

PRESS RELEASE

AITI EXTENDS 'WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY (WTISD)' MESSAGE

17 May 2008 - This year marks the second year Brunei Darussalam is celebrating the **World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD)** since the merging of World Telecommunication Day and World Information Society Day in 2007. AITI's 2008 initiative is to help spread the messages conveyed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations (UN) celebrating WTISD 2008.

Being a member country of the ITU since 1984, Brunei Darussalam annually celebrated the then, **World Telecommunication Day (WTD)**, every 17th May. In November 2005, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) called upon the UN General Assembly to declare 17 May as **World Information Society Day** to focus on the importance of ICT and the wide range of issues related to the Information Society raised by WSIS. Hence, stipulating that the **World Telecommunication and Information Society Day** be celebrated every 17 May 2008.

This year, we celebrate WTISD under the theme "**Connecting Persons With Disabilities: ICT Opportunities For All**" and ITU member countries are urged to focus on this theme and address the special requirements of those with special needs. This should be taken into account in all actions and projects targeting the use and access of ICT, not only as a way to widen ICT opportunities for the 'physically and mentally challenged' but also as a way to accelerate bridging the digital divide and contribute to the development of the telecommunication sector as a whole.

The theme also highlights the importance and urgency of providing access to the benefits of ICT to those with 'Special Needs'. WSIS through the Geneva Plan of Action¹, urged Member States to address the special requirements of persons with Special Needs in their national e-strategies and encouraged the design and production of ICT equipment and services suited to their needs, including adherence to the Universal Design Principle and use of assistive technologies. A further call was made for research and development to facilitate accessibility of ICT for all, including people with Special Needs. The Doha Plan of Action² endorsed the Tunis Commitment of building ICT capacity for all, including people with Special Needs, through the promotion of universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT. It encouraged adoption of universal design and assistive technologies to ensure that the benefits are evenly

¹ <http://www.itu.int/wsis/outcome/booklet/index.html>

² <http://www.itu.int/publ/D-TDC-WTDC-2006>

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distributed within societies as well as to bridge the digital divide by creating digital opportunities for all and by harnessing the full potential for development offered by state-of-the-art ICT.

The Call for Action

During this year's WTISD, ITU calls upon all stakeholders (policy makers, regulators, operators and industry) to raise awareness on the need to adopt policies and strategies that would meet the ICT needs of people with Special Needs by ensuring that both equipment and services are accessible.

Appropriate measures should also be taken to:

1. ensure ICT and emergency service access to persons with Special Needs on an equal basis;
2. promote access for persons with Special Needs to new ICT, including the Internet;
3. promote design, production and distribution of accessible ICT at an early stage;
4. provide information in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of Special Needs in a timely manner and without additional cost;
5. urge private entities that render services to the public to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with Special Needs;
6. encourage mass media (including information providers through the Internet) to make their services accessible.

In support of this, the **Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI)** is organizing various activities starting on the 17 May 2008, that reflects on the theme and drawing attention on its importance, in conjunction with WTISD.

AITI and the TELCOs (TelBru, DST and B.Mobile) had earlier initiated the "Celebrate ICT With A Smile" Campaign, to promote the use of ICT, whereby residents of Brunei Darussalam shared their smiles and submitted their digital photos through the website www.celebrateictwithasmile.com.bn³. These photos are printed into a special calendar and the winners (Best 12 Smiles) are currently being announced through the same website. The "Celebrate ICT With A Smile" calendars will be distributed in all the TELCO branches starting Monday, 19 May 2007 at limited stock only.

³ <http://www.celebrateictwithasmile.com.bn/>

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Also, in line with WTISD, another celebration will be held on Saturday, 17 May 2008 to acknowledge and award the academic achievers and workers who are categorized under 'Special Needs'. This event is supported by Special Education Unit of **Ministry of Education**, Land Transport Department of **Ministry of Communications**, TelBru, DST, B.Mobile, CfBT Learning Centre, Infocomm Federation of Brunei (IFB), Anakbrunei.org and Ranoadidas.com.

