

U N I T E D N A T I O N S

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ITU/57

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STATEMENT MADE BY ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL U THANT

IN OPENING NEW ITU BUILDING IN GENEVA, 3 MAY 1962

(The following has been received from the Information Service of the European Office of the United Nations, at Geneva.)

Acting Secretary-General U Thant, in formally opening the new headquarters building of the International Telecommunication Union* -- located on the Place des Nations facing the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva -- made the following statement yesterday, 3 May:

Ninety-seven years ago this month, the International Telegraph Convention was signed in Paris. It was a historic moment, for the Convention created the first intergovernmental organization of world-wide scope -- the International Telegraph Union -- and laid the foundation for what is now the International Telecommunication Union.

While people from all walks of life are familiar with the various forms of telecommunication -- telephone, telegraph, radio -- few stop to consider how important telecommunications are in the social and economic development of modern civilization. Nor do they realize the long history of international cooperation that has been necessary in order to develop a world-wide communication network.

At each stage in that development the Union has played a major part and has enlarged the scope and range of its activities.

Fifteen years ago it concluded an agreement bringing it into relationship with the United Nations as a specialized agency. It has since been making an increasingly important contribution to the work of the United Nations family in furthering the

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* ITU is a UN specialized agency. For background, see Press Release ITU/56 of 18 April.

great objectives of Article 55* of the Charter. Today it is moving into the new era of space communications and has been entrusted with special tasks in this field by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Cooperation in the activities of the ITU is now well-nigh universal. Its membership has increased from 20 in 1865 to a present total of 113 full and four associate members.

The original bureau was composed of a director with a staff of two. Now there is a staff of over 350, and today we see that staff installed in this fine new building.

May they, under this roof, prosper in their work -- work which is becoming more and more important for the well-being of mankind, which has eliminated distance from man's daily life on earth and is now playing a vital role in his venture into space.

It gives me great pleasure to unveil a plaque commemorating this ceremony of inauguration.

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* This article provides that the UN shall promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems, and international cultural and educational cooperation; and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights.