

# International Telecommunication Union

For immediate release

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## World Telecommunication and Information Society Day ceremony honours three laureates

Three Major announcements made to curb cybercrime,  
connect Africa and connect the young

Geneva, 17 May 2007 – As part of its mandate given by the World Summit on the Information Society to build confidence in the use of ICT, ITU announces an ambitious two-year plan to curb cybercrime. The announcement was made by ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun Touré at a ceremony to present the 2007 ITU World Information Society Award.

Cybercrime takes several forms, from breaching network security, financial fraud, invasion of privacy and identity theft to virus attacks, spam or online child pornography. With schools, hospitals, and government organizations increasingly dependant on online services, the vulnerability of the system and everyone connected to it becomes frighteningly apparent. As we are only as secure as the weakest link, a global concerted response is needed to ensure there are no safe havens for cybercriminals.

### Cybersecurity Agenda launched

Against this background, ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun Touré set out a comprehensive *Global Cybersecurity Agenda* to tackle the issue within a framework of international cooperation. "With more than one billion Internet users in the world today, not only is the number of crimes committed in cyberspace increasing at an alarming rate, but the sophistication in the way these crimes are committed keeps evolving," Dr Touré said.

The goal of the Agenda is to foster a common understanding of the importance of cybersecurity and bring together all relevant stakeholders (governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, and civil society) to work on concrete solutions to deal with cybercrime. This is all the more important as criminals use weaknesses wherever they can be found and leverage them internationally. While there are a number of existing frameworks, they are enforceable only within geographical boundaries, either national or regional, thus leaving room for criminals to use loopholes to their advantage and in almost total impunity as they shift their operations to countries where appropriate and enforceable laws are not yet in place. It is vital to work on bringing together these initiatives within a framework of international cooperation and focus on solutions that leverage the broad range of existing expertise and initiatives in order to avoid duplication and make real progress in building confidence and security in the use of ICT.

"Today, the loss is estimated to run into several billion dollars, both from fraud on the Internet and from costs related to fixing networks that have suffered cyberattacks. But with children, students, and senior citizens communicating by Internet or mobile phone, tomorrow's losses can be devastating. Just one word change on a patient's medical file in a hospital could kill that patient, and hackers who can thwart sophisticated banking systems have no trouble breaking into a hospital's network," said Dr Hamadoun Touré, ITU Secretary-General. This is becoming a major concern for public authorities.

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The Global Cybersecurity Agenda, which will have a two-year timetable, rests on five pillars:

- Finding technical solutions for every environment
- Developing interoperable legislative frameworks
- Building capacity in all the relevant areas
- Establishing appropriate organizational structures
- Adopting effective international cooperation mechanisms

## **Connect Africa**

Turning to the need to fast-track the UN Millennium Development Goals, Dr Touré announced *Connect Africa*, a massive effort aimed at achieving the connectivity goals endorsed by world leaders at the World Summit on the Information Society.

Warning participants that, with the 2015 targets of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) only eight years away, the Secretary-General said that it has become imperative leverage ICT to rapidly mobilize the human, financial and technical resources required to connect all cities and villages.

To meet this challenge, ITU, the UN Global Alliance for Information and Communication Development, the World Bank, the African Union, the African Development Bank, the African Telecommunication Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa are joining to launch *Connect Africa*, the first of a series of regional initiatives to help achieve the WSIS connectivity goals. *Connect Africa* will be launched at a high-level gathering to be held in Kigali, Rwanda, 29–30 October, under the patronage of President Paul Kagame of Rwanda.

*Connect Africa* will aim to accelerate partnerships and the roll-out of ICT infrastructure and connectivity, including broadband, as an essential pre-condition for ICT access and services needed to boost social and economic development in the region. This collaborative effort will attract a range of stakeholders, including the Government of China, G8, OECD and other countries active in the region, major ICT companies, international organizations and civil society. It will complement and reinforce existing public and private sector initiatives and investments in the region by placing a special emphasis on filling in major gaps and enhancing coordination between stakeholders on the implementation and allocation of resources, based on regionally established priorities. It will target progress on several “quick win” projects of significant, catalysing impact that can be realized in the short-term, in addition to longer-term initiatives.

In order to stimulate the needed investment in ICT infrastructure and services, *Connect Africa* will also help expand efforts to develop an enabling environment across the continent, through policy and regulatory modernization and harmonization, strengthened cybersecurity and enhanced support for migration to next-generation networks.

## **Empowering Regulators**

The Secretary-General also announced that ITU, InfoDev and the World Bank are working on a Global Capacity Building Initiative for regulators to expand training opportunities for ICT policy-makers and regulators in developing countries, which will be launched at the *Connect Africa* event in October. This initiative will empower regulators with tools to establish an enabling environment to stimulate investment and innovation and build confidence in the telecommunications and ICT market.

Starting with Africa – and then expanding to other regions – the Global Capacity Building Initiative will build on the highly successful ICT Regulation Toolkit, which ITU and InfoDev launched in 2005 to improve access to training materials on key policy and regulatory issues in the ICT sector.

