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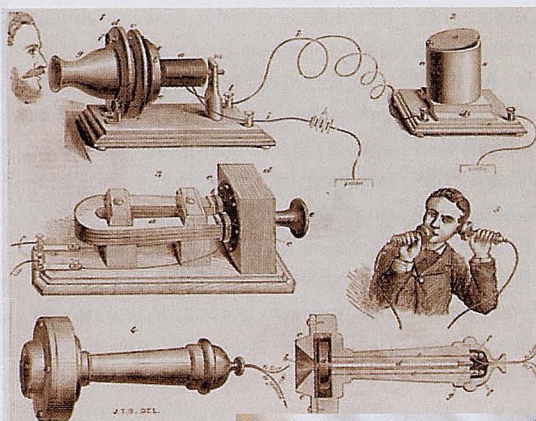
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Assembly sets agenda for next four years

From Alexander Graham Bell to next-generation networks

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA) has agreed on resolutions that will ensure that ITU continues to be the leading global standards-setting body for information and communication technologies (ICT). The Assembly put much emphasis on the move to next-generation networks (NGN), and asked that ITU take a more active role in dealing with the growing issues of cybersecurity and spam. Pedro Jaime Ziller de Araujo, President of ANATEL, the Brazilian regulator, opened the Assembly that took place from 5 to 14 October 2004. Brazil hosted the event in Florianopolis on the island of Santa Catarina, marking the first time that a WTSA was held in Latin America.

"Ever since Alexander Graham Bell showed the world that it was possible to transmit the human voice through electrical impulses, the propagation of the human voice in the 3.4 kHz range dictated the nature of our work. Standardization activities then were dedicated to establishing agreed protocols that would secure interoperability of networks within this framework," ITU Secretary-General, Yoshio Utsumi, reminded delegates at the Assembly. Mr Utsumi went on to underline that: "...today the telecommunication marketplace is no longer just about the human voice. It is about video images, data



Ever since Alexander Graham Bell showed the world that it was possible to transmit the human voice through electrical impulses, the propagation of the human voice in the 3.4 kHz range dictated the nature of ITU work. Today, data and multimedia applications are also frontrunners





Structure of the Assembly

Chairman of the Assembly

Savio Pinheiro (Brazil)

Vice-Chairmen of the Assembly

David Gross (United States)
 Anthony De Bono (Malta)
 Andrey N. Svechnikov (Russian Federation)
 Makhtar Fall (Senegal)
 Ku Wen (China)
 Nabil Kisrawi (Syria)

Committee 1 — Steering Committee

Composed of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Assembly and of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the other Committees.

Committee 2 — Budget Control

Chairman: Bruce Gracie (Canada)
Vice-Chairmen: Hans Meierhofer (Germany)
 Van Dung Dinh (Viet Nam)

Committee 3 — Working methods of the ITU-T

Chairman: Fabio Bigi (Italy)
Vice-Chairmen: Yoichi Maeda (Japan)
 Brahim Khadiri (Morocco)

Committee 4 — The ITU-T work programme and organization

Chairman: Patrick Masambu (Uganda)
Vice-Chairmen: John Visser (Canada)
 Ki-Shik Park (Republic of Korea)
 Sherif Guinena (Egypt)

Committee 5 — Telecommunication network infrastructure: Reports by the study groups

Chairman: Jean-Yves Monfort (France)
Vice-Chairmen: Herbert Bertine (United States)
 Roberto Pomponi (Italy)
 Oleg Gofaizen (Ukraine)

Committee 6 — Telecommunication services and tariff issues: Reports by the study groups

Chairman: Richard Thwaites (Australia)
Vice-Chairman: Carlos Merchán Escalante (Mexico)

Committee 7 — Editorial Committee

Chairman: Ms Marie-Thérèse Alajouanine (France)
Vice-Chairmen: Vince Affleck (United Kingdom)
 Antonio Fernandez-Paniagua (Spain)

transfer, and multi-media interaction between people and even between machines and chips. We are just beginning to understand the potential impact this will have on our society and economy. The reality of this exciting new world of information and communication technology means ITU must also re-examine the way it looks at its standardization activities."

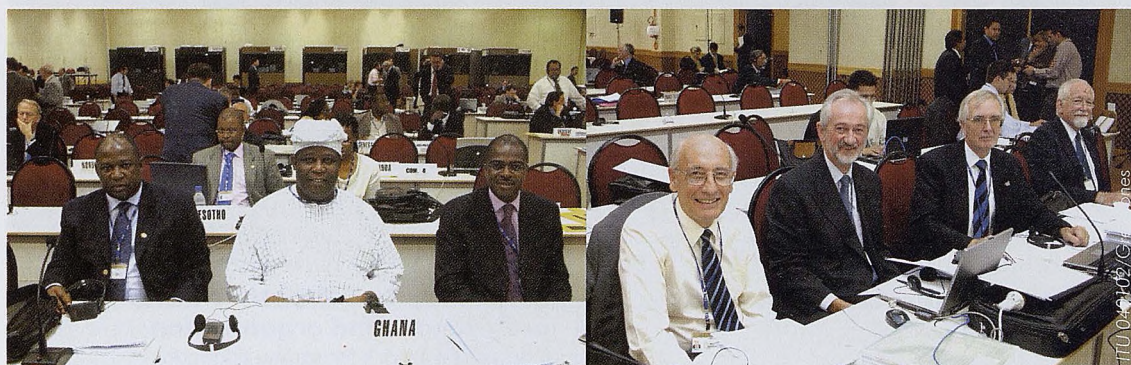
ITU-T: A unique forum

An increasingly competitive market means technical specifications for new systems are often hammered out during long and arduous negotiations between the world's key telecommunication players. In such an environment ITU, through its Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T), offers a unique multilateral forum

that allows competing interests to meet in an atmosphere of constructive debate, providing a framework for companies to mediate their differences for the benefit of consumers.

