

WSIS

Ministerial Roundtable

CICG, Geneva (Switzerland)

Remarks

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**Mario Maniewicz,
Director, Radiocommunication Bureau**

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has a long and storied history that dates back to its founding in 1865. Over the years, the ITU has evolved to play a critical role in the development of global telecommunication and ICT regulatory frameworks.

From an initial focus on facilitating the interconnection of national telegraph networks and standardize telegraphy equipment and protocols, the ITU expanded its scope to include telephony and radio communications, leading to its renaming as the International Telecommunication Union in 1932.

Over the years, ITU has held the World Radiocommunication Conference that updates the Radio Regulations, which facilitates new spectrum resources that facilitate technological innovations, deepen global connectivity, increase access to and equitable use of space-based radio resources, and enhance safety at sea, in the air, and on land.

This regulatory framework ensures the continued coexistence of different radiocommunication services while maintaining the stability required to attract investments and enabling the continued growth of telecommunications and ICTs.

Digital technologies have opened the doors to new applications that are spurring greater interest in, and demand for, the world's limited spectrum and orbital resources. This growing demand sometimes requires updates to the regulatory framework.

Over the years, the ITU Radio Regulations have continuously enabled technological developments to increase the efficient use and access to radio frequency. Modifications to the international treaty have addressed the spectrum requirements of both new and existing services; ensured the timely availability of spectrum and corresponding regulatory provisions; and promoted the benefits of globally harmonized frequency bands.

Since the inception of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003, the world has witnessed significant transformations in information and communication technologies (ICTs).

This period has been marked by a concerted effort to harness ICTs' potential for sustainable development. The Geneva Plan of Action, formulated during the Summit, has provided a comprehensive framework that inspired initiatives focused on bridging the digital divide, enhancing digital literacy, and fostering sustainable development through ICTs.

In 2003, only 785 million people had access to internet. 2 years later, in 2005, the worldwide internet penetration rate has increased by 13%.

Following the WSIS, countries have established enabling environments equipped with policies and frameworks that advance the role of ICTs.

ITU's latest data shows that 67% of the world's population, or 5.4 billion people, are now online, marking a 4.7% growth from the previous year and reducing the number of offline individuals to 2.6 billion.

The WSIS Forum has harnessed the power of technology to foster progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Attracting more than 120,000 stakeholders from 160 countries, the WSIS Forum has become a pivotal platform for international dialogue and cooperation.

All these efforts have been aimed at leveraging technology to drive progress and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.