
- 4 to encourage administrations to harmonize their international tariff policies in order to minimize the harmful effect of call-back and refile on revenues.

RESOLUTION 8

SOURCES OF FINANCING, RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND PRIVATE-SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN BOTH

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96)
(Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

- a) that large amounts of investment are needed for the development of reliable telecommunication infrastructure and efficient telecommunication services in the region;
- b) that the majority of countries in the region will no longer be able to fully finance these investments from traditional sources, namely internal cash generation and government-backed funding;
- c) that most governments are facing budgetary constraints and multilateral and bilateral lending is declining for telecommunication infrastructure;
- d) that a growing number of developing countries have involved the private sector in various ways in their telecommunication sector. Thus, there are now many experiences to evaluate and compare in deciding on how best to involve the private sector in a manner that reflects each country's unique environment;
- e) that in order to facilitate and encourage private investment, an important prerequisite is a clear and transparent regulatory environment. This includes most importantly the separation of operation from regulation and the establishment of an independent regulatory authority;
- f) that there are various methods of private financing which may be adopted before the regulatory framework is perfected. These include revenue-sharing schemes based on variations of Build-Operate-Transfer (e.g., BOCT, BTO, BOO, BLO), new subscribers (e.g., charging cost-based connection charges), property developers (e.g., developers installing telecommunication infrastructure in new buildings) and local concessions (e.g., for public payphones), etc.;
- g) that, furthermore, the development of capital markets and financial institutions could be instrumental in mobilizing resources through private funding, particularly from national and regional markets;
- h) that governments also need to establish clear priorities, goals and policies for the telecommunication sector;
- i) that an operator enjoying extensive managerial and financial autonomy is in a better position to mobilize resources and implement commercial policies that are more geared to customer requirements and to consider different scenarios with regard to association with the private sector;
- j) that, in cases of privatization of the incumbent operator, the strategy and the process need to be thought through as an integral part of a sector reform programme. Intermediate steps have to be considered, such as the corporatization and commercialization of the State entity;
- k) that there is, however, a danger of converting a public monopoly into a private monopoly;

l) that competition is essential and where exclusivity privileges are to be granted, they should be limited and contingent upon the achievement of specific coverage (particularly for rural areas), service quality and accessibility targets in keeping with those recommended in the Arab Book for telecommunication development in the Arab States, which has been submitted to this Conference for consideration and adoption,

resolves

1 to request BDT:

- a) to draw up an inventory of relevant developing country lessons and experiences with private-sector participation and mobilization of resources;
- b) to assist (at their request) the Arab administrations in implementing appropriate financing arrangements;

2 to encourage Arab States:

- a) to allow private participation in telecommunications, where appropriate, by identifying niche segments where the private sector can be effective, through the provision of capital and know-how, and to make available to consumers cost-effective and modern telecommunication services;
- b) to grant full autonomy to the public operator, thereby enabling it to use its own revenue as a source of financing, to implement new forms of management and to develop a commercial policy that is more geared to customer requirements so as to provide more resources for self-financing;
- c) to establish a clear, stable and transparent regulatory framework including setting up an independent national regulatory authority;
- d) to explore the variety of ways that private capital can be involved in the development of their telecommunication sector.

RESOLUTION 9

**APPLIED RESEARCH AND TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGIES
IN THE ARAB STATES**

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96)
(Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

- a) that the highly advanced technology that is increasingly being used worldwide has widened the scope and complexity of modern telecommunications;
- b) that Arab countries would benefit from technology transfers in a wide range of fields, from basic to new telecommunication technologies;
- c) that, in order to master advanced technology and the evolution of service development - thereby closing the knowledge gap and creating employment opportunities - Arab countries need to rapidly mobilize the resources required for building and strengthening their own human skills and capabilities in applied research and development;

d) that technology transfer among developing countries can be promoted further, in addition to the transfer of technology from developed countries or through international organizations,

recalling

a) Resolution 6 of AR-RTDC-92 on the promotion of Arab cooperation in applied research and in related areas of higher scientific and technical education;

b) Resolution 10 of AR-RTDC-92, calling for the continuation of the activities of the Regional Project for Modern Arab Telecommunications equipment (MODARABTEL), which includes a collaboration network for applied research,

resolves

to request ITU/BDT

1 in close collaboration with Member States, to activate the MODARABTEL network for applied research;

2 to identify the prerequisite conditions for creating and/or strengthening national, subregional and regional applied research centres;

3 to prepare proposals for subregional cooperation agreements in these fields;

4 to promote the exchange of information among donor and recipient countries under Question 5/1 of ITU-D Study Group 1, on "Industrialization and Transfer of Technology",

calls upon

UNESCO and other concerned development partners to assist the ITU in this undertaking,

invites the Arab States

1 to harmonize the programme of activities of the existing research centres around priorities which are of the utmost importance and interest for the region and its overall development;

2 to encourage cooperation between Arab and foreign research centres for the transfer of knowledge and technology know-how in the field of telecommunications.

RESOLUTION 10

DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

recalling

a) the Action Plan emanating from the World Declaration on Education for All, adopted by the World Conference in Jomtien (Thailand) in March 1990, advocating the use of new information and communication technologies to improve access to education and meet the goals of education for all;

b) Recommendation 1 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-94) in Buenos Aires, on the application of telecommunications to health and other social services;

- c) the Buenos Aires Action Plan (BAAP) formulated by WTDC-94 and approved by the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994), and in particular Programme 10 on broadcasting infrastructures;
- d) Resolutions 11 and 12 of AR-RTDC-92 on human resources management and development,
noting with satisfaction

the initiatives undertaken by ITU and UNESCO under the cooperation agreement between the two organizations for telecommunications, information, informatics and communication, in particular within the framework of BAAP Programmes 10 and 12,

considering

- a) that telecommunication and information technologies have an important role to play in promoting widespread access to education and improving the quality of education, particularly through the capabilities they offer for continuous training and further training of education staff;
- b) the extremely promising pilot distance education project for the continuous training of education staff by means of interactive television developed in collaboration between ITU, UNESCO and the Government of Morocco;
- c) the undeniable impact of the new techniques developed under that project on innovation in electronic components, software and teaching approaches;
- d) the ITU's interest in the development of interactive distance training systems involving various forms of communication (voice, image, graphics, etc.) supported by different transmission media (telecommunications, television and informatics) and capable of reaching a wide audience;
- e) that it would be useful to set up pilot projects in order to identify the most viable solutions for interactive distance training,

resolves

- 1 to stress the importance of pursuing the development of new interactive distance training technologies;
- 2 to request BDT to support implementation of the pilot distance training project by interactive television developed in collaboration with UNESCO and the Government of Morocco;
- 3 to invite all financing and development agencies and the private sector to provide financial and material support for implementation of the project;
- 4 to encourage other countries to conduct similar pilot projects to the one undertaken in Morocco, in cooperation with ITU and UNESCO, national, regional and international organizations and public and private professional partners, taking due account of the results of Morocco's experience.

