The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) continued in 2004 to promote the worldwide development and efficient operation of telecommunication systems.

At its annual session (Geneva, 9-18 June), the ITU Council discussed preparations for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (see p. 844), the biennial budget for 2004-2005, international telecommunication regulations, Internet issues, issues involving management of the Union, and forthcoming conferences and events.

During the year, the Union staged numerous events, including the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (Florianópolis, Brazil, 5-14 October), ITU TELECOM Africa 2004 (Cairo, Egypt, 4-8 May) and ITU TELECOM Asia 2004 (Busan, Republic of Korea, 7-11 September).

ITU membership remained at 189 in 2004.

Radiocommunication Sector
ITU’s Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) reduced its backlog of satellite network filings as the processing time for most procedures was reduced to less than one year, down from two years at the end of 2003. Preparatory work for the 2007 World Radiocommunication Conference and Radiocommunication Assembly began, and dialogue was initiated with a number of organizations to finalize formal arrangements for facilitating access to their technical standards and for referencing them in ITU-R recommendations. Some 88 new and revised recommendations were published, including on compatibility between passive and active services based on band-by-band studies, digital sound broadcasting below 30 MHz, protection of passive services, spectrum and sharing issues concerning wireless access systems, use of earth stations onboard vessels, and future development of International Mobile Telecommunications 2000 (IMT-2000) and systems beyond IMT-2000. The Radiocommunication Bureau implemented a new component of TerRaSys to streamline workflows by making it possible to examine numerous pending notices related to shared bands more quickly and effectively, thus reducing the backlog in that area.

Telecommunication Standardization Sector
The Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) continued to ensure the efficient and on-time production of high-quality standards covering all areas of telecommunications. In 2004, the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (Florianópolis, Brazil, 5-14 October) adopted 17 revised resolutions and 14 new ones in areas ranging from budgeting and operational planning to Internet top level domains, cyber security, spam, standardization issues for developing countries and gender issues in ITU-T work.

ITU-T also adopted 257 recommendations and supplements on a wide range of issues, including standards for security architecture for systems providing end-to-end communications, quadrupling fiber optic transmission capacity, lowering costs, and setting a standard that encouraged innovation in interactive television.

Telecommunication Development Sector
The Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) continued in 2004 to promote investment and foster the expansion of telecommunication infrastructure in developing countries.

ITU-D’s Telecommunication Development Bureau continued to assist countries to reform and restructure their telecommunication sectors through the introduction of new technologies, capacity development to ensure sustainability in management and operations, and by promoting financing and partnerships as a strategy to attract investment. The Bureau’s Sector Reform Unit carried out an annual telecommunication regulation survey and published the sixth annual Trends in Telecommunication Reform report, which focused on licensing issues for regulators.

The fifth annual Global Symposium for Regulators (Geneva, 8-10 December) established a set of Best Practice Guidelines for the Promotion of Low-Cost Broadband and Internet Connectivity.

ITU-D published the Yearbook of Statistics, the leading source of information and communication technology (ICT) statistics, and the World Telecommunication Development Report 2004, which tracked trends in national, regional and international ICT development.
Secretariat
As at 31 December 2004, ITU had 742 staff members, comprising 5 elected officials, 299 in the Professional and higher categories and 438 in the General Service category.

Budget
The ITU Council in 2003 set the budget for 2004-2005 at 328,872,000 Swiss francs.

NOTE: For further details regarding ITU activities, see the ITU 2004 Annual Report, published by the Union.