

UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATION IN THE LIGHT OF GLOBAL TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

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From a historical perspective, 'the right to communication' is based on human instinct and is also one of the fundamental human rights. The right to communicate relates to the fundamental freedoms and values of contemporary societies and represents the affirmation and expression of the most essential rights for human dignity. With the creation of new technologies of communication such as cellular phones, telefacsimile and the Internet, it is clear that readily available access to telecommunication is highly important for our daily life. However, due to differences in economic development and resources distribution, there is still a big gap between industrialized and developing countries in access to basic telecommunications. Since everyone should have the equal right to communicate, it is the global aim to assist people living in remote and rural areas to gain basic telecommunications to access and connect with the outer world. The main aim of this article is to examine this innate right as it emerges from historic human rights legal documents and international agreements and to emphasize the equality of rights concerning access to telecommunication between industrialized and developing countries.

1. Introduction

Human beings and animals alike have the innate ability to express themselves by sounds, odours, colours, actions, and in many other ways. In this manner, their demands, feelings, and opinions can be observed and understood by the intended recipient and this is termed: "communication." Through communication, persons can understand each other and actively exchange information. Obviously, "communication" itself and related tools play

an important role in mankind's scientific and civilization history. Nowadays, telecommunication methods are developing constantly and have become essential components in our daily life. New communication tools such as cellular phones, telefacsimile, and the internet have changed human lifestyles and brought to light several legal problems at domestic and international levels.

From a historical perspective, "the right to communicate" is a human instinct and also a fundamental human right. The right to communicate, relating to the fundamental freedoms and values of contemporary societies, represents the affirmation and expression of the most essential rights for human dignity. With the creation of new technologies, it is believed that readily available access to telecommunication is essential for our daily life. However, due to the differences in economic development and resource distribution, there is still a big gap between industrialized and developing countries in access to basic telecommunication. Because everyone should have the equal right to communicate, it is the global aim to assist people living in remote and rural areas to gain basic telecommunications to access and connect with the outer world.

The topic of the right to communicate is wide and contains many legal issues, such as, the history of Free Speech, personal freedoms versus national security, privacy and confidential protection, and new technology and encryption. This article does not address all of those issues at one time; instead, it will provide a general description of the right to communication. Most important of all, this article will focus on the relationship between the right to communicate and global telecommunication development. As mentioned above, many people still lack the basic telecommunication access such as basic telephone lines to connect to the outer world. We believe everyone has the equal right to communicate, to use public services, and to enjoy the new beneficial technologies. This is the major theme the author wants to address in this article.

2. The Right to Communicate

2.1 Foreword

"The right to communicate" is one of the legitimate rights required for human beings to remain in contact and exchange ideas with each other. Many social scientists have long recognized that

communication is at the basis of many societies or groups of human beings, and the history of humanity is inextricably linked to communication. The right to communicate relates to basic individual and collective freedoms. Thus this right should be defined as a basic and inalienable human right, just like the rights to food and life. As L. Ron Hubbard states: *“Perhaps the most fundamental right of any being is the right to communicate. Without this freedom, other rights deteriorate.”*

2.2 Historical Overview

Reviewing the history of human rights, “the right to communicate” can be traced back to the 18th century. Both “the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” announced in 1789 and the US Constitution First Amendment which entered into force in 1791, mentioned “free speech”, that is considered one of the first early descriptions of the right to communicate.

a. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)

In August 1789, the French people overthrew the old Empire and pronounced their well-known revolutionary manifesto: “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen”. Article 11 of the Declaration stated:

“The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.”

In the Declaration, it was recognized that “the right to communicate” is one of the most precious rights of human beings and such right was defined as the free communication of ideas and opinions. Under the Declaration, people had such freedoms to speak, write and print. By speaking, writing and printing, people can express their ideas and opinions and communicate with each other in ways that correspond to the meaning of free communication. Obviously, Article 11 of the Declaration contains certain principles of fundamental human rights including free speech, freedom of press, freedom of expression and freedom of information. Under this

Declaration, the right to communicate and to exercise free speech was neither limited nor restricted. On the contrary, abuses of such rights and freedoms were prohibited by this Declaration, which stated that exceptions should be defined by laws, and that people should be held responsible for their opinions and ideas.