RESOLUTION 11

THE ROLE OF TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96)
(Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

recalling

Resolution 8 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (1994) and Resolution 35 of the Kyoto Plenipotentiary Conference (1994), on the contribution of telecommunications for the protection of the environment,

considering

- a) the important role telecommunication and information technologies could play in protecting the environment and in promoting sustainable development activities at low risk to the environment;
- b) that the latest telecommunication and information technologies can be extremely useful in implementing and conducting environment protection activities;
- c) that the application of telecommunication technology can reduce paper consumption and thus combat deforestation;
- d) that telecommunication and information technologies may make a significant contribution to the development of rural areas;
- e) that there is a need to disseminate information on these technologies,

considering further

the results of the study undertaken by ITU-D Study Group 2 under Question 7/2 assigned to it by WTDC and in collaboration with the competent international and regional organizations, as well as the results of the International Symposium on the role of telecommunication and information technology in the protection of the environment (Tunis, 17-19 April 1996),

recommends

- 1 that all Arab telecommunication authorities take the initiative to provide, directly or indirectly, in collaboration with the respective environmental authorities, all the possible telecommunication means and services to support the promotion of applications aiming at the protection of their respective environment;
- 2 that the use of space technologies be considered for environmental protection activities such as monitoring air, river, harbour and sea pollution, remote sensing, wildlife studies, forestry development and others;
- 3 that the need for national environmental protection policies be taken into account, with due emphasis on the role which telecommunications can play in providing such protection;
- 4 that special awareness among the policy/decision makers be created to gain a better understanding of the issue of telecommunications and environment;
- 5 that the importance of an integrated network for collecting, processing and disseminating environmental information at national, regional and international levels be recognized and all necessary steps be taken towards implementing such networks;

6 that the basic telecommunication needs of small communities be satisfied in order to help them establish clean industries, thereby reducing as much as possible the migration of populations to urban areas, which causes urban congestion;

7 that telecommunication networks and services be utilized in situations where reduction of energy consumption could be achieved, for example by substituting telecommunication for travel, by using teleconferencing and by reducing paper consumption, thereby ultimately contributing to saving environmental resources,

requests the Director of the BDT

1 to draw up and implement a comprehensive plan of action in the form of a global operational telecommunication-environment project on the development and use of telecommunication and information technologies for the protection of the environment and sustainable development. This project will be of an interregional nature with regional and/or subregional components and will take account of the specific characteristics and needs of the different regions/subregions concerned;

2 to pursue the preparation of the policy document started by Study Group 2 aimed at promoting the use of all kinds of telecommunication and information technologies, especially space technologies, for environmental protection applications;

3 to establish a framework for regional and international cooperation which will enable all those concerned (governments of developed and developing countries, manufacturers and consumers of technology, private sector, international organizations, United Nations specialized agencies, etc.) to carry out, promote and develop projects, in particular pilot projects, to ensure optimum use of the most appropriate telecommunication and information technologies for the protection of the environment and sustainable development;

4 to organize seminars, regional workshops, training and research programmes, exhibitions and other activities in order to deepen reflection on the matter and heighten awareness among all those concerned of the value of implementing multilateral and bilateral projects within the framework of international cooperation and to consider, if necessary, holding an international conference with the aim, *inter alia*, of establishing a framework and carrying out pilot projects in this area at regional, subregional and national levels, in cooperation with international organizations and with the support of international telecommunication operators;

5 to develop and disseminate appropriate course material for conducting training programmes on the subject and disseminate information on telecommunication and information technology applications for the protection of the environment and sustainable development.

RESOLUTION 12

MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING, EVALUATION AND PROGRESS REVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE'S RESOLUTIONS

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

noting

a) the need for the Arab States to coordinate the development of their telecommunications;

- b) the need to establish a mechanism to monitor, review the progress of and evaluate implementation of the resolutions/recommendations of regional telecommunication development conferences for the Arab States between two development conferences;
- c) the need to associate and involve in this monitoring process the Arab States, the regional and international organizations concerned, as well as the development partners;
- d) the mandate of the Council of Arab Telecommunication Ministers and of the Arab Permanent Telecommunications Committee (PTC);
- e) the purpose of the ITU and its longstanding traditional cooperation with world entities concerned with telecommunication issues;
- f) ITU/BDT's catalytic role, as defined by the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Nice, 1989),

recalling

Resolution 1 of AR-RTDC-92, establishing an Arab regional development conference Coordination Committee (AR-RDC-CC), for cooperation and coordination of telecommunication development in the region and for implementation and follow-up of related resolutions adopted during development conferences,

considering

the experience gained through the AR-RDC-CC's work during the last four-year cycle,

resolves

- 1 that the AR-RDC-CC's activities be continued under the new name of "AR-RTDC-CC";
- 2 that the AR-RTDC-CC be composed of high-level representatives of:
 - the Arab States ministries responsible for the telecommunication sector,
 - the Arab Permanent Telecommunications Committee of the League of Arab States,
 - the Arab subregional telecommunication organizations,
 - the regional and international organizations concerned with telecommunications,
 - the regional and international financial organizations and funding banks,
 - the development partners,
 - ITU/BDT;
- 3 that the representatives of the members of the Coordination Committee should be individuals designated by name by the administrations, operating companies and international and regional organizations concerned, and should assume continuity of representation during the period between two development conferences at least;
- 4 that the monitoring and implementation of Conference's resolutions by the Coordination Committee should be a continuous process during the period between its annual meetings through direct mutual contacts among its members, by means of correspondence, telephone and telefax,

resolves further

- 1 that the mandate of the AR-RTDC-CC should be to:
 - a) contribute to the regional coordination of telecommunication development and to the process of regional integration within the Arab States;

- b) coordinate international cooperation in telecommunication development at the intraregional, regional and subregional levels;
 - c) promote exchange of information and permanent consultations between the countries of the region, on the one hand, and all international, regional and national organizations concerned, as well as other development partners, on the other;
 - d) assist ITU in the preparation of future AR-RTDCs, in particular in the preparation of a summary report on the progress of implementation of resolutions adopted by the previous conferences, and of proposals for further actions at international, regional and subregional levels;
- 2 that the organizational set-up and working methods should be as follows:
- a) the AR-RTDC-CC should meet once a year. It should, however, be able to convene extraordinary meetings;
 - b) the participating organizations would be required to host such meetings in turn and provide all necessary facilities;
 - c) every year, one of the Member countries shall be chosen as a lead country, to host and chair the annual meeting of the Coordination Committee. The lead country, with the support of ITU/BDT, will have the responsibility for coordination and follow-up of work during the period until the next annual meeting;
 - d) ITU/BDT, including its Cairo Regional Office, should provide the executive secretariat and support for the day-to-day monitoring and follow-up of the implementation of AR-RTDC resolutions, as well as for the AR-RTDC-CC meeting proceedings;
 - e) ITU/BDT, in its capacity as the executive secretariat of the Coordination Committee, should issue a biannual progress report on the implementation of conference resolutions;
 - f) ITU/BDT should ensure the coordination of activities generated by the AR-RTDC-CC with similar activities in the region, so as to avoid duplication of work and optimize the use of available resources.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96)
(Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

- a) the existence of international and regional organizations that are specialized in the field of telecommunication development;
- b) the existence of international and regional organizations or entities that are active in resource mobilization for investments for the implementation of telecommunication development projects;
- c) Resolution 6 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, March 1994), encouraging cooperation between ITU/BDT and regional organizations,

recalling

the "Cairo Declaration" of the Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (Cairo, October 1992), inviting the Arab States and the regional organizations to cooperate in the development of the Arab telecommunication sector,

noting

that it is essential for the countries of the Arab region to:

- a) recognize the similarity of their objectives and the complementarity of their needs;
- b) combine their resources in order to optimize their results; and
- c) take, collectively, maximum advantage of the region's resources and capabilities,

recommends

that the members of the Arab region, with possible assistance from ITU/BDT:

- 1 examine in depth the mandates and operational structures of the Arab regional and subregional organizations active in the telecommunication field, in order to avoid any duplication and to promote complementarity;
- 2 define a strategy and associated mechanisms for bilateral and multilateral cooperation among international, regional and subregional organizations and States involved in the development of telecommunications in the Arab region, ensuring that all actions taken contribute to the same objective and are conducted at the lowest possible cost, for each and for all;
- 3 request ITU/BDT to collaborate more closely with the regional and subregional telecommunication organizations of the Arab region, in order to better define a programme of assistance which is best suited to the telecommunication development needs of the Arab countries.

