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## Minneapolis Conference spells out new directions for ITU

**T**he last Plenipotentiary Conference of the 20th century ended in Minneapolis on 6 November 1998 with the signing, by 157 countries, of the Final Acts containing major decisions and resolutions for revamping the Union.

The four-week Conference (12 October–6 November 1998) which took place at the gigantic Minneapolis Convention Center, at the invitation of the Government of the United States, was attended by 1606 participants (1308 delegates from 168 of the 188 Member States of the Union and 298 representatives of 98 organizations from 26 countries).

Ambassador Thomas L. Siebert (United States), Chairman of the Conference, deftly kept the debates on track from the beginning to the end. This report looks at some of the conclusions excerpted from the decisions and resolutions passed by the Conference. Other equally important conclusions will be published in the next issue of *ITU News*.

### **Inclusion of gender perspective in the work of ITU (Resolution PLEN/I)**

Member States and Sector Members are encouraged to review and revise their policies and prac-

tices to ensure that recruitment, employment, training and advancement of both women and men are undertaken on a fair and equitable basis. In particular, they are urged to facilitate, at senior levels of responsibility, the employment of men and women in telecommunication administrations, government and regulatory bodies, intergovernmental organizations and in the private sector.

The Union will henceforth incorporate the gender perspective in its strategic, operational, and financial plans. Council has been instructed to include funding for gender perspective initiatives in each budget it draws up, depending on the resources available.

The Conference also endorsed Resolution 7 of the WTDC-98 calling for the establishment of a task force on gender issues.

A progress report will be submitted to Council in the year 2000.

### **Telecommunications in the service of humanitarian assistance (Resolution COM5/3)**

The Conference noted the Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference on Emergency Telecommunications (Tampere, 1998) and has instructed the Secretary-General to work closely with the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator to develop practical arrangements for the implementation of the Tampere Convention. Member States are urged to move quickly to ratify, accept, approve or sign the Convention. They should also take all practical steps to apply the Convention and work closely with the operational coordinator.

### **Coping with the decreased use of the international telex service (Resolution COM5/4)**

According to ITU's World Telecommunication Development Report for 1998, the number of telex

BDT = Telecommunication Development Bureau  
BR = Radiocommunication Bureau  
WTDC-98 = World Telecommunication Development Conference (Valletta, 1998)  
WRC = World Radiocommunication Conference  
RRB = Radio Regulations Board  
TSB = Telecommunication Standardization Bureau  
UIT-D = Telecommunication Development Sector  
UIT-R = Radiocommunication Sector  
UIT-T = Telecommunication Standardization Sector



### Election results of Members of Council

The Conference elected 46 Members to Council which are shown below in **bold**:

<b>Region A Americas (8 seats)</b>		<b>Region B Western Europe (8 seats)</b>		<b>Region C Eastern Europe (5 seats)</b>		<b>Region D Africa (13 seats)</b>		<b>Region E Asia and Australasia (12 seats)</b>	
country	votes	country	votes	country	votes	country	votes	country	votes
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>Korea (Rep. of)</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Argentina</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>Kenya</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>Philippines</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>Senegal</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>Denmark</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>Romania</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>Mali</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Cuba</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>Egypt</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Venezuela</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>Belarus</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>Cameroon</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Saint Lucia</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>132</b>			<b>Gabon</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>99</b>
Colombia	80					<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>Viet Nam</b>	<b>99</b>
Chile	70					<b>Algeria</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>91</b>
Ecuador	56					<b>Burkina Faso</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>90</b>
Costa Rica	44					<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>Kuwait</b>	<b>83</b>
						<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>78</b>	Iran (Islamic	
						Uganda	75	Republic of)	76
						Zimbabwe	69	Lebanon	68
						Cape Verde	68	Fiji	65
						Benin	64	Syria	65
						Ghana	61	Jordan	56
						Niger	59	Sri Lanka	53
						Sudan	47		
						Ethiopia	46		
						Nigeria	33		

subscribers worldwide has decreased by some 15% (compound annual rate) over the period 1990–1996. Given that countries may have different schedules for suspending the use of the international telex service (once the only worldwide text service available), the Conference has instructed the Director of TSB to conduct a survey on the decreasing use of this service and to assess when it may be replaced by new means of telecommunication. In addition the Director would, in collaboration with BDT, study measures to assist developing countries in making a faster transition from the international telex service to more modern means of telecommunication.

A report will be submitted to Council for review and action.

## **World Telecommunication Policy Forum (Resolution COM5/6)**

The Conference has decided to maintain the World Telecommunication Policy Forum as established by Resolution 2 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994). The Forum will be convened on an ad hoc basis to respond quickly to emerging policy and regulatory issues arising from the changing telecommunication environment.

This body will neither produce prescriptive regulatory outcomes nor outputs with binding force. Rather, it will prepare reports and, where appropriate, opinions for consideration by Member States, Sector Members and relevant ITU meetings.

While the Forum will be open to all Member States and Sector Members, a special session may be held for Member States only, if a majority of the representatives of Member States so decide. Council will decide on the duration, date, venue, agenda and themes of the Forum.

## **World Radiocommunication Conference process (Resolution COM5/1)**

The Conference noted the agenda for WRC-2000 and stressed the need to streamline these World Radiocommunication Conferences.

To this end, their preparation and administration, including budgetary appropriations,

would be planned on the basis of two consecutive WRCs.

The Conference supported the idea of regions bringing harmonized, common proposals to WRCs, as was the case at WRC-97. It has encouraged both formal and informal collaboration in the interval between conferences with a view to resolving differences on new or established conference agenda issues.

The Director of BR has been instructed to study, with advice from the Radiocommunication Advisory Group (RAG), ways of improving the preparations for, and the structure and organization of WRCs.

## **Approval of Questions and Recommendations (Resolution COM5/12)**

The Conference considered the need to approve certain Questions and Recommendations using an alternative approval process. This means that some Questions and Recommendations of the Union's Study Groups may be approved by Member States and Sector Members, acting together on an equal footing, and in accordance with the procedures to be adopted by a given Sector. The Conference further accepted the principle that the alternative approval process would not be used for Questions and Recommendations with policy or regulatory implications, for example those:

- approved by ITU-R and relevant to the work of the radiocommunication conferences, and other categories of Questions and Recommendations that may be decided by the Radiocommunication Assembly;
- approved by ITU-T and which relate to tariff and accounting issues, and to numbering and addressing plans;
- approved by ITU-D and which relate to regulatory, policy and financial issues;
- whose scope is in doubt.