At the time, the Declaration was linked to contemporary political issues. During the monarchical and autocratic period, French people were not allowed to express opinions against government policy and decisions and persons would be punished for exchanges of prohibited information. Dissatisfied with such a condition, people struggled for more freedoms and rights. Historians believe that the Declaration had great influence on political thought, and on several constitutional declarations of European states in the 19th century, such as the Constitution of the Weimar Republic of Germany. Many scholars recognized the Declaration as a product of the Age of Enlightenment. The Declaration was very important not only because it established some doctrines of basic human rights at the earliest point in history, but it also imported these new ideas for the benefit of modern democracy. It also stressed a reasonable and legal basis for rights and freedoms that was defined under Article 4. It stated that:

“Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.”

b. The US Constitution First Amendment and Free Speech (1791)

As in France, the US Congress also passed the Constitutional Amendments, known as the “Bill of Rights” in September 1789 and these entered into force in 1791. The US Constitution First Amendment states:

“Congress shall make no law repressing...or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

With the First Amendment several basic human rights were raised and protected, such as free speech, freedom of press, freedom of religious belief, the right to assemble, the and right to petition.

Unlike the French Declaration, the First Amendment does not mention the restriction and limitation of free speech and freedom of press. In other words, at the time Congress passed the First Amendment, it basically did not limit or abridge free speech. Free speech is absolutely protected in the US Constitution, as it was delivered by the framers and it has been preciously guarded. At the beginning, many people strongly advocated that freedom of speech enshrines, more than any other freedom, the liberty of the individual and it is manifest in the constitutional protection under the First Amendment and rooted in natural law. However some scholars have raised the criticism that the right of free speech should be accompanied by a responsibility and that this is also an important need in order to protect the right in a constitutional democracy.

Under the First Amendment, freedom of speech is no doubt the first freedom mentioned. However the rights of the First Amendment have historically come under huge pressures. During the Red Scare of the early 1920s, many people were deported for their political views. During the McCarthy period, the infamous blacklist ruined lives and careers. Until now, the creators, producers and distributors of popular culture are still being blamed for causing social problems in the US. During the early establishment of the US, most courts usually ignored the First Amendment rights of political minorities and free speech issues did not even reach the Supreme Court. Until 1919, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the conviction of a Socialist Party member for mailing anti-war leaflets to draft-age men. A few months later, in the case of *Abrams v. US* the defendant's conviction under the Espionage Act for distributing anti-war leaflets was upheld, but two dissenting opinions were formed and deeply influenced current applications of the First Amendment. Two Justices, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis D. Brandeis, argued speech could only be punished if it presented "a clear and present danger" of imminent harm. Ultimately, these justices were able to convince a majority of the Court to adopt the "clear and present danger test."

Nevertheless, until the 1950s, the Supreme Court still held the opinion that speakers could be punished if they advocated overthrowing the government even if the danger of such an occurrence were both slight and remote. This recognition seriously weakened the "clear and present danger" test and many political activists were prosecuted and jailed simply for advocating communist

revolution. On the other hand, loyalty oath requirements for government employees were upheld and thousands of Americans lost their jobs merely based on flimsy evidence supplied by secret witnesses. Finally, in 1969, in the case of *Brandenberg v. Ohio*, the Supreme Court struck down the conviction of a Ku Klux Klan member and established a new standard to apply. The new standard set up that speech could be suppressed only if it is intended, and likely to produce, "imminent lawless action." Otherwise, even speech that advocates violence is protected. The *Brandenberg* standard still prevails even now.

