Doha Declaration (2006)

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The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Doha, 2006),

declares that

a) Achievements aimed at universal access leading to the creation of an information society have been accomplished in the telecommunication sector since the first World Telecommunication Development Conference in 1994. The implementation of the Buenos Aires, Valletta, and Istanbul Action Plans has been largely successful, thanks to the collaborative efforts of all parties involved. It is noteworthy that the key to this success has been the considerable effort made by the countries themselves and the catalytic inputs of their development partners, including public, private and intergovernmental organizations. The commitment of countries and development partners was demonstrated by their involvement and the active role that they played during the World Summit on the Information Society process. The ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D), including the ITU-D study groups, have also made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge which has been made available to the international community.

The successes of the past are a great encouragement to all interested parties in the telecommunication development sector to assist in sustaining these efforts in the upcoming period from 2008 to 2011. All these initiatives will be a key factor for the success of the Doha Action Plan.

b) The pace towards the creation of a truly global information society needs to be increased, so as to bring opportunities to countries and to create conditions aimed at deriving maximum benefit from the implementation of new services and applications, in order to accelerate overall development.

c) New and emerging 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, remote and rural areas and between well-served and underserved areas within a country.

The emergence of a conducive environment and entrepreneurial approaches to providing a rural service, and more cost-effective technologies, may offer an opportunity for more rapid deployment of telecommunication services in rural and remote areas.

The global information society (GIS) is evolving and should be responsive to the interests of all nations, especially developing countries, and in particular least developed countries (LDCs), countries with economies in transition and small island developing states (SIDS).

Opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies (ICTs) should be fully exploited with the aim of fostering sustainable development and technology transfer consistent with national laws, through research and development and innovative technological applications, as well as development assistance for the promotion of quality of life and a higher standard of living.

d)   ICTs are essential for political, economic, social and cultural development. They fuel the global information society and are rapidly transforming our lives and promoting better understanding among peoples. They also play an important role in poverty alleviation, job creation, environmental protection and the prevention and mitigation of natural and other disasters. All interested parties are urged to make their contribution to extend these benefits to all peoples.

e)   The rapid growth of broadband technology and the convergence of telecommunications, computing and information and multimedia applications are opening up new perspectives for the sector, providing opportunities for e-applications and e-services, i.e. e-learning, e-health, e-government, e-commerce, disaster relief/response, environmental protection, post-war reconstruction, post-disaster reconstruction/rehabilitation of ICT infrastructure, and many other applications which are highly beneficial to political, social, cultural and economic development, and general welfare resulting from synergistic benefits accruing from multistakeholder partnerships.

Universal, ubiquitous and affordable access to ICTs is key to social and economic prosperity. Telecommunication and information services permit technology transfer, interaction, access and exchange of knowledge, contributing to greater economic activity, higher productivity and ultimately general welfare. Community access to ICTs is one of the most appropriate ways of achieving universal access in many developing countries.

f)   Telecommunication sector reforms leading to greater private-sector participation and competition are forces shaping the development of ICTs. These challenges of the information society and the new trade environment place even greater pressure on policy-makers, regulators and operators to acquire the necessary skills to manage the evolving ICT environment.

g)   Governments play a key role in the development of ICTs and telecommunications, and are urged to establish an enabling environment which promotes reasonable and affordable access to basic telecommunication services for all, so as to pave the way for the active participation of other stakeholders in the ICT sector. Such an environment should also create a stable and transparent framework and promote fair competition, while protecting network integrity and the rights of users, operators and investors. Policies and strategies for the development of telecommunications should reflect the trend towards multiservices utilizing a common infrastructure platform.

h)   ITU and ITU-D have a special role to play in strengthening communication channels, by ensuring effective coordination with other international, regional and subregional organizations, and other entities engaged in activities related to development of ICTs and services, in order to create a proper framework needed for the implementation and development of services and applications, ensuring that ITU and ITU's role and mission are understood.