This resolution invites each Sector to develop its own procedures, if appropriate, for approving Questions and Recommendations using an alternative approval process.

These new measures should speed up the approval process for ITU Recommendations and give some powers to the private sector.

## **Stable procedures for the election of Member States to Council, elected officials, and members of the Radio Regulations Board (Resolution COM5/7)**

The practice to date has been that each Plenipotentiary Conference establishes its own election procedures. One of the basic principles in ITU is equitable geographical and gender distribution of posts for all levels of staff, elected and

appointed. The current practice allows for candidates for these positions to be announced at any time prior to the election, including during the Plenipotentiary Conference itself.

Some delegations expressed concern that the current situation caused uncertainty with regard to the procedures and candidatures, making it difficult to develop national positions in preparation for the elections. Besides, each Conference wastes a lot of time trying to agree the procedures. Other delegations argued that it was common practice in other United Nations agencies to have established election procedures and a deadline for the announcement of candidates.

## **Election results of members of RRB**

The Conference elected 12 members to the Radio Regulations Board. They are shown below in **bold**:

<b>Region A</b> <b>Americas</b> (2 seats)	<b>Region B</b> <b>Western Europe</b> (2 seats)	<b>Region C</b> <b>Eastern Europe</b> (2 seats)	<b>Region D</b> <b>Africa</b> (3 seats)	<b>Region E</b> <b>Asia and Australasia</b> (3 seats)
<b>Carlos Alejandro Merchán Escalante</b> (Mexico) <b>124 votes</b>	<b>Pierre Aboudarham</b> (France) <b>85 votes</b>	<b>Valery V. Timofeev</b> (Russia) <b>124 votes</b>	<b>Jean-Baptiste Kouakou Yao</b> (Côte d'Ivoire) <b>104 votes</b>	<b>Ravindra N. Agarwal</b> (India) <b>101 votes</b>
<b>James R. Carroll</b> (United States) <b>116 votes</b>	<b>Gabor Kovacs</b> (Hungary) <b>84 votes</b>	<b>Ryszard G. Struzak</b> (Poland) <b>119 votes</b>	<b>John Ray Kwabena Tandoh</b> (Ghana) <b>100 votes</b>	<b>Mian Muhammad Javed</b> (Pakistan) <b>92 votes</b>
Total number of ballot papers deposited: 132, two of which were blank. Maximum votes per candidate in this ballot: 130.	Henri A. Kieffer (Switzerland) 83 votes  Total number of ballot papers deposited: 132, two of which were blank. Maximum votes per candidate in this ballot: 130.	Total number of ballot papers deposited: 132, three of which were blank. Maximum votes per candidate in this ballot: 129.	<b>Ahmed Toumi</b> (Morocco) <b>80 votes</b>  Dubby Douglas Mutesha (Zambia) 71 votes  Total number of ballot papers deposited: 132, three of which were blank. Maximum votes per candidate in this ballot: 129.	<b>George Hugh Railton</b> (New Zealand) <b>78 votes</b>  Emamgholi Behdad (Iran (Islamic Republic of)) 62 votes  Toufic Chebaro (Lebanon) 48 votes  Total number of ballot papers deposited: 132. Maximum votes per candidate in this ballot: 132.

Council has been told to develop, in consultation with all Member States, draft stable procedures for all elective positions and submit them to the next Plenipotentiary Conference for examination and possible adoption as permanent procedures.

## **Strategic Plan for the Union for the period 1999–2003 (Resolution COM5/8)**

The Conference adopted the second Strategic Plan for the Union, covering the period 1999–2003. The plan which is contained in Annex 1 forms an integral part of this resolution.

The overriding goal of the Strategic Plan is to establish the Union as the international focal point for all matters relating to telecommunications in the global information economy and society of the 21st century.

This goal is pursued through the Union's mission in three domains:

- **a technical domain:** to promote the development, efficient operation, usefulness and general availability of telecommunication facilities and services;
- **a development domain:** to promote the development of telecommunications in developing countries and the extension of the benefits of telecommunications to people everywhere;
- **a policy domain:** to promote the adoption of a broader approach to telecommunication issues in the global information economy and society.

Annex 2 to this resolution complements the Strategic Plan with the goals, strategies and priorities for the General Secretariat and the Union's three Bureaux.

The Secretary-General is instructed, when reporting annually to Council, to present progress reports on the Strategic Plan and on the goals, strategies and priorities for the General Secretariat and the three Bureaux for 1999–2003.

Such reports would include recommendations to adjust the plan in the light of changes in the telecommunication environment, based on proposals by the competent advisory bodies of the Sectors, decisions by conferences and by assem-

blies of the Sectors and changes in the Union's activities and its financial situation.

Council will oversee the implementation of the Strategic Plan in Annexes 1 and 2 to this resolution. It will also assess the results of the Plan and submit them to the next Plenipotentiary Conference, along with a proposed Strategic Plan for the period 2003–2007.

Meanwhile, Member States are invited to contribute national insights on policy, regulatory and operational matters to the strategic planning process undertaken by the Union in the period before the next Plenipotentiary Conference. For their part, Sector Members are invited to communicate their views on the Strategic Plan through their relevant Sectors.

## **Assistance and support to Bosnia and Herzegovina for rebuilding its telecommunication network (Resolution COM5/9)**

This Resolution calls upon Member States to offer all possible assistance and support to Bosnia and Herzegovina, either bilaterally or through the special actions which have been initiated by the Union. The Secretary-General has been instructed to ensure that ITU's action with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina is as effective as possible.

## **Assistance and support to Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia for rebuilding their telecommunication networks (Resolution COM5/10)**

Telecommunication facilities in these countries have been severely damaged by war. Under the present conditions and in the foreseeable future, these countries will not be able to bring their telecommunication systems up to an acceptable level without help from the international community, provided bilaterally or through international organizations.

However, the conditions of order and security sought by United Nations resolutions have been only partially achieved and hence Resolution 34 (Kyoto, 1994) was only partially implemented.

