



WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY

Submitted by General Secretariat

1. Background

1.1 *World Telecommunication Day* has been celebrated annually on 17 May **since 1969**, marking the date of the founding of ITU and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865. It was formally instituted by the Plenipotentiary Conference in Malaga-Torremolinos in 1973. In recognition of ITU as the lead United Nations agency for telecommunications and information and communication technologies, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, November 2005, called on the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim 17 May as World Information Society Day ([see paragraph 121 of the Tunis Agenda](#)).

1.2 On 27 March 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/252, proclaiming 17 May as *World Information Society Day* to focus global attention annually on bringing the enormous benefits of the digital revolution in information and communication technologies to the world's inhabitants.

1.3 The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2006 welcomed the General Assembly's decision and amended Resolution 68 to invite the Council to adopt a specific theme for each *World Telecommunication and Information Society Day*.

2. Celebration of ITU's 150th Anniversary

2.1 The year 2015 marks a major milestone in the history of the International Telecommunication Union. On 17 May 1865, the first [International Telegraph Convention](#) was signed in Paris. This significant date is celebrated globally each year as [World Telecommunication and Information Society Day](#).

2.2 On 17 May 2015, ITU celebrated its 150th anniversary focusing on the achievements of the Union and its Members in connecting the world. The celebrations organized for the year 2015 focus on the theme: **"Telecommunication/ICTs: Drivers of innovation"**.

2.3 The World Summit on the Information Society recognized the importance of ICTs as the drivers of innovation, and both the Geneva Plan of Action and Tunis Commitment make several recommendations to create an environment that encourages and fosters innovation and calls upon institutions to be both responsive and supportive of research and innovation.

2.4 The theme is in line with several core activities and imperatives of the Union, underlining the work of several key ITU events and meetings organized by the Sectors of the Union.

2.5 Several events have been held in ITU highlighting the theme, including World Radio Day in February showcasing youth and innovation. Each month of the year has been marked by a theme on innovation, including intelligent transport systems, the digital dividend, bridging the digital divide, gender mainstreaming, accessibility, and marine navigation.

2.6 ITU's 150th anniversary has been celebrated worldwide and some 150 initiatives have been posted on the ITU 150 website, including the issuing of postage stamps in some countries, including Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Georgia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Moldova, Monaco, Oman, Portugal, Romani, Russia, Serbia, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, Uruguay and the Vatican State.

2.7 ITU's 150th anniversary was celebrated in Paris on 27 April at the Salon de l'Horloge on Quai d'Orsay with a presentation of historical material, including the International Telegraph Convention of 1865.

2.8 A glittering ceremony was held in Madrid in the presence of H.M. King Felipe VI of Spain to commemorate the re-naming of ITU as the International Telecommunication Union in 1932.

2.9 A gala ceremony was held at the United Nations in New York on 26 September attended by several Heads of State and Government.

3. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2015

3.1 WTISD-15 was celebrated on Sunday, 17 May 2015, during the Council 2015 session and held at the Geneva Convention Centre (CICG).

3.2 Her Excellency Ms Doris Leuthard, Switzerland's Minister of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications was the Chief Guest at the ceremony.

3.3 The ceremony began with a video message from Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations. "ITU has earned its global reputation for resilience and relevance," Mr Ban said. "I applaud the agency's many contributions as the oldest member in the United Nations system. This is a milestone year – the 150th anniversary of ITU, the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, and the potential starting year for transforming our world."

3.4 ITU 150 Awards were presented to Martin Cooper, Robert E. Kahn, Mark Krivocheev, Ken Sakamura and Thomas Wiegand. A special award was presented to Bill.

3.5 The award ceremony was followed by a discussion among the laureates moderated by the Master of Ceremony, Imogen Foulkes of the BBC.

3.6 The Secretary-General recognized the 16 Founding ITU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey).

3.7 Leading industries in the ICT sector and long-standing Sector Members, such as Cable & Wireless, which joined ITU way back in 1871, were also recognized.

3.8 The Secretary-General also recognized Ministers present at the ceremony from Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Djibouti, Japan, Moldova, Morocco, Myanmar, Poland, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the United Arab Emirates.

3.9 The Secretary-General thanked sponsors of the ITU 150 celebrations: Gold sponsors (Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates); Silver partners (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Zimbabwe); and Bronze partners (Inmarsat Global Limited, Close Joint-Stock Company National Radio Technical Bureau, Huawei Technologies, Rostelecom, Rohde & Schwarz, Telecommunications Regulatory Agency, Central African Republic and NTT Group).

3.10 A discussion panel on 'Innovation driving a sustainable future' brought in Philip Walton, COO of BRCK; Luis Von Ahn, CEO & founder of DuoLingo; Gabriela Styf Sjöman, CTO, Telecom Italia Group; Jian Wang, CTO, Alibaba; and Ulf Ewaldsson, CTO of Ericsson.

3.11 A video "One Day on Earth" was screened depicting how ICTs drive development and innovation around the world.

3.11 Astronaut Scott Kelly wished ITU on its 150th anniversary from the International Space Station as it orbited 400 km above the earth at 27,600 km/hr.

3.12 Well-wishers from around the world sent videos of celebrations in their countries, including China, Ecuador, Hungary, Peru, Portugal, Russia, UAE, and USA. Videos were also played of the 150th anniversary ceremonies in Paris and Madrid. The ceremony ended with a video of people wishing ITU a Happy Birthday.