Throughout the course of every year, hundreds of experts gather at ITU meetings, contributing their time, know-how and expertise to the study groups, which develop new standards (known as ITU-T Recommendations) or revise and up-

remarkable achievement and recognized the progress made in speeding up time-to-market of ITU-T Recommendations. As new information and communication technologies and services continue to expand across the globe, greater cooperation will be needed not only to ensure better standards, but that they are developed, adopted and enforced even more quickly for all to benefit.



Delegates enjoy a lighthearted moment before the final plenary

date existing ones. ITU-T Recommendations are technical specifications and operating parameters for equipment and systems covering every aspect of network operation, from numbering plans and accounting rates to the functioning of circuit-switched and packet-based voice and data networks. With a majority of its membership from the private sector, ITU-T understands the crucial balance it has to strike between rapid delivery and the need for stability in standards development.

Through standardization efforts spanning more than 130 years, ITU has helped the global telecommunication industry grow to become the world's third-largest business sector with an annual value of over USD 1 trillion. Now, as an increasing number of operators re-orient their business plans to move to next-generation (all-IP networks) ITU-T's work programme is adapting and expanding to encompass developments in these systems.

Reports of study group chairmen to the Assembly gave an overview of the key achievements of the concluding study period (2000–2004). A total of 982 standards have been approved since the Montreal Assembly, held in the year 2000, representing one new or updated standard for every working day. The Assembly noted this as a

The question of cooperation was also stressed by Houlin Zhao, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB). Mr Zhao, who convened a meeting of Chief Technology Officers in Geneva in December 2003 as a side event to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), shared with the Assembly the statement from that meeting: "We have growing confidence that the telecommunication industry is emerging from a tough period. This is being driven by the market pull for services that come from a real convergence of the information, computing and telecommunication technologies around a converged architecture. This demands a coherent framework for standards development. ITU is in a key position to facilitate the overall framework and the globalization of standards because of its global reach, its traditional relationship with telcos and vendors and its links to governments. ITU must cooperate with other standards bodies and a variety of forums."

The Assembly took into account all of these and other comments when defining the general policy and adopting working methods and procedures for ITU-T for the next study period (2005–2008). As Savio Pinheiro of ANATEL, Chairman of the Assembly, put it in his address to the first

plenary meeting: "We are facing several challenges at this WTSA. First those that happen every four years relating to the restructuring and working methods of ITU-T. But we also have to face the fact that advances in telecommunication have deep, social, economic, technological and political repercussions." Worldwide standards provide manufacturers with a solid basis on which to compete in the global marketplace, unhindered by technical barriers. Also, because global standards can translate into formidable economies of scale and lower development and hardware costs, they mean lower prices to end-users. Finally, global standards protect users from incompatibility problems between rival systems.

Next-generation networks and security in the spotlight

One of the key issues for delegates at the Assembly was to examine the way in which work related to next generation networks is handled in the various ITU-T study groups. The question of next-generation networks also dominated the discussions in the well-attended technical briefings that were organized during the Assembly. Topics such as international domain names, Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) and telecommunications for disaster relief and telemedicine also took centre stage during the technical briefings.

The Assembly has laid the foundations for the next generation of information and communication technologies, giving ITU-T a clear mandate and direction for the coming four years. In this regard, the new study group that has been created for next-generation networks paves the way for industry and government to concentrate their efforts on developing global standards to address this migration.

Furthermore, the Assembly noted growing concern over security in ICTs. Before the event, a Cybersecurity Symposium was held. A key conclusion of that event, attended by private sector and government representatives is that standardization should form a vital part of the global cybersecurity effort. ITU has published over 70 standards in the security field, including one of the most well-known, X.509, which is used for securing the connection between a browser and a server on the Web and for providing digital sig-

natures that enable e-commerce transactions to be conducted. Other standards cover areas including security from network attacks, theft or denial of service, theft of identity, eavesdropping, telebiometrics for authentication, security for emergency telecommunications and telecommunication networks security requirements.



Roberto Blois, ITU Deputy Secretary-General (centre), presents the ITU silver medal to WTSA-04 Chairman, Savio Pinheiro

In view of the potential difficulties resulting from the convergence of legacy networks and IP networks, the Assembly passed a resolution tasking ITU-T to evaluate its Recommendations, especially in the area of signalling and communication protocols, in order to ensure their robustness and prevent exploitation by malicious parties (see also *ITU News*, November 2004 issue, page 2). "This WTSA has seen much intense deliberation," said Roberto Blois, ITU Deputy Secretary-General. "We have always to expect that there will be some difference of opinion. The fact that we have resolved these issues is testament to the value and power of ITU as an able architect of the standards that underpin the world's communication networks," Mr Blois added.

Gender mainstreaming

For the first time at a WTSA, a resolution was passed to include a gender perspective in the work of ITU-T. The resolution encourages ITU-T Members to contribute to meeting gender-equality objectives through the participation of women in both standardization activities and leadership positions. ■