The Conference decided that the special action which was initiated by the Secretary-Gen-

eral and the Director of BDT, along with the specialized assistance from ITU-R and ITU-T, should be continued in order to provide appropriate assistance and support to these countries, as and when the conditions of order and security sought by United Nations resolutions are met.

Member States are urged to offer all possible assistance and support to the Governments of Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia, either bilaterally or through the special actions undertaken by ITU.

## **Role of the Secretary-General of the ITU as depositary for Memoranda of Understanding (Resolution COM5/13)**

In recent times, the Secretary-General has received a number of requests to serve as depositary for Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) that relate to telecommunications. The Conference has endorsed this role, provided that such MoUs are also in the overall interest of the Union. To this end, the Conference has instructed Council to formulate criteria and guidelines for the Secretary-General to respond to such requests. These criteria and guidelines would be based on a set of principles:

- that any involvement of the Secretary-General in this capacity should contribute to and be within the purposes of the Union as set forth in Article 1 of the Constitution;
- that such involvement should be on the basis of cost recovery;
- that interested Member States and Sector Members would be kept informed of the activities of the Secretary-General in serving as depositary of the MoUs and would not be restricted from joining relevant MoUs;
- that the sovereignty and rights of ITU Member States would be fully respected and preserved.

## **Internet Protocol (IP)-based networks (Resolution COM5/14)**

This Resolution requires ITU to fully embrace the opportunities created for telecommunica-

tion development by the growth of IP-based services. In addition, ITU must clearly identify, for its Member States and Sector Members and for the general public, the range of Internet-related issues that fall within the responsibilities incumbent on it under its Constitution. The ITU is also required to collaborate with other relevant organizations to ensure that growth in IP networking delivers maximum benefits to the global community, and that it participates, as appropriate, in any directly related international initiative.

The Secretary-General will prepare a report to Council, as soon as possible, with input from Member States, Sector Members, the Union's three Sectors and the General Secretariat. The report would highlight the activities that ITU has already undertaken in IP-based networks and the roles and activities of other relevant international organizations, describing their involvement in IP-based network issues. This report would then be distributed widely among the Member States and Sector Members, the advisory bodies of the three Sectors and other groups concerned.

Council would consider the report and, if appropriate, recommend further steps.

Meanwhile, Member States and Sector Members are invited to participate in, and follow the progress of, the current work of the Sectors of the Union. Furthermore, they should increase awareness at national level among all interested non-governmental parties and encourage them to participate in relevant ITU activities.

## **Management of Internet domain names and addresses (Resolution COM5/15)**

The future management of the registration and allocation of Internet domain names and addresses must fully reflect the geographical and functional nature of the Internet, taking into account an equitable balance of interests of all stakeholders, in particular of businesses and consumers. According to this resolution:

- Internet domain names and addresses, and more generally the Internet and global information networks, must be widely acces-

- sible to all citizens without regard to gender, race, religion or country of residence;
- the methods of allocation of Internet domain names and addresses should not privilege any country or region of the world to the detriment of others;
- governments should promote a fair and competitive environment among companies or organizations responsible for Internet resource allocation.

The Secretary-General will take an active part in the international discussions and initiatives on the management of Internet domain names and addresses, which is currently being led by the private sector, with special attention to the activities conducted by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), bearing in mind the purposes of the Union. He will report annually to Council on the activities undertaken on this subject.

Council is to take appropriate measures in order to contribute actively to the international discussions and initiatives.

Member States are invited to participate in, and follow the progress of, this work. They are also urged to increase awareness at national level among all interested non-governmental parties and to encourage them to participate in the work of the entities managing Internet domain names and addresses.

### **Coordination and notification procedures for satellite networks (Resolution COM5/17)**

Coordination and notification procedures for satellite networks are the foundation for discharging the ITU's role and mandate in space matters. As such, they should be kept as current and simple as possible in order to reduce the cost for administrations and BR.

In this regard, the Conference noted the review undertaken by the Director of BR in response to Resolution 18 (Kyoto, 1994) to resolve the issue of "paper satellites" or satellite overfilings. You may recall that this review resulted in the adoption by WRC-97 of the administrative due diligence procedures. This is one of the changes adopted by WRC-97 to the Radio Regulations that will enter into force on 1 January 1999.

Given that by WRC-2000 more than one year of experience will have been acquired in using the new procedures, the Conference has requested WRC-2000 and subsequent WRCs to continually review and update the advance publication, coordination and notification procedures. The review would include associated technical characteristics, and the related Appendices of the Radio Regulations, so as to ensure that they reflect the latest technologies.

### **The use of telecommunications for the safety and security of humanitarian personnel in the field (Resolution COM5/18)**

The Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations recalls the essential role of telecommunication resources in facilitating the safety of humanitarian relief and assistance personnel.

The Conference has instructed the Secretary-General to study the possibilities of increasing the use of telecommunications for the safety and security of humanitarian personnel in the field and to report to the 1999 session of Council for appropriate action to improve that use.

Member States are urged to ensure that humanitarian personnel have unhindered and uninterrupted use of telecommunication resources required for their safety and security in accordance with the national rules and regulations of the States concerned.

### **Working methods of the Radio Regulations Board (Resolution COM6/1)**

The Conference noted that the rights of administrations are often affected by the decisions of RRB. Furthermore, the regulatory status of costly satellite networks may be affected or changed as a result of the decisions of RRB. In this connection, RRB has been instructed to develop appropriate changes to its working methods in order to increase further the transparency of its methods and decision-making process. Such changes in the working meth-



ods would be reported to the next WRC by the Director of BR.

### **Provisional application of the changes to the composition of RRB (Resolution PLEN/2)**

The Conference has changed the composition of RRB, increasing the number of its members from 9 to 12. The amendments to the Constitution and Convention reflecting this change would be applied provisionally with effect from 1 February 1999. The 12 newly elected members of RRB will take up their duties as of that date.

### **Cost recovery for some ITU products and services (Resolution PLEN/4)**

The Conference endorsed the use of cost recovery as a means of funding the products and services of the Union for which this new market approach is adopted. Cost recovery is seen as a way of strengthening the declining financial base of the Union. Council will consider a number of factors in deciding the products and services to be subjected to cost recovery, for example:

- when a product or service is provided for the benefit of a limited number of Member States or Sector Members;
- when a product or service is requested to a significantly greater extent by a small number of users;
- when products or services are requested on a discretionary basis.