## **Digital opportunities for the young**

On the same occasion, HRH Sheikha Al-Mayassa Bint Hamad Al-Thani, Princess of Qatar, launched a campaign along with ITU to secure CHF 2 Million to support 250 new scholarships in addition to creating 1000 new internship opportunities in the field of information and communication technologies within the next three years, by 2010. She was represented at the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day ceremony at ITU headquarters in Geneva by Dr Hessa Al-Jaber, Secretary-General of ictQatar.

World Information Society Day, 17 May 2007 is dedicated this year to making available the benefits of the digital revolution to young people everywhere. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) recognized the young as the future workforce and the earliest adopters of ICT, and called for their empowerment as key contributors to building an inclusive Information Society. World leaders stated their commitment at the Summit in Tunis to actively engage youth in innovative ICT-based development programmes and widen opportunities for them.

UN Secretary-General Mr Ban K-moon, elaborating on the theme of this year's observance of World Information Society Day "connecting the young", said "Young people are among the most prolific and knowledgeable users of ICT. But the digital revolution is out of reach for many of them, especially young girls and women and people living in remote and underserved regions. I therefore urge policy-makers and industry leaders to put their minds together, and to work cooperatively with children and youth to produce suitable technologies, applications and services to facilitate access to information and communications technologies."

"ICT are powerful tools to empower children and other vulnerable groups with information and knowledge and act as a catalyst in ensuring their rights within the comity of nations," ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun Touré stated. "It is clearly our duty today to provide the opportunities of ICT to all children and youth, particularly to those who remain unconnected from the ongoing digital revolution."

### **Three laureates honoured by ITU at ceremony in Geneva**

At a ceremony at ITU Headquarters in Geneva, the First Lady of the Dominican Republic, H.E. Dr Margarita Cedeño de Fernández, Professor Mark Krivocheev, Chief Scientist of the Radio Research Institute in Moscow and the Mozilla Corporation represented by Ms Mitchell Baker, President and CEO were presented with the ITU World Information Society Award by the ITU Secretary-General.

Accepting the Award for her outstanding personal contribution towards building an inclusive and equitable global information society, Dr Cedeño de Fernández stated, "Our commitment has been to promote a development that is human and inclusive for Dominican families, which we implement by way of social and educational strategies that allow for the empowerment of each family member so that they may assume the responsibility for their own future well-being. These strategies are strengthened through the effective use of ICT as an efficient and expeditious tool that permits us to develop by transforming the lives of our citizens." Explaining that the goal is to build a Community Technology Centre in each and every municipality and village, Dr Fernández said, "We have focused on establishing Community Technology Centres in the pockets of poverty in the Dominican Republic, where we have put ICT at the hands of the most disadvantaged. Currently we are working in the poorest municipalities and communities in our country."

Professor Krivocheev, who received the Award for his lifetime achievements in the technical development of television services and systems, said that he was overwhelmed that his work in developing worldwide digital standards for television has served "as an impulse for the creation and development of the global information society". He added that progress in signal compression and processing for digital interactive TV broadcasting and multimedia and in the areas of mobile TV and Internet, microelectronics and imaging systems have allowed us to move towards new frontiers in the information society.

Speaking on behalf of Mozilla, Ms Mitchell Baker said that the mission of the Mozilla project is to empower people to participate more fully in online life. "We enable people to build software, to make that software fit local circumstances, to vet the quality of our software, and to modify and improve that software," Ms Baker said. "We create infrastructure through which groups of people organize themselves

to improve the Internet.” The Mozilla Corporation received the Award for its outstanding contribution to the development of world-class Internet technologies and applications.

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**About World Information Society Day**

In recognition of ITU as the UN agency for telecommunications and information and communication technologies, the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, November 2005, called upon the United Nations to declare 17 May as World Information Society Day. 17 May, long recognized as World Telecommunication Day, marks the establishment of ITU in 1865. Endorsed by the UN General Assembly, World Information Society Day focuses global attention annually on reaching the enormous benefits of the digital revolution in information and communication technologies to all the world’s inhabitants. The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2006 endorsed the celebration of 17 May as World Telecommunication and Information Society Day. For more details, see [www.itu.int/wisd/](http://www.itu.int/wisd/)

**About ITU**

ITU is the leading United Nations agency for information and communication technology issues, and the global focal point for governments and the private sector in developing networks and services. For more than 140 years, ITU has coordinated the shared global use of the radio spectrum, promoted international cooperation in assigning satellite orbits, worked to improve telecommunication infrastructure in the developing world, and established the worldwide standards that foster seamless interconnection of a vast range of communications systems.

ITU also organizes worldwide and regional exhibitions and forums bringing together the most influential representatives of government and the telecommunications industry to exchange ideas, knowledge and technology for the benefit of the global community, and in particular the developing world.

From broadband internet to latest-generation wireless technologies, from aeronautical and maritime navigation to radio astronomy and satellite-based meteorology, from phone and fax services to TV broadcasting and next-generation networks, ITU continues to play a central role in helping the world communicate.