RECOMMENDATION 2

INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE ARAB STATES

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

- a) Kyoto Resolution 31, "Telecommunication Infrastructure and Socio-Economic and Cultural Development", and particularly the paragraph to the effect that "the recent spectacular progress, and particularly the convergence of telecommunication and computer technologies and services, has transformed telecommunications into an agent of change for the information age";
- b) Programme 12 of the ITU/BDT Buenos Aires Action Plan on "Development of Telematics and Computer Networks" as well as the growing number of informatic initiatives and projects taking place in the Arab States,

noting

the efforts being deployed in order to organize a regional symposium on the Arab World and the information society under the auspices of ITU and UNESCO within the framework of the Regional Arab Information Technology Network (RAITNET) (Tunis, 31 March - 4 April 1997),

recognizing

the growing strategic importance of information infrastructures and their potential for improving quality of life for every citizen of the Arab States, promoting the economic integration of the Arab States and improving trade and other linkages with the global community,

urges administrations

to note the critical importance of telecommunication networks for the exchange of multimedia information and to facilitate and promote the development of electronic communications and networks such as the Internet by adopting the appropriate regulatory, tariff and service provision policies, and by making available appropriate infrastructures,

requests ITU/BDT

- 1 in collaboration with other development partners, to make the governments of the Arab States aware of the relevance of information infrastructures and to assist in the establishment of national policies for information infrastructures in the Arab States;
- 2 to establish an appropriate mechanism for coordination among the administrations and the various partners involved (ESCWA, UNESCO, etc.) which will draw up an inventory of service requirements and associated constraints and formulate an action plan for the development of information technology in the Arab States;
- 3 in collaboration with the parties concerned, to take the necessary steps in order to produce a White Paper similar to the Arab Book, as a thought-provoking document offering the Arab States possible approaches for the development of their information infrastructures.

RECOMMENDATION 3
IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS
FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96)
(Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

the objective of Programme 11 "Information Services" of the ITU/BDT Buenos Aires Action Plan, which is to establish a detailed and comprehensive database covering the telecommunication sector for the use of partners, and of Programme 7 "Improvement of Maintenance", including the implementation of management information systems to monitor quality of service,

noting

- a) that BDT has continuously, particularly since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Action Plan, been expanding its cooperation activities in the Arab States towards the establishment of modern management tools such as the computerized management information system;
- b) that it is important for telecommunication managers in the Arab States to be able to base their decisions on objective assessments of network performance, and that major efforts have already been made by the administrations of the region to implement management information systems at the national level,

recommends that administrations

- 1 should, at the national level, each set up a management information system;
- 2 should devise a management information system project which takes account of national systems with a view to:
 - enhancing network performance;
 - improving network utilization and efficiency;
 - reducing operating and investment costs,

requests ITU/BDT

- 1 to provide the administrations with a formal framework for the development of national management information systems, together with a prototype system;
- 2 to assist the administrations in the development of management information systems with access to a comprehensive and reliable database;
- 3 to promote cooperation amongst Arab States by helping to define a common strategy for improving quality and by facilitating the exchange of experience between administrations.

RECOMMENDATION 4

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TRADE IN SERVICES (NEGOTIATIONS ON BASIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS)

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

the results of the Uruguay Round multilateral trade negotiations, and the traded aspect of telecommunications,

considering further

the General Agreement on Trade in Services and the negotiations on basic telecommunications,

conscious

of the impact these might have on the telecommunication sector in the Arab countries, taking into account particularly the considerable investment they have made in developing their telecommunication infrastructure,

conscious also

that many countries in the region remain unclear about the implications of joining the WTO,

recommends that Arab telecommunication administrations

- 1 enhance coordination at the national level among the various ministerial departments concerned by the multilateral trade negotiations and/or set up, if necessary, an interministerial national committee on these matters;
 - 2 formulate national strategies, having regard to the specific features of the telecommunication sector;
 - 3 participate actively in the work of the group of Arab telecommunication administrations to study the impact of the GATS on the telecommunication sector and follow up the relevant recommendations contained in the Arab Book;
 - 4 step up cooperation within the Arab region and identify common approaches on the issue,
- requests ITU/BDT*
- 1 to take the necessary steps to intensify the dissemination of relevant information and studies concerning developments in the negotiations on basic telecommunications and their impact on the telecommunication sector in the Arab countries and to convene information meetings on these matters;
 - 2 to provide Arab telecommunication administrations with the necessary assistance and expertise in this field:
- to assist in clarifying/informing about relationships between WTO and ITU, and their respective roles in dealing with telecommunication trade issues;

- in collaboration with other international organizations concerned, to assist the Arab countries in grasping the implications of membership of WTO for the telecommunication sector, preparing their schedules, negotiating, and participate in the ongoing negotiations on basic telecommunications;
- 3 to provide the necessary support to the working group of Arab administrations set up to study the impact of the GATS and the negotiations on basic telecommunications.

RECOMMENDATION 5

TELEMEDICINE IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

recalling

Recommendation 1 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in Buenos Aires, March 1994, which focused on the application of telecommunications for health and other social services,

recognizing

the potential of telemedicine to meet health care needs in remote and rural areas,

conscious

- a) of the work which has been carried out on the impact of telecommunications on health care under Question 6 in ITU-D Study Group 2;
- b) of the experience which some Arab countries have already gained in the telemedicine field;
- c) of the Resolution on Telemedicine adopted at the African Regional Telecommunication Development Conference (Abidjan, 6-10 May 1996),

conscious also

- a) of the increasing competition in the telecommunication sector;
- b) that a number of countries have established universal service obligations (USOs) as a means of ensuring that all competitors contribute to the extension of telecommunications to remote and rural areas which might not otherwise be economically served and that, even where competition has not yet been introduced, often the public telecom operator (PTO) has USOs anyway,

considering

- a) the need to extend adequate health care to all citizens;
- b) the need for collaboration between health officials and telecommunication operators in order to implement telemedicine services;
- c) that it is desirable to establish some pilot projects in order to help identify the most cost-effective solutions to the provision of health care to those living in remote and rural areas,

invites all Arab countries

- 1 to promote collaboration between health care officials and telecommunication operators in order to identify solutions to meet health care needs, especially in remote and rural areas and for those on the move and those who might not otherwise have access to the quality of care available in urban hospitals;
- 2 to consider initiating one or more telemedicine pilot projects in remote and rural areas;
- 3 to share the results of their experiences so as to identify the most appropriate, cost-effective and sustainable solutions,

further invites the Director of the BDT

- 1 once approved, to make available copies of the current draft of the Telemedicine Report to ministries of health as well as ministries of communications as soon as possible so that officials can see what telemedicine experience other countries have;
- 2 to convene a world telemedicine symposium for developing countries in 1997 so that the experience of developing countries can be shared, especially in regard to the costs and benefits of different experiences, and to foster the adoption of global solutions.

RECOMMENDATION 6

DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPUTERIZED SUBSCRIBER MAINTENANCE SYSTEM (CSMS)

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

- a) that the Arab telecommunication networks are undergoing radical technical changes as a result of the switch from analogue to digital systems and the introduction of new services;
- b) that all network maintenance and management activities primarily concern switching, transmission and power infrastructures and that the outside plant is often pushed into the background,

recognizing

- a) that the outside plant, which is the portion of the network visible to the customer, is the Achilles' heel of the network;
- b) that, in this situation, maintenance is often given little attention or priority;
- c) that, nevertheless, telecommunication network maintenance is of major concern to managers, although the resources allocated for the purpose still fall short of actual requirements;
- d) that the customers increasingly want access to services with the requisite level of quality,

convinced

that improved maintenance of the network and particularly of the outside plant will have a multiplier effect on customer satisfaction as well as on operator revenues,

having noted

that the first World Telecommunication Development Conference adopted a special programme for least developed countries (LDCs) comprising, *inter alia*, maintenance activities and particularly the development of a guide on the introduction of a computerized subscriber maintenance system (CSMS) and a pilot project for the CSMS,

having noted further

the interest of the operators for this project,

requests

that CSMS project activities in the Arab countries should take into account the specific realities of these countries,

requests the BDT

to take all the necessary measures to ensure that:

- 1 the guide on the introduction of a computerized subscriber maintenance system is elaborated within one year to respond to the expectations of the Arab countries;
- 2 appropriate software model(s) are developed for the benefit of the Arab countries;
- 3 the guide and software are widely distributed among the Arab countries;
- 4 Arab experts participate in the CSMS project;
- 5 development partners are involved in the CSMS project and particularly in the financing and implementation of pilot projects in the Arab countries.