Council will implement cost recovery in a way which:

- ensures that no more than the actual costs of providing products and services are recovered;
- allows for open and transparent accounting for costs and receipts;
- provides a means of adjusting the charge for the product or service based on actual expenditure;
- takes account of the special needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed ones, to ensure that cost recovery

is not an impediment to the development of telecommunication services or networks in those countries;

- allows all Member States an adequate level of the product or service free of charge, where appropriate.

Council would amend the Financial Regulations accordingly for cost recovery to be implemented and as a way of ensuring accountability and transparency.

### **Strengthening the regional presence (Resolution COM7/15)**

The total number of ITU regional and area offices has fallen steadily since 1992. Besides, these offices are inadequately staffed. The Conference has proposed a number of actions to strengthen the Union's regional presence to meet the diverse requirements of its Member States.

These actions call for:

- the regional presence to be strengthened and kept under review in the interests of meeting the evolving requirements and priorities of each region, the first objective being to maximize the benefits of the regional presence for the whole of the Union's membership;
- a broadening of the information dissemination functions of the regional presence to ensure that all of the activities and programmes of the Union are represented, while avoiding the duplication of such functions between headquarters and the regional offices;
- the regional offices to be empowered to make decisions within their mandate, while the coordination functions and the balance between ITU headquarters and the regional offices are facilitated and improved, in accordance with the Strategic Plan 1999–2003, in order to achieve a better balance of work between headquarters and the regional offices;
- improved cooperation between the ITU regional offices and the relevant regional and other international organizations dealing

with development and financial matters, in the interests of optimizing the use of resources and avoiding duplication.

Furthermore, Council has been instructed to develop a more clearly defined role, functions and objectives for the regional presence. Council is to include the regional presence as a standing item on its agenda in order to monitor the evolution of this presence. The ITU headquarters would take the necessary measures to strengthen the regional presence gradually.

This resolution sets the end of the year 2000 as the time-limit for strengthening the regional presence, under an action plan to be initiated in 1999.

### **Implementation of processing charges for satellite network filings and administrative procedures (Resolution COM5/21)**

According to this resolution, cost recovery for satellite network filings will be implemented as soon as possible, using the general principles for cost recovery adopted in Resolution PLEN/4.

Satellite network filings received by BR after 7 November 1998 will be subject to the application of cost recovery. This includes all filings for the production of the Special Sections of the Weekly Circular for space radiocommunication services concerning advance publication, requests for coordination or agreement, or for modification to the space service plans contained in Appendices 30/S30, 30A/S30A and 30B/S30B of the Radio Regulations. The newly elected Council, which had its inaugural session immediately after the Conference, established a working group open to all administrations and satellite network operators of ITU-R. The group has the mandate to submit recommendations to the 1999 session of Council on the costing methodology and schedule of charges.

Council has been instructed to implement, soon after its 1999 session, processing charges for satellite network filings received by ITU from 7 November 1998. Payments for these filings should be received soon after WRC-2000.

In the light of Council's decisions, WRC-2000 will consider whether any amendments should

be made to the Radio Regulations with respect to the procedures covered in this resolution.

### **Gradual lifting of interim limitations on the use of official and working languages of the Union (Resolution COM7/16)**

The Conference recognized among other things that the use, on an equal footing, of the six official and working languages of the Union (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian) would have a positive influence on the development of telecommunications and of knowledge in general. Interim limitations on the use of three of these languages (Arabic, Russian and Chinese) were put in place notably for financial reasons. The Conference has decided that the limitations established by Resolution 62 (Kyoto, 1994) should be lifted gradually.

As a first step, Council would decide to what extent the limitations spelled out in the relevant provisions of Resolution 62 would no longer apply.

The Secretary-General would report to Council on ways and means of implementing this new resolution and on the practical and financial implications of using all the official and working languages of the Union. Based on this report, Council would take any action necessary to implement the resolution, bearing in mind the financial limits set by the Minneapolis Conference.

Resolution 62 would remain in force, subject to the implementation of Resolution COM7/16, until the next Plenipotentiary Conference in 2002.

### **Expenditure of the Union for the period 2000–2003 (Decision COM7/2)**

This decision was taken in the light of the Strategic Plan and the goals established for the Union and its Sectors for the period 1999–2003 and of Resolution PLEN/4 on general principles for cost recovery.

The Conference has authorized Council to draw up the two biennial budgets of the Union

in such a way that the total expenditure does not exceed CHF 333.2 million for the years 2000 and 2001 and CHF 332.6 million for the years 2002 and 2003.

These amounts include expenditure in respect of the working languages Arabic, Chinese and Russian, to an amount not exceeding CHF 30 million for the years 2000 to 2003.

Council may exceed these limits by up to 1% in order to meet expenditure on unforeseen and urgent activities which are in the interests of the Union.

### **Status of Palestine in ITU (Resolution PLEN/3)**

Many ITU Member States recognize Palestine as a State. In this three-point resolution, the Conference has given Palestine an enhanced status. In essence, the resolution states that:

1) the provisions of the Administrative Regulations, and related resolutions and recommendations, shall be applied to the Palestinian Authority in the same manner as they are applied to administrations as defined in No. 1002 of the Constitution, and the General Secretariat and the three Bureaux shall act accordingly, in particular in relation to the international access code, call signs and the processing of frequency notification assignments;

2) Palestine may participate in all ITU conferences, assemblies and meetings as an observer, with the rights that are attributed to an observer as defined in No. 1002 of the Convention, and in treaty-making conferences with the following additional rights:

- the right to raise points of order related to the proceedings on Palestinian and Middle East issues, provided that the right to raise such a point of order shall not include the right to challenge the decision of the presiding officer,
- the right to co-sponsor draft resolutions and decisions on Palestinian and Middle East issues; such draft resolutions and decisions shall only be put to vote upon request from a Member State;

3) the Palestinian delegation shall be seated immediately after Member States.

### **Future conferences and assemblies of the Union (Resolution PLEN/9)**

The schedule of future conferences and assemblies which has been decided by the Conference includes:

- Regional Telecommunication Development Conference (RTDC): fourth quarter of 1999 or first quarter of 2000
- Radiocommunication Assembly (RA-2000): Turkey, 1–5 May 2000
- World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-2000): Turkey, 8 May–2 June 2000
- World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-2000): Canada, 27 September–6 October 2000
- Regional Telecommunication Development Conference (RTDC): first quarter of 2001
- World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-02): first quarter of 2002
- Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-02): Morocco, latter part of 2002
- World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-02/03): place and date to be determined. Council would decide whether there is need for a Radiocommunication Assembly in 2002 or 2003.