i)   ITU and ITU-D should continue to play an active and leading role in the development and deployment of low-cost, affordable and appropriate technologies for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and in the development of policies and strategies that could facilitate the use of ICTs in disaster prevention, preparedness and relief.

j)   The Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) should sustain the current momentum of promoting and enhancing the participation of the private sector in the activities of ITU-D, and should continue to coordinate and facilitate the creation of partnerships between governments and private enterprises and between private enterprises in developed countries and those in developing countries.

k)   International, regional and national financing and investment institutions are urged to attach high priority to the growth of ICTs as well as to explore ways and means of achieving the improvements and innovations in existing ICT financing mechanisms referred to in § 27 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. The Digital Solidarity Fund should be used as a source of financing ICT development projects.

l)   ITU should play a leading role in the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society, as noted in § 64 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles, recognizing that ITU's core competencies in the field of ICTs – assistance in bridging the digital divide, international and regional cooperation, radio spectrum management, standards development and the dissemination of information – are of critical importance for building the information society.

m)   The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Doha, 2006) calls upon all ITU Member States and Sector Members to contribute towards the successful implementation of the outcomes of the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society held in 2003 (Geneva, Switzerland) and 2005 (Tunis, Tunisia). In this regard, the Doha Action Plan will be an important tool for the implementation of the Summit outcomes.

n)   The programmes summarized below, which are part of the Doha Action Plan, developed in a spirit of encouraging awareness and actions on, *inter alia*, gender, youth, indigenous peoples and the disabled, and implemented under the leadership and coordination of ITU-D, become important and relevant tools for achieving universal access:

•   Regulatory reform:

        The focus of ITU-D's work in the area of policy, regulation and strategy will be on assisting Member States and national regulatory authorities in developing and implementing an enabling environment that fosters a supportive, transparent, pro-competitive and predictable policy, legal and regulatory framework. Such a framework would provide the appropriate incentives for investment and promote universal, ubiquitous and affordable access to information and communication technologies (ICT). The programme will take into account accelerated convergence between technologies and services and the development of next-generation networks.

• Information and communication infrastructure and technology development:

To assist Member States and ITU-D Sector Members to maximize the utilization of appropriate new technologies in the development of their information and communication infrastructure, by taking due account of the accelerated convergence of telecommunication[9] networks[10] and services. Infrastructure is central in achieving the goal of digital inclusion, enabling universal, sustainable, ubiquitous and affordable access to information and communication technologies (ICT) by all, taking into account relevant solutions already in place in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in order to provide sustainable connectivity and access to remote and marginalized areas at national and regional levels.

• E-strategies and ICT applications:

To assist developing countries, through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and telecommunication networks, to advance the achievement of national, regional and the internationally agreed development goals, by promoting the use of ICT-based products, networks, services and applications, and to help countries overcome the digital divide.

• Economics and finance, including costs and tariffs:

Make available information on financing policies and strategies appropriate to the economic situation, including, where appropriate, cost-oriented pricing, with a view to fostering equitable and affordable access to innovative and sustainable services.

• Human capacity building:

Strengthen human, institutional and organizational capacity through human resource management and development activities, so as to facilitate a smooth transition to the current telecommunication and information and communication technology (ICT) environment.

• Least developed countries (LDCs), and small island developing states (SIDS), and emergency telecommunications:

Seek to deploy appropriate technologies and to develop strategies aimed at responding to particular needs of LDCs and SIDS and to develop comprehensive information and communication technology (ICT) solutions for disaster risk reduction for all countries.

o) The importance of addressing the needs of regions is high on the agenda of ITU and ITU-D. These needs have been discussed during the various regional preparatory meetings for WTDC. The regions have encapsulated these needs into regional initiatives and presented them to the conference.

Thus, WTDC-06 has adopted regional initiatives and referred to them in a resolution of the conference. The detailed descriptions of these regional initiatives can be found at the following address: http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/wtdc06/pdf/RegionalInitiatives.pdf .

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[9] In ITU the term "telecommunication" includes sound and television broadcasting.

[10] "Telecommunication networks" are widely known as information and communication infrastructure.