

New Year Message from ITU Secretary-General



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It is a great pleasure to have this opportunity to greet our Japanese community through the ITU Journal. The ITU Association of Japan (ITU-AJ) has proved extremely valuable in enhancing ITU's work in technical standardization and radiocommunications, helping connect the world and bring the benefits of modern communication technologies to people everywhere.

Last year was especially busy and productive for ITU. We hosted major events including the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-14) in the United Arab Emirates, the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) in Bahrain, the WSIS+10 High-Level Event in Geneva, and ITU Telecom World 2014 in Qatar. The most important event of course was PP-14, which took place in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 20 October – 7 November 2014. I am pleased to note that Japan made a particularly strong contribution to this Conference with its call in the formal policy statement from the Government of Japan “to establish a ‘smart global connected network’, which all people can access freely and easily from everywhere, get and share information and knowledge and create value”.

PP-14 was the biggest and best-attended Plenipotentiary Conference yet, with over 2,500 delegates. The Republic of Korea hosted “the ICT Olympics”, comprising not just the Conference but also a wide range of exciting side events and activities. The Conference approved the Strategic and Financial Plans for 2016-2019, and elected the new management team, the members of the Radio Regulations Board and the members of ITU Council. PP-14 saw some new resolutions approved on: flight safety and tracking; combating counterfeit ICT devices; disaster management and ICTs; youth empowerment; child online protection; gender empowerment through ICTs; using the power of ICTs to combat Ebola; and on delivering affordable international Internet connectivity for all, in addition to ITU's existing established regular work programme. The telecom and Internet communities continued the rapprochement started at WTPF-2013, and grew closer to each other in understanding. In addition, PP-14 approved the Connect 2020 Agenda for global telecommunication/ICT development, which sets universal, specific and measurable targets for the development of the sector under goals of growth, inclusiveness and sustainability, as well as innovation and partnership.

True to our commitment to being as open and inclusive as possible, all Plenary sessions were captioned and webcast, and all sessions of the substantive committees were open to the media and the public. ITU held regular press briefings and specific briefings for civil society to keep all stakeholders up to date on developments as they happened. And true to our commitment to being environmentally friendly, despite 6,000 pages of translated documents, the Conference was managed in a virtually paperless manner.

ITU continues to work closely with industry leaders, governments and policy pioneers, regulators, civil society, other international organizations and academia, most notably through the ITU Telecom World events and the regular meetings of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Digital Development.

PP-14 has helped define the ICT policy agenda moving forward, and will enable ITU to respond more flexibly to future opportunities and challenges in this fast-moving industry.

In late November, ITU published its flagship report, *Measuring the Information Society 2014*, at the World Telecommunication and ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS), which explored the promise of Big Data for enhancing policy decisions and monitoring policy outcomes. WTIS confirms ITU as the primary statistics-gathering agency for ICT data, with our data being used extensively in World Bank and World Economic Forum reports, as well as by private sector consultancies and analysts. I am proud that our statistics are widely recognized as the world's most comprehensive, reliable and impartial data on the state of the industry.

Significantly, the final G.fast standard was approved in December, a major development which promises to deliver fibre-equivalent speeds of up to 1 Gbps over 250m of copper wire. This standard moves us from the “last mile” to the “last metres”. By pushing fibre out still further into the network towards the distribution point, but retaining copper for the problematic entry-points into customer premises, it has been estimated that this standard could save the global telecom industry in excess of a billion dollars by avoiding the total replacement of copper to the end-point.

As 2015 dawns, ITU looks forward to another busy and productive year committed to serving the needs of its membership. 2015 is a milestone year for ITU, which will celebrate 150 years of international cooperation among governments, private companies, academia and other stakeholders on 17 May 2015. ITU invites you all to join in the ITU's 150th Anniversary celebrations.

We especially look forward to the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) 2015, which will review and, if necessary, revise the Radio Regulations, the international treaty governing the use of the radio-frequency spectrum and geostationary-satellite and non-geostationary-satellite orbits. WRC-2015 will deal with many pivotal issues for the industry, including considering: the reallocation of more spectrum to underpin the growth of mobile broadband and satellite services; spectrum for flight tracking; aeronautical issues; maritime issues for onboard communication stations; and radiolocation issues for new car radar systems.

We will also be very much looking forward to the 2015 edition of the WSIS Forum, which will be taking place in Geneva from 25-29 May, as well as GSR-15, which will be taking place in Gabon from 9-11 June 2015.

This year will also see the renegotiation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in Disaster Risk Reduction, a landmark agreement which will provide the framework for all agencies working in this field for the next ten years. All in all, we anticipate that 2015 will prove pivotal for defining global strategies for managing disasters and mitigating climate risk, in combination with the UN's new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the much hoped-for Climate Agreement.

I am confident that Japan will continue to participate actively in all of ITU's many activities, and I would like to thank Japan for its continuous support ever since joining the Union in 1879. As I enter into office as the Secretary-General, I look forward to engaging with as many of you as possible in this year, through ITU's events scheduled throughout the coming year, and I take this opportunity to wish all of you at ITU-AJ, as well as your families, a peaceful and prosperous 2015.