The US First Amendment exists precisely to protect even the most offensive and controversial speech from governmental suppression. By imposing "time, place and manner" restrictions, government can limit some protected speech. It is most commonly done by requiring permits for meetings, rallies and demonstrations. However, a permit cannot be unreasonably withheld, nor can it be denied based on the content of the speech. That will constitute "discrimination" and is also unconstitutional. Therefore, the best way to counter obnoxious speech is by opening more speech, by persuasion, not coercion.

2.3 Reviews of Some International Agreements

Although the declarations and legislation concerning the right to communicate had been agreed to and implemented at an early stage in many industrialized countries, numerous developing countries and remote areas in the world still lack any standards. Because the right to communicate is rooted in a natural instinct of mankind, a general and wide-based agreement should be reached to promote Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights together with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and several UNESCO Resolutions, which are general documents setting out international standards.

a. Universal Declaration of Human Rights

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 of the Declaration states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart

information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration is more specific when compared to the French Declaration and the US Constitution First Amendment concerning the definition of the right to communicate. Under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration, the right to communicate includes freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, and freedom of information.

Considering the phraseology used, speaking is one kind of expression of human beings. Not only speaking, but also writing, printing and acting ought to be protected. Those protections are within the scope of freedom of expression. Moreover, expression is only a single side of “communication”, and the other side is the role of receiver, listener, and reader. Including freedom of information that contains free transmission and receipt of information, the right to communicate can be well established. Also, those rights and freedoms should be “without interference” and exercisable “through any media and regardless of frontiers.” Considering the rapid changes of telecommunications, these two provisions correspond to the requirements of the modern information society.

In addition, Article 21 (2) states “*Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.*” The “service” mentioned here should include “universal service” defined thereafter as everyone’s equal right to use basic telecommunication tools to connect with the outer world. Article 2 of Universal Declaration also states that:

“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status...”

Thus the right to communicate is already recognized as a legalized and fundamental right under international law.

b. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states:

“1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

2. *Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.*
3. *The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:*
 - (a) *For respect of the rights or reputations of others;*
 - (b) *For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals."*

Basically, Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights advocates the free expression and free information defined under the Universal Declaration. The difference between them is that the International Covenant also defines the restrictions and limitations of such rights in Article 19 (3). It stresses that the exercise of such rights should be accompanied by "special duties and responsibilities." Under Article 19 (3), freedom of expression and freedom of information should not be "absolutely protected" and should have some "demarcation lines."

To maintain the interests of the public and to limit the abuses of personal rights, several exceptions to freedom of expression and information are regulated under the International Covenant including:

- (1) *respect for other peoples' rights,*
- (2) *respect for other peoples' reputations,*
- (3) *national security,*
- (4) *public order,*
- (5) *public health; and*
- (6) *public morals.*

It is difficult to balance interests between personal rights and public order. Any imbalance between them will cause either abuses of personal rights or excesses of governmental power. Therefore the manner in which the "demarcation lines" and the confirmation of "special duties and responsibilities" are established is to be clearly defined. Article 19 (3) provides two measures: "legal basis" and

“necessary” to set up the standard of reasonable limitations to personal freedoms and rights. Outside of these “demarcation lines”, the exercise of such freedoms will be considered as abuses of rights and will not be protected by law.

c. Convention on the International Right of Correction

Unlike the Universal Declaration and the International Covenant, the goal of the Convention on the International Right of Correction likely focuses on the freedom of the press. Nevertheless, from several articles of the Convention, the tracks of freedom of expression and freedom of information can be found. Article 2.1 of the Convention on the International Right of Correction states

“Recognizing that the professional responsibility of correspondents and information agencies requires them to report facts without discrimination and in their proper context and thereby to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to further international understanding and cooperation and to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Considering also that, as a matter of professional ethics, all correspondents and information agencies should, in the case of news dispatches transmitted or published by them and which have been demonstrated to be false or distorted, follow the customary practice of transmitting through the same channels, or of publishing corrections of such dispatches,...”

d. Some Resolutions of UNESCO (United Nation Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization)

The Constitution of UNESCO stresses the need for information and communication within and between states. In accordance with the provisions of Article I.2 (a) of the UNESCO’s Constitution, it states:

“the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image.”

