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## **Vital broadband expansion key to development and peace, UN conference told**



Hamadoun Touré, Secretary-General of the ITU

24 May 2010 – The United Nations telecommunications agency opened its quadrennial development conference today, stressing that a vital expansion of broadband networks holds the key to rapid growth in productivity in developing countries and the potential to enhance global peace and justice.

“Broadband will be absolutely critical for all nations in the coming decade,” UN International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](#)) Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré told the opening session of the two-week World Telecommunication Development Conference in Hyderabad, India.

“Broadband networks will change the way governments offer essential services from education and health care to transportation, water and energy. By delivering efficiencies across all of these areas, broadband networks can quickly pay for themselves, creating a virtuous circle of investment, productivity and human development,” he said.

“What we decide and define here over the next two weeks will shape not just the future of ICT [information and communication technology] development over the next four years, but the future shape of the very world we live in. It will change the way that social and economic development happens, and the way ICT development happens.”

The conference chairman P. J. Thomas, Secretary at the Indian Department of Telecommunications, highlighted the ability of ICT to foster faster development of various social and economic sectors in any country, citing global recognition that technological progress and innovations are long-term drivers of economic growth, especially in developing countries.

“ICTs lead to equal opportunities for all mankind, especially perceptible improvement for the most vulnerable parts of society in rural and remote areas, contributing to the inclusive growth of society,” he said. “It is our cherished hope that increased general awareness among the masses created by the knowledge society would bring enhanced global peace, justice and respect for each other, which are the cornerstones for the elimination of disparity and poverty worldwide.”

ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau Director Sami Al Basheer stressed that while each country has its own challenges to face, they all share the same overall goals, calling for dedicated resources to deal with connectivity in the world’s least developed countries and better targeted and more positive regulation that focuses on incentives rather than obligations.

Issues to be discussed during the conference include broadband connectivity, digital broadcasting, open source software, cyber security, e-accessibility for people with disabilities, e-applications including health, human capacity building, emergency communications and ICT policy and regulation.

ITU’s focus on delivering equitable and affordable broadband access to achieve a knowledge-based information society aims to promote achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which seek to reduce extreme poverty, hunger and disease, while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability – all by 2015.

Various workshops during the two weeks will deal with a host of ambitious goals, including at connecting all schools by 2015, regulatory reform and enhancing countries’ capacity to develop or update national e-health strategic plans.

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