RECOMMENDATION 7

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING AND THE EVOLVING ENVIRONMENT

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

considering

- a) the impact of the evolving environment on the public service broadcasting role;
- b) the results of the study undertaken by ITU-D Study Group 2, under Question 8/2 assigned to it by WTDC, in collaboration with the competent international and regional organizations,

recommends

- 1 that ITU, UNESCO and the regional broadcasting unions, acting in cooperation, develop a model role and mandate definition of Public Service Broadcasting in developing countries that will serve to guide future developments of policy and the laws governing the PSB in those countries. This document should define a clear differentiation between the role of the PSB and that of the private commercial broadcaster;

2 that ITU, UNESCO and the regional broadcasting unions, acting in cooperation, investigate ways that the entry of digital technology into the PSBs in developing countries can be expedited, through technical assistance, feasibility studies, pilot projects and the identification of appropriate sources of capital funding and training, to bring them and the associated telecommunication systems the attendant operating efficiencies and performance enhancements. Technical assistance is also required to help in planning coordination and defining the strategy of the transition to digital sound and television broadcasting;

3 that ITU, UNESCO and the regional broadcasting unions, acting in cooperation, develop ways to allow PSBs in developing countries access to the global information infrastructure (GII) and other digital telecommunication networks to enable efficient sharing of productions, resources and material, as well as access to libraries and archives worldwide;

4 that ITU, in the Telecommunication Development, Radiocommunication and Telecommunication Standardization Sectors, take the necessary steps to ensure efficient coordination of strategies and programmes for the development of telecommunication and broadcasting services in developing countries, to the benefit of both services;

5 that ITU, working in cooperation with UNESCO, UNDP, the regional broadcasting unions and others, establish:

- the current and future requirements of the PSBs in developing countries for human resources development through training;
- the potential resources (conventional and electronic) required to meet those requirements, taking note of the linguistic and cultural aspects of this activity, in both spoken and printed forms; and
- the financial resources needed to carry out such training programmes;

6 that ITU, in all its Sectors, and the regional broadcasting unions, acting in cooperation, undertake proactive programmes to ensure an adequate representation of the PSBs in developing countries in activities at the international and regional levels that develop technology, equipment and standards, to ensure that their specific needs are considered and included,

requests the relevant ITU Sectors

to expedite work on relevant Recommendations on decoders of broadcasting satellite digital receivers and their conditional access, and to provide the required technical assistance on these Recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 8

IMPROVEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (HRM/HRD) IN THE ARAB STATES

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

noting

- a) the important role of human resources in the process of telecommunication development;

- b) the existence of management, operational and maintenance problems affecting the quality and availability of telecommunication services;
- c) the process of restructuring the telecommunication sector and the separation between regulatory and operational functions, requiring new skills, knowledge and attitudes in human resources management,

recognizing

- a) that poor management is the main cause of the shortcomings with respect to the supply of high-quality services;
- b) the vast training needs to be met, both in technical and management domains, in order to support the development of telecommunications in the near future;
- c) the consequences for operators and regulators in the region lacking the required skills in human resources;
- d) that ITU/BDT is aware of countries' needs and has already been deeply involved in the development of their human resources:
 - using traditional and innovative methodologies; and
 - promoting the joint participation of the regional organizations and the private sector in this process;
- e) that activities to improve the quality of management are primarily targeted at senior management,

recommends that administrations

- 1 establish or inject dynamism into the policies, structures and appropriate means/tools for the management and development of human resources;
- 2 acquire an effective management information system incorporating the human resources data and indicators necessary for forward-looking management of resources;
- 3 derive maximum benefit from training centres through:
 - developing a policy for the marketing of training;
 - the specialization of training centres with a view to their operation within a training framework;
 - the use of distance-learning technologies;

4 maintain and reinforce, with the assistance of ITU/BDT if required, the human resources cooperation network existing between the Arab States, in order to establish cooperative programmes to help the organizations of the region in improving the quality of their human resources;

5 with national training centres, and in coordination with the regional training centres to be established:

- make the necessary efforts to modernize their methodologies to train people, using as much as possible the facilities provided by information technologies and telecommunication networks;
- be active in joining the ITU/BDT Virtual Training Centre; and
- become members of the Global Telecommunication University/Global Telecommunication Training Institute,

requests ITU/BDT

1 to take steps to make senior management in telecommunication administrations aware of the need to involve itself directly in the improvement of human resources and in the modernization of the management process, with a view to introducing, *inter alia*, the principles of total quality management, benchmarking and re-engineering as tools to manage the organizations;

2 to assist administrations (on request) in setting up appropriate structures and tools, particularly in the elaboration of human resources and vocational training development plans, in collaboration with financial backers and development partners in the telecommunication sector;

3 to promote cooperation among administrations, reinforcing the human resources cooperation network existing among the Arab States, as well as the cooperation among training centres, through the organization of regional meetings aimed at achieving agreement on the harmonization of management, training and training programme methods;

4 to continue its efforts (through the Teleproject and MANDEVTEL activities of BAAP Programme 2: HRD) in training top and middle level managers in management techniques. To this end, external resources through agreements with ITU should be incorporated in the process of training managers;

5 to continue its efforts to support administrations in the translation and Arabization of all the manuals and training materials produced in the BDT/HRD Unit;

6 to continue assisting countries in the areas of human resources development, organizing relevant meetings, workshops and seminars. To this end, regional associations and private organizations are encouraged to join ITU/BDT, in order to establish partnerships in line with their objectives of strengthening the human resources in the Arab States.

RECOMMENDATION 9

FINANCING OF INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROJECTS

The Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-96) (Beirut, 11-15 November 1996),

noting

- a) the detailed description of the BDT technical cooperation projects for the region;
- b) that projects will be prioritized using the criteria of sectoral impact and quality, rather than being funding-driven. As examples, MODARABTEL Phase II Project and telecommunication glossary were candidates for such prioritization,

considering

- a) that not all the regional projects foreseen by the 1992 Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for the Arab States (AR-RTDC-92) could become operational, due to lack of funding;
- b) the advantages of possibilities for implementing projects other than those traditionally used;
- c) that this Conference has reviewed priorities for regional activities based on the needs of the region,

requests

- 1 that ITU/BDT evaluate different ways and means of implementing regional projects (activities) making the utmost use of available BDT resources and in particular those of the Regional Office, as well as the possible use of expertise from the region;
- 2 that the ITU/BDT regular budget and other extrabudgetary resources, such as part of the TELECOM surplus, could be used to cover part of the costs envisaged³;
- 3 that ITU/BDT explore possible partnerships with regional financial institutions, Member States and Sector Members of the Development Sector in order to sponsor any activities within these projects of mutual benefit to the partners,

recommends

- 1 that Member States and Sector Members contribute in kind and/or in cash to the foreseen budget of these projects;
- 2 that regional cooperation be strengthened.

³ Note by the BDT: This request may apply within the limits of the Financial Regulations and taking into account the other needs of the region.

ANNEX 1

Agenda of the Conference

I Introduction

1 Assessment of telecommunication sector development during 1992-1996

- Follow-up action and assessment of the implementations of Cairo AR-RTDC-92, WTDC-94 (BAAP Programmes), and relevant decisions of Kyoto PP-94.
- Analysis/evaluation of changes in the Arab telecommunication sector since 1992.

2 Progress report on the activities of ITU-D Study Groups 1 and 2

II Policies, strategies and related issues

Arab Book; Restructuring; Regulatory issues and their relation with the introduction of new technologies; Infrastructure and service development; Policy impact of GATS Agreements on Arab telecommunication administrations.

