

# Creating an Equitable and Harmonious Information Society

## — Address on the Conference Marking the 37<sup>th</sup> World Telecommunication Day

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**Dear guests, comrades and friends:**

Today, we are here commemorating the 37<sup>th</sup> World Telecommunication Day. First, on behalf of the Ministry of Information Industry and Minister Wang Xudong, I would like to express my warm welcome to you, to extend my kind regards to all the leaders and workers in the industry, and to say thank you from the bottom of my heart to all those who are concerned about and give their support to the development of China's telecom industry from all walks of life, especially the hundreds of millions of telecom users from around the nation.

"*Creating an Equitable Information Society: Time for Action*" is the theme of this year's World Telecommunication Day. We think that, an information society should be one in which information technologies are widely used; information services are

widely available; and everybody and every nation can fully benefit from it. Currently, information technologies have been developing rapidly, and economic globalization and information networks are in an ever-increasing trend. But at the same time, "Digital Divide" is also deepening. Speeding up the development of the information and telecom sector and creating an equitable society is a common challenge for all the countries in the world.

Since opening up to the outside world, the telecom sector has been enjoying a jumping development in China. To date, the number of phone subscribers has reached 674 million, among which 325 million are fixed line subscribers and 349 million are mobile phone subscribers, making China number one in the world in terms of network and user base. Web users have reached 98.80 million in China, being at the second place in the world. Various new services are booming. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of this year, the number of short messages sent through mobile phones reached 67.21 billion pieces, up 39% year-on-year; the service duration of IP phone reached 30.74 billion min, up 16.8% year-on-year; and 3.484 million broadband web users were newly added, with the total number reaching 28.331 million. There were about 30 kinds of new services introduced by different telecom carriers. The sustainable and rapid development of the telecom sector has greatly boosted the improvement of China's level as an informa-

tion society and the widespread use of information technologies, and has played an important role in promoting economic restructuring and reforming and upgrading traditional industries, as well as in improving people's life.

The Chinese government has been attaching great importance to the coordinated development of the telecom sector, and has introduced a series of policy measures aimed at speeding up the telecom development in rural areas, remote areas and west China. Especially since 2004, the Ministry of Information Industry, in cooperation with other related government agencies, has initiated a nationwide campaign to provide phone service to every single village in China, with each government agency being responsible for a certain region. The campaign has played an active role in promoting telecom services in rural areas. With the joint effort of different telecom carriers, telecom regulators and governments at different levels, 9357 administrative villages newly received phone services in 2004, with the total number of administrative villages with phone services having reached 628,000 nationwide. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of this year, among the newly added phone subscribers in China, rural subscribers accounted for 25.4%, up 1.5% year-on-year.

But we have also clearly seen that, the overall level of China's telecom sector is not high, the technical innovation capability and core competitiveness are not strong, and especially, we still have more than 50,000 administrative villages in the nation that have not yet had phone services. Therefore, the task of promoting coordinated development and realizing universal service is still very arduous. To this end, we need to take people first, further embrace and carry out the idea of taking a scientific view of development, and promote the coordinated development of economy and society by taking full advantage of information technologies, information networks and information services in accordance with the requirements for building a harmonious society.

**One is to further speed up development, so as to provide powerful support for creating an in-**

**formation society.** To solve the problem associated with the incomplete and incoordinate development of China's telecom sector in many different aspects, the most fundamental thing to do is still to speed up development. We need to continue to carry out the strategy of empowering the nation with telecom industry, to further consummate information infrastructure, and to improve the comprehensive strength of China's telecom sector, so as to provide the support in networks, technologies and services for building China into an information society. We need to embrace the concept of taking information service as a big industry, and continuously improve our capability to provide information service to the service sector and the application level of information technologies in the service sector, so as to meet the needs of different levels of people for information and telecom services.

**The second is to vigorously promote the development of new technologies and new services centered closely on the needs of the society.** The global information and telecom sector currently is to migrate to the next generation networks. We need to get used to the current trend in which new technologies and new services are constantly emerging and different technologies and services are merging in an accelerated speed, enhance our research effort, actively guide their development, steadily move forward, and try to realize a coordinated growth of new technologies and new services. We need to actively promote the development of new technologies and new services, and enhance our effort in promotion, and popularization and application, so as to better meet the needs for information technologies and services from various sectors of economy and society. The underdeveloped regions also need to grasp the opportunities brought about by the development of information and telecom technologies, take full advantage of being a latecomer, try hard to catch up and even overtake others, and realize coordinated development.

**The third is to stick to the idea of taking people first, and to let people get more and more benefits from the development and reform of the**

**telecom sector.** Whether it's industry planning, market regulation or company operation, we must consider everything by bearing in mind the idea of maximizing the societal benefits, and take the fundamental benefits of the most widely represented people as our starting point and ending point. We need to actively but steadily go ahead with telecom tariff reform, and gradually create a mechanism to decide service rates by the market, so that the consumers can really benefit from the process. We need to attach great importance to improving services, take the hot service issues that the consumers are strongly complained of as the breakthrough point, try hard to improve our services, and effectively safeguard the legal rights of the users.

**The fourth is to take effective measures to speed up the development of telecom service in rural areas.** Rural areas lag behind in telecom service development. Solving this problem appropriately is very important to promoting rural social and economic development and improving the overall level of ICT development in China. We need to actively promote the establishment of the Universal Telecom Service Fund, and continuously work hard to implement the "Phone Service for All Villages" program, and ensure that 95% of the administrative villages in the nation will have had phone service by the end of the year. At the same time, we need to attract enterprises to participate in the efforts to develop suitable technologies, and actively explore the possibility of forming a lasting mechanism involving the participation of different forces that is not only in

line with the law of market economy, but also in line with the uniqueness of the rural areas, so as to promote the coordinated development of telecom services in both rural and urban areas.

**The fifth is to actively create a sound environment for the harmonious development of the industry.** We need to enhance policy guidance, management and regulation, give support to the industry in market access, resources allocation and standard preparation, and create a sound policy environment for the effort of building an information society. We need to further deepen the structural reform of the telecom sector, discipline market behavior and maintain market order by combing legal, economic, technological and administrative measures, and try hard to create a competitive market environment that is fair and just as well as effective and orderly. Especially, we need to enhance our legislation effort, creating a situation in which the government legally regulates the industries, the companies legally do business, and the consumers legally safeguard their rights.

Comrades and friends, creating an equitable information society is a common task for the whole world, and is also the obligatory social responsibility of the information and telecom sector. Let's get started, take concrete measures, venture into new territories, and make great efforts to realize the all-round, coordinated and sustainable development of the telecom industry and to create an equitable, harmonious and happy information society.

Thank you!