*Attached are the messages by **Dr Hamadoun Touré**, ITU Secretary-General and **Mr Ban Ki-moon**, UN Secretary-General on WTISD 2008.*

Released by:

Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI)

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Message from Dr Hamadoun Touré
Secretary-General
International Telecommunication Union⁴



The key to the information society is universal access. Everyone must have equal opportunity to participate in the digital age. And no one should be denied the potential benefits of new information and communication technologies (ICT), not least because they are hampered by their disabilities. As ICT bring a range of innovations in the workplace, at home and in every facet of our lives, these benefits must also be harnessed for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

This year, ITU has adopted the theme: "Connecting Persons with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All" to mark World Telecommunication and Information Society Day. The World Summit on the Information Society urged Member States to address the special requirements of persons with disabilities along with other marginalized and vulnerable groups in their national e-strategies. A further call was made to encourage design and production of ICT equipment and services adhering to the Universal Design Principle and the use of assistive technologies for research and development to facilitate accessibility to ICT for all, including persons with disabilities.

⁴ <http://www.itu.int/wtisd/2008/messages/toure.html>

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The last World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-06) held in Doha, Qatar in 2006, created a new Special Initiative on "Access to telecommunication services for persons with disabilities". The Doha Plan of Action endorsed the Tunis Commitment of building ICT capacity for all, including persons with disabilities, through the promotion of universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICT. It encouraged the adoption of universal design and assistive technologies to ensure that the benefits are evenly distributed within societies as well as to bridge the digital divide by creating digital opportunities to harness the full potential for development offered by state-of-the-art ICT.

During this year's WTISD, ITU calls upon all stakeholders (policy makers and regulators as well as operators and industry) to raise awareness on the need to adopt policies and strategies that would meet the ICT needs of persons with disabilities by ensuring that both equipment and services are accessible. This would not only ensure an inclusive information society, but would also enable Member States to meet their obligations under Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006.

Our focus this year on meeting the ICT needs of persons with disabilities is aimed at empowering every citizen with information and knowledge, improving the lines of communication to the remotest and most vulnerable groups, and building an inclusive information society geared towards the advancement of a better, more peaceful and productive world. It is clearly our duty today to provide the opportunities of ICT to all, especially to those of us with disabilities.

As we celebrate World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, we invite all stakeholders — manufacturers, service providers, international organizations, public and non-governmental organizations as well as policy makers — to join us in our endeavour to connect everyone, especially the 650 million or so people around the world who live with disabilities, to the remarkable digital opportunities offered by ICT.

Hamadoun I. Touré
ITU Secretary-General

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Message from Mr Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nation⁵



Starting with the earliest drum beats, telegraphy -- "writing in distance" -- has been with us in dynamic, evolutionary motion. The ability to relay important information quickly across vast distances, closing the gaps of time and space, has expanded exponentially all manner of human activity, from sending out personal messages to completing complex financial transactions to engaging critical matters of war and peace. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day heralds the enabling and transformative role of communications and information in societies, and the universal need to communicate and cooperate across borders.

It is also the day in 1865 when the International Telecommunication Union was founded. At the time, the idea to transmit electronic signals across wires had already set forth a dramatic chain reaction of competing technologies. ITU was formed to address the growing need for international standards. From these early days, ITU has played a key role in connecting the world, a challenge which continues today with 3G mobile and broadband technologies.

Yet the reach of communications technology is not universal, its benefits have not been shared equally. The World Summit on the Information Society, held in

⁵ <http://www.itu.int/wtisd/2008/messages/kimoon.html>

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Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005, linked information and communication technology (ICT) with human development and called on Member States to build a global "inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented information society" through the sharing of information and knowledge.

The Summit also urged Member States to address the special requirements of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The theme of this year's observance, "connecting persons with disabilities", highlights the importance of making ICT equipment and services accessible to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. There are an estimated 650 million persons living with disabilities worldwide. Including their families, there are nearly two billion persons who are directly affected by disability, almost a third of the world's population. It is important to remember that anyone can become disabled at any moment.

It is vital that we change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities, ensuring that all fundamental rights and freedoms are honoured, including the right to fully participate in the information society, and bring forth input, ideas and effort from the disability community.

This is a significant development challenge. But we must find creative solutions, including the development of new assistive technologies, and facilitate a broader access to ICT. I urge policy-makers and industry leaders to accelerate scientific and technical research aimed at developing technologies that will be inclusive and accessible to all.

On this day, let us pledge to adhere to the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and work together to connect all humankind equally to the present opportunities and those yet possible in our ever-evolving world.

Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary-General