III Network and service management and development

- Planning; Operation and maintenance; Rural telecommunications; Impact of new technologies and services (including GMPCS) on the Arab telecommunication network; HRD; MIS as a tool for network management, traffic and performance indicators; Transfer of technologies, R&D and industrialization in the Arab States.
- Regional development projects:
Pipeline projects; GLOSSARABTEL, MODARABTEL, DEVMARTEL, ...
Other projects:
- Global projects and their application to the Arab region:
 - Public service broadcasting infrastructure.
 - Impact of telecommunications in health-care and other social services.
 - Telecommunication support for the protection of the environment.
- Information infrastructure for Arab States and their participation in GII.

IV Special action plans

- Assistance to Palestine.
- Assistance to Somalia.
- Assistance to other Arab LDCs.

V Finance, economics and tariffs

- BDT finance, economics & tariffs survey.
- Results from the Arab States Telecommunications Finance Colloquium (Amman, Jordan, 1-4 September 1996).

- Finance handbook.
- Initiative 2000 (Arab States).
- Information Society and Development (ISAD) pilot projects (Arab States).

VI International and regional cooperation

Objectives; Fields of application; Regional network integration; Service harmonization.

VII Modalities for monitoring, evaluation and progress review of the Conference's resolutions

VIII Other business

ANNEX 2

Opening and closing speeches

Address by the Secretary-General of ITU

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like first to express my sincere appreciation to the authorities of the Republic of Lebanon for having offered to host this second Arab States Regional Telecommunication Development Conference, in the beautiful city of Beirut - historic and ever eternal - which has played over the centuries a major role in the Mediterranean (Mare Nostrum) and has always been and is still, despite all events, a central pole for the most prestigious world civilizations from the Phoenician to the Greek, to the Roman, to the Byzantine and to the Islamic Arab civilization, as well as being a commercial centre for the Middle East.

In seeing the speed and quality of the country's reconstruction after the devastating events which lasted more than seventeen years, we all are confident that stability has been restored and that Lebanon is regaining its dynamic role in the area. The fact that this important regional Conference is taking place here is one proof to this effect.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The second Arab States Regional Telecommunication Development Conference is taking place at a turning point of our Union's history, coming shortly after the first World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF), which took place from 21-23 October 1996 in Geneva, and the first Meeting of the Working Group called "ITU 2000" on 24-25 October, two important gatherings, established by the 1994 Kyoto Plenipotentiary Conference and the 1996 Council meeting respectively, the first one for preparing appropriate answers to the emerging policy issues arising from the changing telecommunication environment, the second one for examining a wide range of issues regarding the future shape of ITU structure and functioning.

For the first time, Member States and Sector Members - public and private sector - were seated side by side in straight alphabetical order. This has proved the Union's ability to adapt with pragmatism and realism to the changes inherent to the evolution of the world political, economic and social environment. If one could judge these two gatherings from the constructive spirit which characterized the discussions and the relative ease by which consensus was reached on expressions of opinion, it would not be exaggerated to state that they gave a concrete demonstration that the interests of Member States as well as the Sector Members are not necessarily divergent but more likely complementary if not similar, as long as there is a common approach to the issues. A lot of synergy was found and used as a positive power.

ITU is tackling issues of the present and at the same time facing tomorrow's challenges. Several activities which led to important decisions or results illustrate the continuous effort of the Union and of its Members towards the development of the world telecommunication sector. In addition to the first WTPF and "ITU 2000" working group, I would like to refer here, in particular, to the 96 Council meeting which focused on several important and fundamental issues for the role and future of our Union against the background of a changing telecommunication environment.

The Council deliberations this year covered a broad range of topics. I would like to highlight seven of them:

- the establishment of necessary conditions for the development of the new "information society";
- the improvement of mechanisms of assistance to the developing world;
- an examination of the current activities of the ITU with a view to strengthening the financial base of the organization;
- the development of proposals to strengthen the relationship between the public and private sectors of the industry and the government membership to the ITU;
- the establishment of a fair balance between the rights and obligations of Member States and Sector Members (public and private sectors of the industry, non-governmental entities and intergovernmental organizations);
- the improvement of the structure and working methods of the Union;
- the future of the ITU as an intergovernmental organization.

Amongst the 96 Council Resolutions which are, in my opinion, of particular interest to our present Conference, are those related to the strategic plan for the year 2000, the work of ITU 2000, telephone accounting rates and call-back issues.

I will not go into the strategic plan for the year 2000, except to appeal to you: please make sure that you and your organizations are active in contributing to the work of the strategic plan and please be active in the work of the ITU 2000 working group, to which all Members are welcome to contribute. But I would like to say a few words about accounting rates and call-back.

Given the concerns expressed by some developing countries over 50/50 cost sharing in the apportionment of telecommunication revenues, ITU-T Study Group 3 has been very active and looking at the issue of telephone accounting rate reform, to ensure that the cost of providing a service is taken into account. This is a very complicated and difficult issue and contributions from this Conference will be very much appreciated.

Call-back, as one part of the accounting rate problem, is an even more acute one. In recent years, some telecommunication operators have taken advantage of differences in international tariffs between countries to offer so-called "call-back" services. This practice has led to problems when one of the two countries involved does not authorize such alternative calling procedures. The problems may be of a technical nature (degradation of the quality and performance of the network by methods such as constant calling and answer suppression), or of a legal nature (the national laws of a country do not authorize such practices), or of an economic nature (loss of revenue for the national operator where call-back is offered). According to estimates this represents roughly US\$ 500 million today and is expected to grow to US\$ 1.2 billion by 1998. So no wonder people are worried and concerned. The ITU Council approved a resolution which calls for suspension of practices of those call-back applications which seriously degrade the quality and performance of the network. The resolution also invites the ITU-T to develop appropriate Recommendations that will guide Members in dealing with call-back services. The call-back question was also extensively discussed at the recent World Telecommunication Standardization Conference, just a month ago, which adopted a resolution similar to the one adopted by Council. The discussion continues and I hope that we see some light at the end of the tunnel. Some solutions have to be found.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 94 Kyoto Conference, in establishing the ITU World Telecommunication Policy Forum, aimed at providing a forum where ITU Member States and Sector Members can discuss and exchange views and information on emerging telecommunication policy and regulatory matters arising from the changing telecommunications environment.

The first such forum, grouping some 900 delegates representing 129 countries, took place in Geneva and discussed in particular the development and implementation of "Global Mobile Personal Communications by Satellite" (GMPCS).

From all points of view this first Forum was regarded as a success beyond any expectation by both the Members States and Sector Members. It has consecrated the convergence of interests of the government and private sectors and has embodied the conviction that with their joint efforts, the development of world telecommunication will not only be easier but will be more responsive to mankind's needs.

Based on the general discussions of my report which incorporated and synthesized contributions from ITU membership on policy and regulatory issues raised by the introduction of the new satellite systems, five opinions were adopted.

- **Opinion 1** deals with "the role of GMPCS in the globalization of telecommunication";
- **Opinion 2** deals with "the shared vision and principles for GMPCS";
- **Opinion 3** deals with "the essential studies by the ITU to facilitate an early introduction of GMPCS";
- **Opinion 4** deals with "the establishment of a memorandum of understanding to facilitate the free circulation of GMPCS user terminals";
- **Opinion 5** deals with the "implementation of GMPCS in developing countries".

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the limited time allocated to an opening statement, one cannot cover, even briefly, all the numerous activities of the ITU which might be seen as relevant to our Conference today and in the days to come. I believe however that it is most appropriate for me to stress here how much the year 1996 has been rich in events of importance and far-reaching impact on the ITU and the telecommunication sector as a whole. I just mention that the African Regional Telecommunication Development Conference which took place in Abidjan last May, the Preparatory Meeting for the present Conference held in Damascus in early June, the Abidjan and Amman Finance Colloquia held respectively in March and September, the Study Group 1 and 2 meetings in Geneva during the month of September and finally the Telecommunication Development Advisory Board in Geneva in October, are among the major events of this year and their outcomes are certainly of direct relevance to our work during the coming days.

