

Conference report

Telecom 99 + Interactive 99

10–17 October 1999, Geneva, Switzerland

ITU

About the ITU

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is an international organization headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, where governments and the private sector co-ordinate global telecom networks and services. The ITU (headed by Secretary General Yoshio Utsumi), includes 189 countries – of which 85% are developing countries – and some 550 members from the private sector. The organization appoints study groups and task groups to work on recommendations for worldwide standards. Further information on the ITU can be found on their website at:

<http://www.itu.int/aboutitu/index.html>

Telecom

In 1971 the ITU launched the *Telecom* event and it has taken place every four years since. *Telecom* organizes regional and global trade shows and conferences, such as the *Africa Telecom* and this year's *Telecom 99 + Interactive 99*. The event is a showcase of the latest telecommunications products and services industry has to offer. The conference Forum was designed to stress industry trends and share information, and to foster the transfer of this information to less developed countries. *Telecom* aims to provide a meeting place for government leaders, administrations, top-executives from operators, industry and service providers as well as users, investors, regulators and the press.

The event has gained in prestige, attracting the biggest and most important companies to the exhibition and some of the most influential industry speakers to the Forum. The initial intent of giving emerging nations a place to view new telecommunications technologies seems sometimes to be forgotten.

Telecom 99 + Interactive 99

Site

The Eighth World Telecom event was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 10 to 17 October 1999, closing with a weekend of *World Telecom Internet Days*. The exhibitions and Forums took place in the Palexpo Exhibition and Conference Centre. In the garden in front of Palexpo, a new outdoor press centre – nicknamed 'Hall 8' – was created, equipped with television studio etc. (The event was organized by the ITU management team, headed by Jean-Patrick Baré.)

Overview

Telecom 99 is roughly split into two activities, the exhibitions and the forum sessions. The net exhibition space (counting upper floors) has grown from 14 000 square metres in 1971 to 66 000 square metres in 1999. 1 123 Exhibitors from 48 countries showed some 200 000 visitors, 3000 journalists and some hundred of ministers and directors-general all which is new and remarkable in telecommunications and launched a path for many new technologies.

Around 5000 Forum delegates, speakers and panelists of ministers, CEOs, politicians and industrial experts were brought together. Not surprisingly the main focus was on the Internet and Mobile Communications.

Sessions and papers of special interest

The Forum comprised four summits and eight combined sessions covering issues of interest for all the summits. The four summits dealt with Policy and Regulatory, Infrastructure, Interactive (Service and Applications) and Development issues. The Summits and Combined Sessions had quite a few presentations related to satellite communications. In such an immense

programme it is impossible to cover everything, therefore I focussed on that session that most meets the aims and scope of *Space Communications*.

In this light, Session INF3, *New Technologies-Satellite Solutions*, held on Tuesday morning 12 October was probably the most interesting. The session focussed on developments that allow satellites to play a more important role in telecommunications networks, as complete networks instead of 'as now' network elements. Some interesting papers were presented on satellites with on-board switching, intersatellite links and different orbits (GEO, MEO and LEO). A clear general overview of the state of the art and development of satellite technologies was given by one of the keynote speakers, Dr. Modanlo, Chairman and President of Final Analysis (USA). Dr. Prakash Chitre of COMSAT Laboratories (USA) lectured on 'ATM and Internet Standards and Interoperability'. He also discussed the development of LINKWAY 2000, a product for bandwidth on demand on the Internet. The presentation by Dr. Grundström of Nokia Research (Finland) dealt with 'Providing high-speed internet access using DVB broadcast channels'. The presentation specifically focussed on the evaluation of DVB through satellites, not terrestrial or cable links. Another interesting topic presented was 'A range of novel architecture concepts for broadband satellite communications networks' by Mr. Franchini of Matra Marconi Space (France).

On Friday 15 October afternoon, another interesting session was held, INT8 on *Broadcasting: Towards an Interactive Environment*. The presentations in this sessions dealt with the flexibility, interactiv-

ity and interoperability boundaries in the new environments of digital broadcasting and information systems. Mr. Lavin from the European Broadcasting Union and Mr. Claudy from the National Association of Broadcasters gave keynote speeches on future developments. Due to other activities, I could unfortunately not attend the complete session.

Documentation

Though not all papers were received, there are quite a lot available. For more information on the sessions and published presentations, check the ITU Forum website at:

<http://www.itu.int/telecom-wt99/forum/forum.html>

The ITU is also publishing all submitted papers together in a folio production. More information is available from the ITU.

Next Telecom

Americas 2000 in Rio de Janeiro is the next ITU *Telecom* event, for Latin America and the Caribbean, on 10–15 April 2000. *Asia 2000* will take place in Hong Kong on 4–9 December 2000, followed by *Africa 2001*. The next *World Telecom* will be held in Geneva in 2003.

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