Since 1945, UNESCO has set up its action plans in the field of communication and information for decades to “promote the free flow of ideas by word and image.” The purpose is to prevent wars and construct the defence of peace by “advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of people” in spite of the “ignorance of each other’s way and lives, suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world”. Also, UNESCO Resolution 3.2 of 1983, UNESCO Resolution 4.1 of 1991 on the Right to Communicate, and the 1991 UNESCO Declaration of Windhoek reaffirmed the importance of the right to communicate and freedom of information on behalf of the participant countries concerned and is expected to reduce disparities in information flow between developed and developing countries, international and national levels as well as the public and private sectors.

3. Universal Access and Global Telecommunication Development

3.1 The Scope of Universal Access and Services

Universal service is defined as a telephone in every household and universal access is defined as being within easy reach of a telephone. Universal access to basic telecommunications has already been emphasized for decades in the 20th century. To make universal access affordable plays a vital role in international telecommunication cooperation. For most developing countries, universal access is more relevant than universal service. The policy of universal access has been enforced through the provision of public telephones, at least installing one public telephone in every village. Although the cost of providing telecommunication services in rural areas is quite high, the impacts on cultural, social, educational, and economic development are obvious and considerable. A large portion of the populations of developing countries live in rural areas, and those areas are often lacking in the communication tools needed to connect with the outside world. Making telecommunication and information accessible and available is essential and important for them. In other words, achieving universal access and services not only realizes everyone’s basic right to communicate, but also has a great influence to the right to know, to print, right to education, etc.

3.2 Teledensity – the Differences in Telecommunication Development between Industrialized and Developing Countries

There is a big gap between industrialized and developing countries in teledensity. The most common measure of telecommunication access is teledensity, the number of main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants. In the richest countries, there are 45 or more phone lines for each 100 people; however, there is less than one in the poorest countries mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. Many developing countries in Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe are somewhere in between. The gap between industrialized and developing countries, the “information haves” and “information have-nots” has lasted for many years and continues to increase. Compared to all the people in the world, the inhabitants that belong to “information haves” make up a very small proportion, and the major population in developing countries still belongs to “information have-nots” that do not even have the basic telecommunication tool –the telephone – in their daily lives. For example, sub-Saharan Africa has fewer telephone lines than the city of Tokyo, while about 12 million telephone lines serve more than 700 million Africans. The biggest challenge for African countries is how to overcome the limited finance available for infrastructure provisions. The big gaps existing between industrialized and developing countries relate to distribution of access, resources, and opportunities in the information and communication fields. Thus, it is extremely important to increase teledensity in remote areas.

People living in the industrialized countries have easier access to telecommunications than those in developing countries. In many developing countries, it is estimated that probably more than half of the population has no access to even simple telecommunication services such as telephones and telegraphs. This is one kind of poverty, information poverty, which appears in many lower-developing countries. Many developing countries, especially the least developed countries are not sharing the benefits of the communication revolution. Many of them lack financial support, suitable policies, technical skill, and trained manpower to develop, maintain and provide the basic telecommunications service. The telecommunications infrastructure is really fragile in most developing countries. The lowest-income countries that account for

about 56% of the world's population share only 7% of the world's telephone mainlines. Excluding China (PRC) and India, a total of 57 lowest-income countries that account for one-fifth of the world's population has only one-hundredth of the global telephone mainlines. Additionally, those lines are limited to major cities, the waiting lists for basic telecommunication tools are still long, and there is no indication showing that the situation will improve soon. Without basic telecommunication services, information and knowledge cannot easily reach these areas and will impair their fundamental human rights concerning the rights to work, shelter, health, medicine, education and development.