Since all these activities have been organized and carried out successfully by the BDT, I am sure that Mr. Laouyane is better placed to brief you on them. He is certainly more competent to do so. My "propos" here is only to mention them.

Nevertheless, before I ask the floor to be passed on to Mr. Laouyane, let me simply end by quoting the concluding remarks I made only three weeks ago, during the GMPCS information session luncheon.

"It is sometimes suggested that global systems require a global regulator, and that the ITU should become a "global FCC".

I personally do not hold this view. As I hope the Policy Forum will demonstrate - and the present Conference as well - as long as nations can continue to agree on common approaches to global problems, we can continue with things more or less as they are with a lot of dynamism but without new bureaucracy. The real problem, in my mind, is more the reverse - to devolve greater degrees of responsibility to the regional and local level, within the framework of global agreements and understandings".

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For five days, the ball is now in your court

I wish you all every success in your work.

Address by the director of the BDT

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A whole series of activities and events took place in 1996 which have had, and will doubtless have, a direct or indirect impact on telecommunication development in the Arab world:

- the African Telecommunication Development Conference held in Abidjan in May 1996, in which many Arab countries participated, was a great success;
- the Preparatory Meeting for the present Conference, held in Damascus in June 1996, drew up our agenda, thereby identifying the main lines of action for coordinated development of the telecommunication sector in the Arab world;
- the ITU Council session, which the Secretary-General has just reported on;
- the Arab States Finance Colloquium, organized in Amman in September 1996 in close collaboration with the World Bank, which, as we shall see in detail during the present Conference, formulated a set of draft recommendations on subjects of importance to all of you, such as:
 - tariff issues;
 - the impact of the GATS agreements on telecommunication services;
 - private-sector participation;
 - mobilization of financial resources and means of financing Arab regional telecommunication development projects, etc.;
- the meeting, in Geneva in September 1996, of the Study Groups of the Telecommunication Development Sector, which were set up by the World Telecommunication Development Conference in Buenos Aires in 1994, to deal with telecommunication development policies, strategies and financing (Study Group 1) and the operational, technical and management aspects of telecommunications (Study Group 2);
- the sixth meeting of the Telecommunication Development Advisory Board, held on 7 and 8 October last in Geneva, which addressed and analysed matters of importance for the Union and for all of us, relating to both the agenda of this Conference and that of the second World Telecommunication Development Conference to be held in 1998 in Valetta (Malta);

These few activities I have mentioned, together with the many other no less important ones organized at the regional and subregional level under the auspices, in particular, of the League of Arab States, and with the individual activities and initiatives undertaken by most of the Arab countries, have helped to bring about a radical transformation of the Arab telecommunication sector and give it the necessary foundation and impetus to confront the challenges and demands of the next century with greater chances of success.

Technological development and new trends are of course a driving force; in addition to this, however, all the Arab countries without exception are also becoming increasingly aware of the importance of telecommunications for the development of the Arab economies and for their integration in a coherent and effective regional unit, something which has to be achieved if they are to take their rightful place at the global level while respecting and safeguarding their individual and collective interests. The proliferation and introduction of new technologies and services, and the imposition of new world rules governing the organization of market structures and trade in services have produced a new situation to which the Arab countries, like all others worldwide, must adapt; and the sooner they do so the better. There is a real danger of seeing our telecommunications

"stifled", or even economically "recolonized" in a more insidious manner, if we do not take adequate and timely measures to turn the inevitable effects of the current liberalization and globalization of the economy as a whole, and telecommunications in particular, to our advantage.

Happily, given the progress made in this respect by all the Arab countries, they will be able to view the future of Arab telecommunications with optimism and confidence; especially since this progress has been made in a relatively short space of time.

Only yesterday, most Arab countries were barely emerging from the colonial period, from which they had inherited networks which were rudimentary or, in some cases, barely functioning. Rural telecommunications were virtually inexistent. Furthermore, the networks were not integrated at the regional level, with the result that it was difficult or even impossible to make direct calls between Arab capitals, without transiting through the capital of the former colonial power. Television, too, was embryonic and its coverage often confined to urban areas around the capital. The exchange of television programmes between Arab countries was no more than a pipe-dream. In this connection, I should like to report that a very important seminar was held recently in Tunis on the impact of digital technologies on the development of television in the Arab world.

Thanks to the efforts deployed in the sixties and seventies within the former Arab Telecommunication Union, the Arab countries quickly set up telecommunication networks with dense national coverage and good regional integration. For telephony and television, this integration received a tremendous boost from the establishment and operation in the eighties of a regional Arab satellite telecommunication network (ARABSAT). Today, barely three decades later, it may be said that the physionomy of the Arab telecommunication sector has altered radically. National networks, often using the latest technologies, are in place and are operating relatively efficiently. The interregional direct automatic telephone service has been successfully introduced. The Arabsat satellite network has served to break down the natural barriers between Arab countries, accelerating not only the integration of telephone networks but also the introduction of regional exchanges of live television programmes, not to mention the extension of Arab national television coverage to the most remote or isolated rural areas. I would also mention the establishment of a number of submarine cable systems, such as SEA-ME-WE.

This foundation of infrastructure and services has been built upon and accompanied by measures necessary for sound management and effective export and development of an asset which is rightfully seen as being of strategic and fundamental importance for the development and overall growth of the countries of the region and of the region itself. For instance, today all Arab countries have specialized training schools for telecommunication engineers, technicians, operators and managers. Several countries also have applied research centres, while many have already laid the foundations for a national telecommunication equipment manufacturing industry.

This recent progress and development is obviously your work, and you may all be proud of it. Above all, it is the burgeoning fruit of the efforts and sacrifices which each of your countries have made. The BDT, whose role is to promote and assist telecommunication development worldwide, can but welcome the Arab region's achievements in this field. Allow me, however, to say that for us the satisfaction is also accompanied by a sense of pride - which I feel personally on behalf of all the staff of the Development Sector for which I am responsible - because, without doubt, the BDT, like its predecessor the Technical Cooperation Department and the Centre for Telecommunication Development before it, can take credit for its - albeit modest - contribution. If I do not shy away from highlighting ITU/BDT's contribution, this is also because, as you know, it is entirely disinterested, our sole aim being to help the Arab countries organize, develop and manage their telecommunications more effectively. Since the 1960s, ITU has conducted a plethora of technical

assistance activities for the benefit of all countries of the Arab region and endeavoured to upgrade technical staff and managers in the Arab world: Sectoral studies have been carried out for the telecommunication networks of all Arab countries without exception; many national and/or regional development projects have been designed and put in place; workshops and training seminars have been organized on technology, technical aspects, services and new management methods; fellowships have been granted and equipment donated for the region's least developed countries; and so on. It may be worth pointing out in this connection that BDT's assistance to Palestine has been stepped up since October 1994, pursuant to the specific guidelines laid down by Resolution 32 of the Kyoto Plenipotentiary Conference.

It is BDT's intention to pursue and strengthen its assistance both in the immediate future and in the long term, since, despite the progress made and the tangible improvement in the status of the Arab telecommunication sector, much still remains to be done to bring the region's telecommunications if not up to world level then at least to a level commensurate with the Arab countries' needs and development plans.

Seen in this light, the agenda you are being asked to approve for this second Regional Conference for the Arab States is more than a simple list of topics for discussion. It is a genuine programme for cooperation and concerted action, identifying priority areas in which the Arab countries are invited to mobilize their resources and collaborate, and on which they should focus their joint efforts in the years to come. The target for the year 2000 should be to perfect the Arab telecommunication networks and services and raise them to the level required to meet the region's development needs and the new demands of the world telecommunication environment.