The agendas of these conferences would be established by Council. In cases where the precise dates and places have not been decided, Council would decide after consultation with the Member States.

### **Special measures concerning alternative calling procedures on international telecommunication networks (Resolution PLEN/5)**

#### **Call-back**

As of October 1998, 86 Member States had notified TSB that call-back is prohibited in their countries. The Conference noted that Study Group 2 of ITU-T had concluded that certain

alternative calling procedures such as constant calling (or bombardment or polling) and answer suppression seriously degrade the quality and the performance of the PSTN.

Both ITU-T and ITU-D have been urged to work closely to implement Resolutions 21 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Kyoto, 1994) and 22 of WTDC-98.

Resolution 21 urges Member States to cooperate among themselves to resolve difficulties in order to ensure that their national laws and regulations are respected. It further instructs ITU-T to accelerate its studies with a view to developing appropriate solutions and recommendations.

Resolution 22 of WTDC-98:

- encourages administrations and recognized operating agencies (ROA) to enhance ITU's role and give effect to its recommendations in order to promote a new and more effective basis for the accounting regime which would help limit the negative effects of alternative calling procedures on developing countries;
- requests ITU-D and ITU-T to collaborate so as to avoid any duplication of work, and achieve an outcome based on the spirit of Resolution 21;
- requests administrations and ROAs of countries which permit the use of alternative calling procedures to respect the decisions of other administrations and ROAs whose regulations do not permit such services.

Member States and Sector Members are urged to continue to cooperate among themselves to fully implement those resolutions.

### **Urgent need for prompt action to address the Year 2000 problem (Resolution COM5/20)**

This resolution calls on the Union to give every possible encouragement and support to the efforts of telecommunication operators and carriers around the world to address the Year 2000 problem and prevent system failures at the turn of the new millennium.

The resolution urges administrations to take all possible steps to raise awareness, motivate telecommunication operators and carriers to address the Year 2000 problem speedily and facilitate the exchange of information that is essential to tackling the problem. They should also work closely with the telecommunication industry to ensure that the Year 2000 challenge is addressed promptly and that adequate resources are made available for this purpose.

Telecommunication operators and carriers should be urged to:

- conduct an inventory of their systems and/or components and assess whether they need to be reprogrammed in response to the Year 2000 problem;
- reprogram and "fix" those systems and/or components which are not Year 2000 compliant;
- test systems and/or components to determine whether the Year 2000 problems have been satisfactorily remedied;
- test systems and/or components together in their operating environments;
- establish adequate contingency plans throughout all of these phases.

The Director of TSB will work hand in glove with the Directors of BR and BDT to encourage the telecommunication industry to take prompt, comprehensive and effective action to address the Year 2000 problem. He will continue supporting the ongoing work of the ITU Year 2000 Task Force and report to Council in May 1999 on progress made and on the work of the Task Force.

### **World Summit on the Information Society (Resolution PLEN/13)**

This resolution recognizes ITU as the organization best able to seek appropriate ways to foster telecommunications as a tool for economic, social and cultural development and calls for a World Summit on the Information Society. To this end, the Secretary-General has been instructed to place the question of holding such a Summit on the agenda of the United

Nations Administrative Committee on Coordination, with a view to meeting the necessary conditions for holding such a Summit before the next Plenipotentiary Conference. The results of the consultation will be reported to Council for a decision on the Union's contribution to the holding of a Summit, the aim of which will be to:

- establish an overall framework identifying, with the contribution of all partners, a joint and harmonized understanding of the Information Society;
- draw up a strategic plan of action for concerted development of the Information Society by defining an agenda highlighting the objectives to be achieved and the resources to be mobilized;
- identify the roles of the various partners to ensure smooth coordination of the establishment, in practice, of the Information Society in all Member States.

## **World and regional telecommunication exhibitions and forums (Resolution PLEN/14)**

This resolution states, among other things, that decisions on the venues of world and regional TELECOM exhibitions and forums should be made in all transparency, based on objective criteria. Such criteria would include cost elements and, in the case of world events, the additional costs which may result from holding the event outside the city of the seat of the Union.

It stresses the need to strengthen the management of TELECOM and its structure. It calls for a significant part of any surplus income over expenditure derived from the activities of TELECOM to be used (as extrabudgetary income for BDT) for specific telecommunication development projects, primarily in the least developed countries.

The resolution further instructs the Secretary-General to ensure the transparency of TELECOM activities and report on them in a regular annual report to Council, including on action taken with respect to the use of surplus income, on the process and criteria to be used for selecting

venues, and on the reasons for the actual selection of venues. He will also ensure that the TELECOM secretariat, while being governed by the ITU Staff Rules and Regulations, maintains the necessary flexibility in its decision-making process to compete in its semi-commercial environment.

Council will approve the use of TELECOM surplus funds.

## **Apportionment of revenues in providing international telecommunication services (Resolution PLEN/6)**

The Conference noted the studies being undertaken by ITU-T Study Group 3 to complete Recommendation D.140, which establishes the principles of cost-orientated accounting rates and accounting rate shares in each relation. It also recalled the recommendation in *The missing link* report, that Member States should consider a rearrangement of their international traffic accounting procedures in relations between developing and industrialized countries such that a small proportion of call revenue can be used for development purposes.

The resolution urges ITU-T Study Group 3 to:

- expedite its work on completing the additional alternative procedures in Recommendation D.150 for the settlement of international telephone accounts;
- expedite its work on developing the appropriate costing methodologies;
- agree on transitional arrangements which may allow for some flexibility, taking into account the situation of the developing countries and the rapidly changing international telecommunication environment;
- take into consideration the interests of all users of telecommunication services as a high priority.

Administrations are invited to contribute to the work of Study Group 3 and its focus group, with a view to reaching an early resolution of the issue of accounting rate reform.

The Director of TSB will submit a report to Council on the progress of the studies. ■



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## **Minneapolis Conference spells out new directions for ITU (the end)**

**T**his report concludes our coverage of the Minneapolis Plenipotentiary Conference (12 October–6 November 1998). In Issue No. 10/98 of *ITU News*, we brought you most of the conclusions of this historic Conference through the resolutions\* it passed.

Many of these resolutions highlight the strategic policy of the Union and its financial management and give strategic directions to the Union's three Sectors: Radiocommunication, Telecommunication Standardization and Telecommunication Development. In so doing, they underline the need for greater transparency in the work of the Union's organs and the important roles which Member States and industry will have to play in shaping the future of telecommunications.

A few other decisions extend certain rights and obligations to Sector Members (private sector) and give greater responsibility to the Union's three advisory groups: the Radiocommunication Advisory Group (RAG), the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) and the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG). A number of rec-

ommendations of the ITU-2000 Group provided a strong basis for some of these decisions and made it necessary to amend the Union's Constitution and Con-

vention. The amendments will come into force on 1 January 2000.

But that was not all. As some of the resolutions covered in this report will show, the Conference also paid special attention to human resources management, yielding positive results on the subject.

All of these important decisions would not have been possible without the hard work, commitment and dedication of the Host Committee and the lead sponsors (see box). The four-day technology exhibition which opened its doors on the eve of the

### **Lead sponsors of the Minneapolis Conference**

**T**he Thomson Corporation, ADC Telecommunications, Inc., U S West, Dorsey & Whitney LLP, AT&T, State of Minnesota, Motorola, DSC Communications Corporation, QUALCOMM, Inc., MCI WorldCom, Lucent Technologies, MediaOne Group, Cisco Systems, Inc., North American GSM Alliance LLC, Telecommunications Industry Association, Xerox Corporation, SkyBridge, Brahler and Brede Exposition Services.

Conference was a constant reminder to delegations that the technology is there. What was needed was the political will and commitment to move forward together. The exhibition was organized by the United States Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA).

While some may be somewhat disappointed that despite the preparatory work, the Conference did not take all the expected decisions, they nonetheless recognize that the steps taken are in the right direction.

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\* *Editor's note:* The resolutions mentioned in *ITU News*, No. 10/98, pages 12–23, and in this report will be renumbered in the definitive version of the Minneapolis Final Acts to be published in May 1999. In case you need details of a specific resolution after that date, remember to quote the numbering used in these two issues.

The whole range of measures contained in the resolutions and in the amended Constitution and Convention, if well implemented, will safeguard the future of the Union. As one delegate put it: "In some ways, the Union today was like a frail person whose health could be seriously undermined by over-vigorous treatment."

Council and all other permanent organs and groups of the Union have a lot of homework between now and the next Plenipotentiary Conference in Morocco in 2002. They will all "need to display zeal, creativity, discipline and wisdom", another delegate commented.

## **Review and improvement of the management, functioning and structure of ITU (Resolution PLEN/II)**

The ITU must constantly stay on its toes in this rapidly changing environment. This resolution instructs the Directors of the Union's three Bureaux to seek advice from the advisory groups of the Sectors for more changes to improve the working methods and the way these Sectors are organized to enable ITU meet its constitutional objectives as well as those embedded in its new Strategic Plan for the period 1999–2003. The Directors are expected to report to future sessions of Council on any changes they implement, including the difficulties they may encounter in the process.

Similarly, the Secretary-General will review the workings of the General Secretariat and report to Council on the strengthening of the financial base of the Union and on the management of human resources.

These efforts will be crucial in ensuring that the Union responds effectively to the needs of its membership and that it maintains its position of leadership in world telecommunications.

The resolution further invites Council to establish an open-ended working group of Member States and Sector Members to review the management, functioning and structure of the Union. The group will also review the rights and obligations of Member States and Sector Members, based on their contributions and on the reports from ITU's top management. It will then make recommendations accordingly, and compile interim and final reports to Council for action.

Council will examine those recommendations and take decisions within the limits of its power. It will also prepare draft amendments to the Constitution and Convention and consider and circulate an interim report to Member States and Sector Members for comment. Council will ultimately consider and compile a report to the next Plenipotentiary Conference, along with its recommendations and draft texts for amendments to the Constitution and the Convention.

Meanwhile, the resolution invites conferences, assemblies and advisory groups of the Sectors to implement the changes they consider appropriate, provided that such changes are in line with the Constitution and the Convention.

## **Evaluation of the administrative due diligence procedure for satellite networks adopted by WRC-97 (Resolution COM5/II)**

The Minneapolis Conference noted that the 1997 World Radiocommunication Conference adopted Resolution 49, establishing an administrative due diligence procedure to be applied to some satellite communication services with effect from 22 November 1997.

This administrative due diligence procedure requires regular disclosure of implementation data for satellite systems, for example: the name of the spacecraft manufacturer, the name of the satellite operator, the contractual date of delivery and the number of satellites procured, the name of the launch vehicle provider, the name of the customer and the contractual launch date.

All of this is intended to minimize the number of "paper satellites" (satellite overfilings) by requiring information which becomes available when systems have reached an advanced stage of development and are soon to be deployed.

It is worthwhile recalling that WRC-97 endorsed many of the recommendations made by the Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau (BR), introducing a number of amendments to the Radio Regulations which entered into force on 1 January 1999.

By passing Resolution 49, WRC-97 was of the view that the problem of having too many notifications was a serious one and that it was likely to become





Minneapolis Convention Center

Photo: A. de Ferron (ITU 980130)

more serious in the future. In particular, Resolution 49 requires the BR Director to report to WRC-2000 as well as to future WRCs, on how the administrative due diligence procedure is faring.

Against this background, the Conference has called on WRC-2000 to evaluate the effectiveness of the administrative due diligence procedure and submit its findings to the 2002 Plenipotentiary Conference, which will then take any measures it considers appropriate.

## **International Telecommunication Regulations (Resolution COM5/16)**

The Strategic Plan calls for action to decide on the need to review the International Telecommunication Regulations in order to take account of developments in the telecommunication environment. Indeed, the relationship between Member States and recognized operating agencies has changed significantly (for some Member States) in the ten years since the International Telecommunication Regulations were adopted in Melbourne in 1988.

Examples abound. The worldwide trends in the provision of telecommunication and information

technology services have resulted in many telecommunication networks being privately owned and operated.

Many Member States have, in addition to their binding ITU commitments, made binding multilateral commitments to expand trade in telecommunication services and have adopted progressive liberalization policies as a means of promoting world economic growth and development.

