



## **Valetta Declaration (1998)**

This PDF contains an extract from the publication *World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-98): final report*. (Geneva: ITU, 1998)

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## VALLETTA DECLARATION

Taking note of the above and with a view to setting goals and objectives for the future, the Conference **declares** that:

- a) Significant achievements have been accomplished since the first World Telecommunication Development Conference in 1994. The implementation of the Buenos Aires Action Plan (Chapters II and III) has been largely satisfactory thanks to the collaborative efforts of all the parties involved. It is noteworthy that the key to this success was the considerable effort made by the countries themselves and the catalytic inputs of their development partners, including public, private and intergovernmental organizations. The ITU-D study groups also made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge which has been placed at the disposal of the telecommunication community.

The successes of the past are a great encouragement to all stakeholders in the sector to sustain these efforts in the upcoming period from 1999 to 2003. These initiatives will be a key factor for the success of the Valletta Action Plan.

- b) The BDT should promote the enhanced participation of the private sector in the activities of the ITU-D and it should facilitate the creation of partnerships between governments and private enterprises and between the private enterprises in developed countries and those in developing countries.
- c) Telecommunications, including sound and television broadcasting techniques, is an essential component of political, economic, social and cultural development. It fuels the global society and economy and is rapidly transforming our lives and promoting better understanding among peoples. It also plays an important role in protecting the environment and in the mitigation of natural and other disasters. All stakeholders are urged to make their contribution to extend these benefits to all peoples.
- d) New technologies have a significant impact on the expansion of telecommunications and have the potential to close the gap not only between developing and developed countries but also between urban and rural areas within a country.

Convergence between telecommunications, computing and broadcasting, and multimedia applications, is opening up new perspectives for the sector, providing opportunities for tele-education, telemedicine, environmental protection and many other applications which are highly beneficial for social and economic development.

The emergence of innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to providing a rural service, and more cost-effective technologies, may provide the opportunity for telecommunication services in rural and remote areas to be profitable.

The global information infrastructure (GII), of which the Internet is a precursor, and the global information society (GIS) are evolving and should be responsive to the interests of all nations, especially developing countries.

The opportunities offered by modern technologies should be fully exploited through research, development and innovative technological applications for the ongoing betterment of our lives.

- e) The environment of the telecommunication sector is undergoing significant changes. The combined forces of "demand pull" and "supply push" have made telecommunications one of the leading growth sectors of the world economy. The telecommunication sector has a high profit potential in every country of the world. However, experience suggests that in developing countries retained earnings in the sector are not sufficient to finance all new projects because networks are underdeveloped and do not generate enough cash flow.
- f) Sector reforms leading to greater private sector involvement and competition are new forces shaping the development of telecommunications. These new challenges of the information society and the new trade environment heightened by the agreements reached by WTO, place even greater pressure on policy-makers, regulators and operators to acquire the necessary skills to manage the new environment.

In this respect, human resources development becomes a key success factor.

- g) Governments play a key role in the development of telecommunications, and are urged to establish appropriate policies and regulatory structures to promote reasonable and affordable access to basic telecommunication services for all.

The regulatory framework should also create a stable and transparent environment, promote fair competition while protecting network integrity and guarantee the rights of users, operators and investors. Policies and strategies for the development of telecommunications should reflect the trend towards multi-services utilizing a common infrastructure platform.

- h) Global, regional and national financing and investment agencies are urged to attach high priority to the growth of telecommunications, particularly in developing countries.

- i) ITU has a special role to play in advising policy-makers on the options available in tailoring policies and regulatory structures to fit a country's unique requirements. ITU should work in collaboration with regional telecommunication organizations and international, regional and national development and financing agencies, as well as with the private sector, to bring about appropriate sector reform.

ITU's regional presence and synergy and collaboration between the Standardization, Radiocommunication and Development Sectors of ITU will be highly beneficial in instilling dynamism and vitality in the process of transferring knowledge and technology.

ITU should be urged to promote the development, expansion and operation of telecommunication networks and services, particularly in developing countries, taking into account the activities of other relevant bodies, by reinforcing capabilities for the implementation of new services and technologies including the Internet, mobile and other wireless technologies, human resources development and management, planning, management, resource mobilization and research and development.

- j) ITU-D is urged to provide expert knowledge, information and advice to developing countries to enable them to make significant advances in the telecommunication sector.

Further, ITU-D is committed to encouraging gender issues in its programmes as well as ways to reflect the needs of other aspects of global society such as youth and the needs of indigenous peoples.

WTDC-98 drew the attention of all ITU Member States and Sector Members to a number of pressing issues. These included the importance of emergency telecommunications and the need for an international convention on this subject and the need to address, as a matter of urgency, the "Year 2000" problem. It also pointed to a number of mechanisms for the Development Sector to advance the goals of telecommunication development including Opinion B of the World Telecommunication Policy Forum (Geneva, 1998) and the opportunities provided by the centres of excellence funded by the surplus funds from the ITU TELECOM exhibitions.

WTDC-98 reaffirmed the ITU-D commitment to focus its activities on the major facets of telecommunication development, including among other things sector and regulatory reform, accounting rate reform, management of technologies, finance and investment and human resources, giving special attention to the least developed countries (LDCs). ITU is urged to encourage and support universal service, global access and fair pricing.