In fact, this programme flows naturally from the guidelines and recommendations you formulated at the first Regional Conference for the Arab States held in Cairo. It takes account of what has been achieved and the progress which has been made since then, as well as the results of the first World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 1994). It fits in with the general movement of reform and change imposed by the emergence and introduction of new telecommunication and information technologies. The aim is to lay the foundations for a realistic and gradual reform - and here I am thinking in particular of the Arab Book - of all aspects of the Arab telecommunication sector: development policies and strategies, structure, organization, management and commercial aspects.

To put it another way, this Conference has to conceive of the best ways and best means of ensuring realistic and flexible adjustment of the Arab telecommunication sector to the needs of the current decade and prepare it to take up the challenges which lie ahead in the next century.

I therefore wish you every success in your work, although I feel sure in advance that your debates and discussions will yield the necessary resolutions and recommendations to nurture the reform and adjustment now under way in the Arab telecommunication sector, in order to meet the requirements of the modern world and accelerate development of the sector so as to bring it progressively but speedily up to world standard.

Before concluding, I should like, on your behalf and on behalf of ITU, to extend once again our most sincere thanks to the Lebanese Post and Telecommunication Administration for its hospitality and for the practical facilities it has made available: against the background of a town like Beirut and with the legendary warm welcome of the Lebanese people, there can be no doubt that our Conference has every chance of being a success.

Thank you for your attention.

Address by H.E. the Prime Minister of Lebanon

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are assembled here today in Lebanon to address a very important subject for the technology of our century and for building the future, namely telecommunications; Lebanon, like all the Arab world, is very alert to the recent progress and advances in all its fields.

Our intention here is to work on policies and strategies that will, bit by bit, put us on the developed world map, give us the capabilities and dynamic force to influence the decision-making process, and meet the aspirations of our young generations to live on an equal footing with other human beings in a world which is converging and shrinking with the help of the telecommunication revolution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Lebanon, we now have a sound base to take up the challenges of the technological revolution, which includes the telecommunication revolution. Our economy is an open, free economy, and our private sector has traditional experience in dealing with the world, a knowledge of international relations, and a mastery of the scientific and legal aspects.

We have recently started to introduce measures and modernize, so as to be ready to open up to international market economies, as required by their different systems.

In the last few years, we have made huge strides in the field of reconstruction and development, especially in telecommunications, since we are on the verge of achieving the goal of the one million telephone lines project, which we plan to work on and expand in the next few years, in order to provide one and a half million lines. The first project was executed by international companies whose representatives are attending your Conference today, while local companies are and will be working on the expansion and modernization project. These telephone projects not only contribute to communications with the rest of the world, but also constitute a national development operation which reflects the principle of balanced development that the State of Lebanon guarantees for its different sectors and regions.

These communication media are not only for public services, but have also become a market commodity. In other words, telecommunications is now a tremendously huge economic sector where the rules of the market and the possibility of competition apply. Today, there are two major markets in the world: the market of the developed countries, and that of the developing countries, to which Lebanon and the Arab States belong. The first market is highly saturated, to the tune of about 80-90%, while in the Arab States penetration does not exceed 5%. This means that our countries and other similar countries are the ones that are striving to purchase and deal in this commodity. Experts estimate that investments in this field in the next few years will hit the 30 billion dollar mark.

If I have started by recalling this basic and well-known information, it is in order to reflect on methods and ways of satisfying these needs, and specify the interests and resources needed to meet them. I should like to emphasize that we cannot close our eyes or turn our back, irrespective of the political decisions that are taken; there is no replacement for a strong and capable State that protects the national interests, guarantees transparency and determines the measures, capabilities and opportunities of cooperation and coordination.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Conference is being attended by four different groups: Arab national telecommunication directorates, the International Telecommunication Union which is responsible for supervision of the sector in the world, international corporations working in the field of telecommunications, and international and regional financial institutions engaged in the financing and operation of the sector. It is therefore an extremely important meeting for studying the present situation of telecommunications in the Arab States, specifying requirements and needs, making forecasts in respect of the economies of the sector, and discussing its evolution at the level of services, technology and competition.

The Arab administrations participating in this second Conference are invited to formulate resolutions and recommendations on two major issues: development of cooperation among the Arab States in the telecommunication sector for modernization and to protect their interests; and identifying ways and priorities for cooperating with international institutions, in expectation of market trends and in preparation for opening up to these markets under specific conditions. In order for our countries to communicate and coordinate among themselves in the next few years in the economic, financial and legal domains, they have to collaborate from a position of mutual trust, and achieve the targets set and protect their interests.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We stand today in Lebanon at a new dawn, following the parliamentary elections and the formation of the government. It is a new point of departure for economic and social development, and for continuation of the process of building the State.

Serious and fruitful work has been accomplished in recent years in different areas, in particular for reconstruction of the economic, financial and social sectors. I still believe that the real challenge as far as social affairs are concerned lies in continuation of the construction, reconstruction and development effort. That operation creates new job opportunities, increases production, contributes positively to improving personal income, and helps to redress the balance of payments. Social and political problems and issues remain in the fields of education, health and public housing which require sustained action and practical solutions.

With our financial, economic and political stability, we will continue in our reconstruction projects, in the modernization of market methods, media and tools; in so doing, we believe that we will support opportunities in the business and production sectors and in the construction field, and create business opportunities and an ability to compete.

I wish your Conference every success, and thank you for choosing Beirut as the venue for meeting and discussing the issues in this active sector.

Long Life to You All, and Long Live Lebanon!

Closing address by the Deputy Secretary-General

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Second Arab States Regional Telecommunication Development Conference has now come to an end and I have the singular privilege of addressing the closing remarks on behalf of the ITU.

I would like to congratulate all of you for accomplishing another ITU success by bringing nearly 200 people from various nations to discuss common problems and to come to concrete plans for action as embodied in the resolutions and recommendations that you have adopted at this Conference.

You have gone even further. You have adopted a resolution that sets forth mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the resolutions that you have adopted.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is clear that you mean business. And the business is to move forward. And I can say that in your journey forward, the International Telecommunication Union is with you all the way.

Dr. Abdul Youssef, our Chairman, I want to pay a special tribute to you for your efforts and your skill that have enabled all of us to keep on track and on time. In doing so, you have managed to violate a minor ITU tradition: namely, late night and weekend work.

For this violation, we will forgive you and we will indulge in the hope that as men and women of your energy and accomplishments come to the fore in our membership, our Union has nothing to fear from the 21st Century.

Mr. Chairman, at this Conference we have devoted quite a bit of time within the sessions and outside on an issue that was not even contemplated at the first Arab States Telecommunication Development Conference in Cairo.

That is the issue of GMPCS. Because we have just recently concluded the first ITU World Telecommunication Policy Forum on this subject, and because we have a number of competing system operators who are approaching all our members for business, there is not only interest but perhaps a little anxiety as well.

You will, therefore, permit me to say a few words about this topic. In my view the issue can be thought of as a three-legged stool or a tripod. All three legs being equally important. And the three legs are:

One, **technology** which we in the developing countries, by and large do not own.

The second leg is **capital** which you will note in one of the "voluntary principles" in opinions adopted by the Policy Forum: it says that ownership of the systems should not be constrained to a given nation. And indeed I believe that Arab entrepreneurs are partners in some of these systems.

The third leg is the **market**. Ladies and Gentlemen, the markets are yours, you make them available at your volition and in the format you wish to do so.

In other words, we have the ingredients of a partnership on a global basis in which you have something to contribute, a card with which to bargain. You are not helpless.

Mr. Chairman, as we consider all these activities, all these exhortations to ourselves to cooperate with each other within the region and to support those of our brethren who need a helping hand to enable them to take their rightful place among the nations, we need to keep our eyes on the ball.