This resolution calls upon the Secretary-General to undertake a number of tasks in consultation with the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB) and a group of experts appointed by Council so that appropriate action can be taken.

These tasks require the Secretary-General to:

- undertake an exploratory study of the evolution of the respective roles and responsibilities of Member States and Sector Members (or recognized operating agencies) as regards the regulation and operation of international telecommunication services;
- consider the wider context of multilateral treaty obligations that affect ITU Member States and those they regulate;

- review the extent to which the current needs of Member States are reflected in the basic instruments of the Union and in particular the International Telecommunication Regulations;
- report to Council on these points no later than the year 2000 and advise Council of any action the Union could take. Such action may include the convening of a world conference on international telecommunications in order to define further the relations between Member States and recognized operating agencies as regards the regulation and operation of international telecommunication services.

Council will consider the Secretary-General's report and decide whether any action should be taken on these issues in the period before the 2002 Plenipotentiary Conference. This Conference is invited to consider convening, at an appropriate date, a competent conference to revise the International Telecommunication Regulations.

## **Arrears and special arrears accounts (Resolution COM7/7)**

It is clearly in the interests of all Member States and Sector Members to maintain the finances of the Union on a sound footing. The Conference deplored the increasing level of arrears and the slow pace at which those with unpaid contributions were settling the arrears accounts. This resolution instructs Council to establish guidelines for repayment schedules. Council may also, where appropriate, take additional measures such as the temporary reduction in the class of contribution, particularly for least developed countries.

The resolution further urges all Member States in arrears, especially those for which special arrears accounts have been established, as well as Sector Members in arrears, to submit and agree upon schedules for the repayment of their debts with the Secretary-General.

From now on, any new special arrears account would only be opened after the conclusion of an agreement with the Secretary-General, establishing a specific repayment schedule.

In the case of existing special arrears accounts where no repayment schedules were agreed upon, agree-

ment should be reached no later than 6 November 1999.

Failure to comply with the agreed terms of settlement and any associated conditions may well result in the abolition of the special arrears account.

## **Special arrears accounts (Resolution COM7/8)**

This resolution was passed exceptionally to allow a number of Member States with outstanding contributions to transfer their arrears to a special arrears account.

This transfer shall not release the Member States concerned from the obligation to settle their unpaid contributions.

The Conference has authorized Council to write off interest on overdue payments from the Member States listed in the resolution, provided that each Member State concerned complies strictly with the agreed repayment schedule for the settlement of the unpaid contributions.

Council is expected to report to the next Plenipotentiary Conference on the results obtained in implementing this resolution.

## **Procedure concerning choice of contributory class (Decision COM7/1)**

Member States and Sector Members are free to choose their class of contribution for defraying Union expenses. The class of contribution will be chosen from the scale of classes of contribution given in Article 33 of the Union's Convention. This means that the Union's membership pays a sum equivalent to the number of units in the class of contribution they have chosen (the scale goes from 1/16 unit class to 40 unit class).

Until now, this choice was made within six months following the end of a Plenipotentiary Conference. But this will change in the future. The Conference has modified the Union's legal instruments so that Member States can announce their class of contribution at a Plenipotentiary Conference. Sector Members would be required to announce their contributory class three months from the closing date of a Plenipotentiary Conference. These measures are

expected to give the Union a more sound basis for planning its activities.

But for now, the Conference has decided that each Member State and Sector Member should inform the Secretary-General before 6 May 1999 of the class of contribution it has chosen from the scale of contributions in Article 33.

The classes of contribution so chosen will be applied from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2003.

Those who fail to make known their decision before 6 May 1999 shall retain the class of contribution chosen previously.

### **Review of the contribution of Sector Members towards defraying the expenses of ITU (Resolution COM7/II)**

For nearly four years, the rights and obligations of all the Members of the Union's Sectors (Kyoto Resolution 15) and strengthening the Union's financial base (Kyoto Resolution 39) were subjects of an important review. Recognizing the need to strike a fair balance between those rights and obligations, the Conference has concluded that within the context of the free-choice system, the current ratio between the amounts of the contributory unit paid by Member States and Sector Members ought to be reviewed. This review will be conducted under the auspices of Council, which has been instructed to establish the terms of reference, general guidelines and specific procedures to that end.

Furthermore, Council will invite Member States and Sector Members to participate in the review. An important objective to bear in mind during the review will be the need to retain current participants in the activities of the Sectors of the Union, while at the same time attracting new participants.

The resolution instructs the Secretary-General to invite Member States and Sector Members to submit proposals and to take all necessary measures to provide full support and secretariat services for those undertaking the review. The Directors of the Union's three Bureaux are also instructed to lend full support to the review process through their respective Bureaux.

Once the review has been completed and a report compiled, the Secretary-General, will on the basis of

instructions from Council, circulate the report to all Member States and Sector Members.

Council will report its findings to the next Plenipotentiary Conference.

### **Linking strategic, financial and operational planning in ITU (Resolution COM7/I2)**

The Strategic Plan of the Union for the period 1999–2003 highlights, as one of the priorities, the introduction of operational planning on an ITU-wide basis. At present, this management tool is only used in the Radiocommunication Sector, where it has proved successful.

This resolution underlines the importance of linking strategic, financial and operational plans which set out the activities planned to be undertaken during any given year. Such plans could be effectively utilized to monitor and measure progress in the implementation of the programmes of the Union. The plans are also expected to enhance accountability and transparency, particularly in the application of cost recovery. Through these plans, the Union can also hope to better coordinate its activities with those of other relevant international and regional telecommunication organizations to avoid duplication of effort.

However, the introduction of operational planning and its effective linkage to strategic and financial planning call for changes to the Union's Financial Regulations.

The Conference has therefore instructed the Secretary-General and the Directors of the three Bureaux to review those Financial Regulations, taking into account the views of Member States and of the Union's advisory bodies and eventually submit proposals to Council for consideration. In addition, these officials will each prepare their consolidated plans reflecting the linkages between strategic, financial and operational planning for annual review by Council.

Council will, among other things, take the necessary action to ensure that future strategic, financial and operational plans are prepared in line with this resolution. It will compile a report, along with recommendations (if necessary) for consideration by the 2002 Plenipotentiary Conference.