For developing countries, basic telecommunication development also raises other problematic issues including nationwide availability, non-discriminatory access and widespread affordability. Considering economic, social, geographic issues and local demand, a telephone should be within a reasonable distance for everyone. The distance between lines depends on the coverage of the telephone network, the geography of the country, the density of the population and the spread of habitations in the urban and rural areas. It also can reflect different policies such as that of providing a telephone to every village. On the other hand, in industrialized countries, universal access is considered to have been basically achieved, since the majority of the population already has the basic telecommunications device – the telephone – in use. The goals of developed countries will gradually focus on telecommunication market liberalization and on the higher quality, and more advanced telecommunication tools which are being introduced, such as cellular phones, pagers, the Internet, and satellite connections. The poor telecommunications infrastructure in developing countries will also impact on telecommunication development and its accessibility in industrialized countries. Due to lack of basic and reachable telecommunications, the people living in developing countries cannot connect with people living in industrialized ones, to know their cultures, and to promote future cooperation in telecommunications. The mutual understanding and assistance between developing and industrialized countries are necessary for global peace and development. Therefore, developed countries have the duty to assist telecommunications-lacking countries and decrease the gap in teledensity.

3.3 *The Role of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU)*

Founded in 1865, the former ITU, the International Telegraph Convention, was set up to solve problems encountered in message transmission and transcription across two or more countries caused by different telecommunications systems. After the mid-20th century, following the participation of more and more developing countries in the ITU, the mission of the ITU has been broadened from international telecommunications cooperation to telecommunications developmental assistance for developing countries.

a. *The Constitution of the ITU and the Right to Communicate*

Providing technical assistance to developing countries in order to make telecommunications universally available is one of the important missions of the ITU. Under Article 1.1 (b) of the Constitution of the ITU, the ITU should *"promote and offer technical assistance to developing countries in the field of telecommunications..."* It is one of the major aims of the ITU to reduce the differences and distances of teledensity between industrialized and developing countries. Article 1.1 (c) states the ITU should *"promote the development of technical facilities and their most efficient operation with a view to improving the efficiency of telecommunication services... as far as possible generally available to the public."* Also, Article 1.1 (d) states the ITU should *"promote the extension of the benefits of the new telecommunication technologies to all the world's inhabitants."* Obviously, the ITU stresses that telecommunications should be available to the public and everyone should enjoy the benefits of the new telecommunications. In addition, the ITU promotes everyone's equal right to telecommunication. Under Article 33, every state should:

"recognize the right of the public to correspond by means of the international service of public correspondence. The services, the charges and the safeguards shall be the same for all users in each category of correspondence without any priority or preference."

The ITU also reserves the right to each state to stop or cut off telecommunications services due to national security, public order, and domestic legal requirement and decency.

b. Some Efforts of the ITU in Global Telecommunication Development

For many years, the ITU has promoted the right to communicate as a basic human right. Under the aegis of the UN's Administrative Committee on Coordination, a project is under implementation on Universal Access to Basic Communications and Information Services. The project is designed to reduce the information gap between the developed and developing countries and make telecommunication and information services easily accessible. In 1984, the Maitland Commission recommended that by the year 2000 everyone in the world should have ready access to at least a basic telephone service. This goal has not yet been reached; however, access to basic telephone services for the inhabitants of developing countries is rapidly increasing. An inter-agency UN project on universal access to basic communication and information service – “the right to communicate” – has also been created at the initiative of Dr. Pekka Tajanne, Secretary-General of the ITU.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the duty of the ITU is to make telecommunications available to all of the world's inhabitants, at prices that are affordable to all. In addition, the mission to strengthen the multilateral foundations of international telecommunications and to promote universal access and global connectivity should quickly be embarked upon. With the guidance and support of the ITU, there are several Action Plan Programs planned and proceeding such as the Buenos Aires Action Plan and the Valletta Action Plan Program. In 1998, the ITU held the World Telecommunication Development Conference in Malta and 143 participatory countries adopted the Valletta Declaration and Action Plan. The Valletta Declaration underlines the importance of translating the indisputable potential of telecommunications into tangible results to improve the lives of all people of the world, especially those in developing countries.