Our purpose is to provide to the people of the Arab nations a modern telecommunication network that is flexible, that is adaptable to the needs of commerce, to the needs of efficient government and yes to the needs of a modern society that seeks cultural enrichment, that seeks participation in national life and the delivery of services such as healthcare and education.

Mr. Chairman, you and some of us had the privilege to witness an astounding telemedicine demonstration at the Hôpital Alsahel where Dr. Elouzeir along with colleagues located a long way away in Toulouse, France, were engaged in a cardiac operation linked with a satellite channel.

This is an indication of what technology can do today and a pointer to what it can do for our societies in the future.

It happens also that telecommunication is also a major business in its own right.

That is why a crucial ingredient of the networks that we develop is the training of men and women who manage and operate them.

These should be people who understand not just the technology but even more importantly, the need to respond to the customer. For only the customer will judge the efficacy of our work.

So we need to continue to focus on the commercial aspects of our work and to grasp the fact that the service we provide to our customers and the amount we charge them for it are no longer purely national matters: they have regional and global implications. We are no longer an island.

I am therefore very pleased that you are rightly placing emphasis on the work going on in the WTO and the associated GBT negotiations. In this context, I should congratulate you for the adoption of the Arab Book which will now take its place along with the Green Book for Africa and the Blue Book for the Americas as a major event in your progress as a region towards the new approach to the management of policies relating to the telecommunications sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no such thing as "the future". Instead, there are many futures. As a people, as professionals, as managers we choose which future we want to achieve. Having chosen the future, we choose the path towards it. And that guides the way we, as the citizens of developing countries, will direct our thoughts and our talents, will spend our time and will spend our money.

May I put it to you that a good deal of this is in your hands, in our hands. Let us accept the responsibility.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, permit me to say to you and to your colleagues in the Lebanese Administration and to your government a big "thank you".

You have gone considerably out of your way to make us feel welcome and at home. You have made all the facilities available to us to do our work efficiently: from documentation to computers and telecommunications. All this, not without considerable sacrifice.

And the weather here is gorgeous! No wonder the Lebanese people have such marvellous temperaments.

You have also allowed us to partake of your culture and your food! What marvellous food! What marvellous fruits!

We could not have chosen a better venue. Beirut has been inscribed in our minds and in our hearts. I believe I speak for all of us when I say simply: "Shukran".

Let me end by wishing you all a safe trip back to your countries and your homes. And thank you for sharing these five days with us.

ANNEX 3

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- D: Délégué - *Delegate*

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ANNEX 4

List of documents

Document	Submitted	Title
1	SG	Agenda of the Conference
2	BDT	Implementation of the resolutions of AR-RDC-92, WTDC-94 and the Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-94)
3	BDT	International and regional cooperation
4	BDT	Mechanism for monitoring, evaluation and progress review of the implementation of conference resolutions
5	Syrian Arab Republic	Extension and development of telecommunications in Syria 1992-1996
6	BDT	Regional projects for the Arab States
7	BDT	Assistance to Somalia
8	BDT	Assistance to other Arab least developed countries
9	BDT/ ITU-D SG 2	Telecommunication support for the protection of the environment
10	BDT	Telecommunication policies for the Arab Region - The Arab Book
11	Syrian Arab Republic	Activation of the Arab regional telecommunication projects
12	Canada	The infrastructure of synergy in the work of the development sector
13	Canada	Access: Applying rural communications to the needs of development
14	SG	Implementation of Kyoto Resolution 32 (1994) - Technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority for the development of telecommunications
15	INTELSAT	Project access - INTELSAT support for development
16	INTELSAT	INTELSAT DAMA - A solution to rural integration in the global economy
17	INTELSAT	Telemedicine - INTELSAT's contribution to social services delivery
18	Syrian Arab Republic	General agreement on trade in services - Telecommunications implications

19	Syrian Arab Republic	Alternative calling procedures and apportionment of revenues and international accounting rate shares
20	BDT	An overview of ITU activities in support of distance education in developing countries
21	BDT	An overview of ITU activities support of public service broadcasting in developing countries
22	BDT	Information infrastructure for the Arab States and their participation in GII
23	ITU-D SG 2	Telemedicine and developing countries
24	Saudi Arabia	Flat network concept
25	Saudi Arabia	Introduction to Saudi telecom's intelligent network (IN) architecture, service features and services
26	BDT	Information society and development themes and projects (ISAD)
27	BDT	Finance, economics and tariffs survey for the Arab States
28	BDT	Arab States telecommunications finance colloquium - Overview/Recommendations
29	BDT	Telecommunications finance handbook
30	Canada/ ITU-D SG 2	Understanding rural telecommunication infrastructure
31	BDT	Networks, services management and development
32	BDT	ITU-D Study Groups 1 and 2 status reports
33	BDT	TDAB contribution to the AR-RTDC-96
34	BDT	Arab States Telecommunication Indicators 1996
35	BDT	Report of the Preparatory Meeting of the AR-RTDC-96 Damascus, (Syria), 3-5 June 1996
36	BR	ITU-R activities of relevance to developing countries with emphasis on WRC-97
37	Saudi Arabia	Current challenges facing Saudi Arabian MOPTT in operating a new SDH network
38	ITU-D SG 1/ Rapp. Q.2/1	Driving forces for telecommunication reform and economic development
39	BDT	Re-activation of the Arab Regional Telecommunication Development projects - MODARABTEL Phase II
40	State of Kuwait	Call-back service
41	State of Kuwait	GATS

42	Syrian Arab Republic	Training in Telecommunications
43	ITU-D SG 1/ Rapp. Q.5/1	Telebras inductive card payphone system
44	ITU-D SG 2/ Rapp. Q.6/2	Collaborative action to improve health care in developing countries
45	BDT	Telecommunications and the GATS
46	Inmarsat	Bridging the policy and regulatory gap
47*	United States	Policy and development strategies
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49	Palestinian National Authority	Contribution to the AR-RTDC-96
50	Switzerland	The situation of the Swiss telecommunications regulatory authority in 1996
51	ASBU	Symposium on the impact of new technologies on television in the Arab region
52	Egypt	Strategic plan for the telecommunications sector
53	TEMIC	Executive management training
54	Tunisia	Telecommunication development in Tunisia
55	Tunisia	Negotiations on basic telecommunications in the context of the World Trade Organization
56*	United Kingdom	Digital sound broadcasting and the public service radio broadcaster in the Arab world
57*	Malta	The Regional Telecommunications Training Centre of Malta
58	-	Not attributed.
59*	WorldTel	The WorldTel strategy of cooperation with host countries
60	France	New ground rules for telecommunications in France
61	Djibouti	Operation and maintenance of the telecommunication network in Djibouti
62	SG	Secretariat of the Conference
63	France Telecom	Globalstar: a new tool to develop telecommunication networks

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- English only.
 - English only.

64*	Japan	Executive summary on PHS services
65*	Palestinian National Authority	I Telecommunications training centre (TTC) II Radio links and equipments requirements III Fibre optic cables and tools IV Telephone network management system (TNMS) V Digital exchanges
66	SG	Structure of the Regional Telecommunication Development Conference for The Arab States (AR-RTDC-96)
67	SG	Minutes of the opening Plenary Meeting
68(Rev.1)	SG	Chairmanship of the Conference
69	UAE	Thuraya regional mobile-satellite system
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71	SG	Minutes of the first and second Plenary Meetings
72	SG	Minutes of the third Plenary Meeting
73	Kuwait	Politics of relations with the WTO and GATS in relation with the issue of telecommunications
74**	SG	Accord général sur les commerces des services
75	Morocco	Contribution to the AR-RTDC-96
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78(Rev.1)	Committee 1	Final report of Committee 1
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82	Committee 1	Message from AR-RTDC-96
83	SG	Minutes of the fifth Plenary Meeting
84	SG	Minutes of the sixth Plenary Meeting
85	SG	Minutes of the Closing Meeting

** French only.



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