## **World Telecommunication Day (Resolution PLEN/10)**

This resolution invites Council to adopt, for each World Telecommunication Day (17 May), a specific theme relating to the main challenges which the changing telecommunication environment poses for both developed and developing countries.

In view of the value of the annual celebration of this Day in supporting the main strategic orientations of the Union, Council had taken a decision in May 1998 designed to give the commemoration a new focus, while using resources in a more efficient way.

Member States and Sector Members are invited to celebrate the Day annually by organizing national programmes which aim to stimulate reflection and exchange of ideas on the theme adopted by Council, debate the theme so chosen with people from all walks of society and compile and submit a report to ITU on the national debate. The ITU will consolidate these national reports into a single information document and circulate it to the entire membership.

The theme chosen for the 1999 World Telecommunication Day is "Electronic commerce". This choice was made in the closing hours of the Conference by the newly elected Council at its inaugural session chaired by Lyndall Shope-Mafole (South Africa), Special Advisor to the Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting.

## **Staff matters**

### **Human resources management and development (Resolution COM7/2)**

According to this resolution, ITU's human resources management and development must be carefully directed towards achieving its goals. To this end, the Secretary-General has been instructed to prepare medium-term and long-term human resources management and development plans to respond to the needs of the Union, its membership and not least, its staff. In particular, the Secretary-General has been requested to study how best practices in human resources management might be

applied within the Union and report to Council. He will also continue to pursue a recruitment policy designed to improve geographical and gender representation among appointed staff.

### **Compensation matters (Resolution COM7/3)**

The Conference expressed concern over the increasing number of ad hoc measures taken by certain Member States to give additional compensation to their nationals working in the United Nations system. Those countries were doing so in order to compensate their nationals for what they believe to be a lack of competitiveness of remuneration levels in the United Nations common system.

The Conference has invited the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and the United Nations General Assembly to continue monitoring the situation and take steps to ensure the competitiveness of the common system compensation scheme for staff in the professional and higher categories.

These two organs are urged to continue to introduce some flexibility in the United Nations common system to enable small highly technical agencies to be competitive in the labour market from which they draw their workforce.

For its part, Council will continue to monitor carefully the question of protection of the purchasing power of pensions and the competitiveness of the compensation scheme for staff in all categories.

Similarly, Council will monitor the responsiveness of ICSC and the United Nations General Assembly and take steps to ensure that the specific needs of the International Telecommunication Union, as expressed in this resolution, are met.

### **Occupational illness (Resolution COM7/6)**

The Conference recognized that provisions in the ITU Staff Regulations and Staff Rules regarding safety, health and environmental standards were inadequate. Similarly, provisions regarding compensation for work-related illness, death, injury or disability attributable to service occurring after the end of service are also inadequate.

This resolution instructs the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to ensure compliance with accepted safety, health and environmental standards in force in the country of the seat of the Union (Switzerland). He will also determine if the current insurance coverage would be applicable and effective in the event of an illness occurring after end of service by reason of prior employment with ITU. If such is not the case, he will evaluate the cost of appropriate coverage.

### **The Kingdom of Morocco's irresistible offer for 2002**

Morocco's Secretary of State of Posts and Information Technologies, Larbi Ajjoul, in a general policy statement to the Plenipotentiary Conference, extended an invitation to hold the next Plenipotentiary Conference in Morocco. The venue of the conference is likely to be Marrakech.

Speaking as head of the Moroccan delegation, Mr Ajjoul, underscored the need for the Union to reposition itself and reinforce its world leadership in order to remain a focal point for strategic decisions in telecommunication matters. "It is also important that ITU be more involved in finding concrete solutions to problems inherent to the information society, including the privacy, protection of intellectual property and security of electronic transactions", he said.

The Conference, planned for 2002, will be the first ITU Plenipotentiary Conference to be held in the new millennium. "In Morocco, by virtue of the country's dual African and Arab heritage, the international telecommunication community will be welcomed as guests of both the African continent and the Arab world", concluded Mr Ajjoul.

### **Brazil to host Americas TELECOM 2000**

During the Minneapolis Plenipotentiary Conference, an agreement was signed by ITU Secretary-General, Pekka Tarjanne, and Renato Navarro Guerreiro, President of Brazil's regulatory authority, the *Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações* (ANATEL), to hold an international telecommunications exhibition and forum in Rio de Janeiro in the year 2000.

Dubbed "Americas TELECOM 2000", the event will be held in the spring of 2000 at the Riocentro Exhibition and Conference Centre. The event will be the fourth to be organized by ITU in the Americas Region, with Rio de Janeiro being the venue for Americas TELECOM 88 and Americas TELECOM 96, and Acapulco, Mexico being the venue for Americas TELECOM 92.

The ITU received invitations with very attractive conditions from several countries in the region to host Americas TELECOM 2000. After many consultations and a series of negotiations, and taking into account the questions of infrastructure, accommodation, transport and conference and exhibition facilities, Brazil's offer to host the event was accepted.

Americas TELECOM 2000 promises to be the biggest telecommunications event ever held in the region. With the addition of two new exhibition halls, Riocentro now boasts a total of more than 35 000 m<sup>2</sup> of net exhibition space, making it the largest venue of its kind in Latin America. Americas TELECOM 2000 is expected to attract over 400 companies from more than 30 countries.

Nearly 30% of the world's main telephone lines are to be found in the Americas Region, but the vast majority are in the United States and Canada; the other 500 million people in the Americas Region have only 51 million telephone lines between them. Even though growth across the region has been spectacular, particularly in the wireless and cellular markets, the potential is still vast, with a huge pent up demand for all telecommunication services.

Brazil itself has just witnessed Latin America's biggest-ever privatization; with three fixed line operators, eight cellular companies and the international long-distance carrier being sold to the highest bidders and generating enormous inward investment for the country, and indeed the whole of the region (see *ITU News*, No. 8/98, pages 32–37 and No. 9/98, pages 26–32). Meanwhile, Argentina, Peru and Venezuela have plans to open up their markets to further competition.

For more information about Americas TELECOM 2000, please contact: "Thomas Frankl, TELECOM Press Officer. E-mail: [thomas.frankl@itu.int](mailto:thomas.frankl@itu.int). Tel.: +41 22 730 6345. Fax: +41 22 730 6444. Web site: <http://www.itu.int/TELECOM>". ■