The ITU encourages and supports universal service, global access and fair pricing and gives special attention to the least developed countries. Those actions and programs are designed to develop best-practice, sustainable and replicable models of ways to provide access to modern telecommunication facilities and information services, especially to people living in rural and remote areas. The final goal of those programs and plans is universally accessible

telecommunications to the whole of humanity. In the prevailing environments of converging technologies and globalization, it is the time to structure the telecommunication sector in order to stimulate public and private sectors' investments and accelerate the pace of expansion and modernization of telecommunication networks in developing countries. In the end, it will benefit everyone to provide basic telecommunication services and necessary technical skills in rural and remote areas.

4. Recommendations and Conclusions

With the creation of new technologies, the modes of telecommunication have changed at a very high-speed. The world is in the midst of the communication and information revolution, and a new lifestyle accompanied with modern telecommunication tools has gradually been formed. The new information highway will change the lifestyle of people. Many services will be provided by new systems such as telework, telecommuting, teleservices, telemedicine, tele-education, teleshopping and telebanking. Under this new trend, physical location is becoming irrelevant to the ability to deliver or receive services and goods. The rapid explosion of the Internet and the World Wide Web have provided a more convenient form of communications interface linking computers in global communications, information and data exchanges for those who need it, look for it, and can download it whenever they want. With the rapid development of the electronic flow of information across the whole world, the role of telecommunications has changed from that of a voice communications network to a component that underpins many economic activities. With the further development of new telecommunication technologies, the right to communicate should take on a more energetic role.

With the invention of new telecommunication tools and information technologies, several legal problems also arise. For example, should the doctrine of free speech be applied to new communication tools such as pagers, facsimiles, or Internet communications? Due to new high-speed technologies, it is easier to gain personal data and national secrets via cyberspace and multimedia. Does the government already establish a series of measures and regulations to protect the right of privacy and public interests? The so-called "Encryption" software was invented to protect national confidentiality and personal privacy.

However, some people criticize this, arguing that such measures may be overused to violate the basic right to communicate, by attacking free expression and free information. "The right to communicate" is one of the natural and fundamental rights affirmed by numerous historical legal documents and international agreements. Thus, even the new communication tools that are continually being invented should be freely used and this use should be protected in the name of free speech and free information. The legal standards used to balance between these freedoms and national security or between freedoms and privacy also should be applied. In addition, the scope of universal access should be extended to include the Internet and other new electronic tools, to support their effective use to achieve democratic ends.

We use the basic telecommunication tool, the telephone, to communicate with our family, friends, coworkers, and deal with thousands of business affairs every day. We receive, listen, watch and are informed of daily news via broadcasting and television. Recently, we can even attend classes, transact stocks, and send emails through the Internet. However, there are still many people lacking the basic telecommunication access. Considering the principle of equal rights, it is necessary for developed countries to assist developing ones to promote basic telecommunication services. As Dr. Tarjanne, the former Secretary-General of the ITU has said:

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out the rights and freedoms that people everywhere should be able to enjoy. It is the best definition the world community has so far been able to develop of the common elements of humanity shared by all people."

For all to enjoy these rights, they must have access to basic communication and information services. He warned:

"Without action on the part of the world community, there is a very real danger that the global information society will be global in name only; that the world will be divided into the "information rich" and the "information poor"; and that the gap between developed and developing countries will widen into an unbridgeable chasm."

The relation between universal access and the right to communicate is very intimate. By liberalization and the

establishment of telecommunications, this relationship will achieve a great deal and prove widely beneficial. The developments of advanced telecommunication technology will quickly bring numerous benefits to everyone everywhere. With the information society becoming a reality, electronic communications are becoming an ever more important tool in promoting the international communications and media regime. Access by individuals and by collective groups such as governments, organizations, and enterprises to global telecommunications, will continue to inspire development and assistance for developing countries, and will make the information society come true and promote fundamental human rights for everyone.