His Majesty, the King of Spain,

Mr. Juan Clos i Matheu, Minister of Industry, Tourism and Commerce,

Mr. Francisco Ros Perán, Secretary of State for Telecommunications and the Information Society,

Mr. Enrique Gutierrez Bueno, Dean and President of the Official College of Telecommunications Engineers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen:

I wish to express to you my gratitude for the kind invitation to be a guest speaker on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the 1932 Madrid Conferences. I am especially delighted to see so many ITU friends and partners present today for this celebration.

With His Majesty’s indulgence, I take this opportunity to remind the audience of his commitment to ITU by recalling his gracious act of honoring us with his presence at the official opening ceremony of ITU Telecom World 2003 in Geneva.

The Madrid Convention was signed on December 9, 1932. Since this celebration marks an historic event, allow me to share some historic details about the Conferences.

Seventy-five years ago, the 13th International Telegraph Conference and the 4th International Radiotelegraph Conference met simultaneously in Madrid.

Both Conferences began their work on September 3, 1932. The Radiotelegraph Conference held its final session on December 9, and the Telegraph Conference held its final session on December 10.

Some 80 countries and 62 private companies and private international organizations participated in the Telegraph Conference. While 65 countries and 64 private companies and private international organizations were represented at the Radiotelegraph Conference. Today, we have 191 Member States and 700 Sector Members and Associates.

Mr. Santiago Cesares Quiroga, Spanish Minister of Interior, was appointed Chairman, the Director of the Bureau, Dr. Räber, was appointed the Chairman’s counselor and the Vice Director of the Bureau, Mr. Scwill, was appointed Secretary-General.

The most important achievement of the Madrid Conference was the creation of a single
convention containing the general principles considered to be common to the telegraph, telephone and radio services.

It was apparent from the beginning of the Conference that a very large majority of the delegations present favored the creation of a single convention. However, the drafting procedures and the provisions it was to contain caused many heated arguments.

Complete drafts of a single convention were submitted by Greece, Italy, the International Bureau, and the Comité international de la télégraphie sans fil. The most important draft, in view of its objectivity, was the one presented in the name of the International Bureau, by its then Vice-Director Mr. Boulanger.

The Convention, adopted here in Madrid, included the following regulations:

- the Telegraph Regulations
- the Telephone Regulations
- the Radio Regulations

It was a combination of the 1927 Radiotelegraph Convention and the 1875 Telegraph Convention. No major innovations were introduced and most articles remained quite general in their scope. However, Article 1 created the International Telecommunication Union which replaced the International Telegraph Union.

The following definition was adopted for the new term telecommunication: “Any telegraph, or telephone communication of signs, signals, writings, images, and sounds of any nature, by wire, radio, or other systems or processes of electric or visual signaling”.

This definition shows exceptional foresight on the part of the delegates because it continues to define the multimedia world in which we live today.

It also covers the Information Society, which is embodied in the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) which took place in two phases in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005.

We can proudly say that the Madrid Conference will safely bring us to towards the Knowledge Societies of the not too distant future.

Where do we go from here?

In about two weeks, the Radio Regulations from the Madrid Conference will undergo the most important revisions since 1947 when the 2007 World Radiocommunication Conference opens on 22 October in Geneva. The Conference will facilitate the development of broadband wireless access technologies such as Wi-Fi and WiMAX which promise new ways of bridging the digital divide. Flexibility in spectrum allocation and management would allow these technologies to really take off.

The Telegraph Regulations and Telephone Regulations, mentioned earlier and now known as the International Telecommunication Regulations, are scheduled for a major revision in 2012. This decision was taken at the last Plenipotentiary Conference in Antalya in 2006) with the adoption of Resolution 146, which calls for a world conference on international telecommunications.

One of the reasons for this conference is that legacy, single-purpose networks are being replaced by broadband next-generation networks (NGN). These new networks can carry any combination of voice, data and multimedia (graphics, video and audio), in any format. Broadband is as different from standard voice telephony as telephony is from the telegraph services of 150 years ago.
Just like the Madrid Conference, today’s conferences continue to challenge us to move forward in our respective fields. What is different now is that we have people and nations waiting for ITU to act. Since information and communication technologies (ICT) are the tools necessary for e-health, e-government, e-education or e-business, the whole United Nations family is relying on ITU to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

My personal concern is that we are less than 8 years away from 2015 the milestone for achieving the MDGs. What should we do?

Today, the upsurge in information and communication technologies (ICT) is contributing to the information society. During ITU’s 142-year history, people have gone from walking to the nearest post office to send telegraphs, to sending faxes from machines in their offices, and now to sending multimedia messages from their computers and mobile devices. Communication tools are coming closer and closer to the end user.

In the early 1980s, telecommunications meant mainly fixed telephone lines or telex, with fax just beginning to be used. The use of mobile phones was also being launched in a few countries. The World Wide Web was still a research project. Now there are more than 4 billion fixed and mobile subscribers and over 1 billion Internet users worldwide.

The importance of communications has continued to grow over the last twenty years. In the emerging information society, the creation and distribution of information have become an important economic and cultural activity. Information and knowledge are one of the major sources of wealth.

Of course, technology alone will not solve the world’s problems. But it is certainly one of the most important tools that can help to create a better society. I believe that in the information society, no human being should be left behind. I also believe that if we all pool our resources, we can bridge the development gap, meet the Millennium Development Goals, and create a just and sustainable information society for all.

We must all work together with governments, the private sector, civil society, and multilateral organizations. In this context, I would like to make reference to an innovation in Paragraph 4 of Art.18 of the Madrid Convention, which allows for the participation of private operating companies in each administrative conference in an advisory capacity. As you can see for yourselves, ITU was a multi-stakeholder institution before the term was used in the UN System.

The ITU mission is to ensure that ICT are put at the service of all people, regardless of language, culture, gender or geographic location. A large number of people around the world are still without access to communication networks. Since information and communication are the main preconditions for the economic and cultural development of any society, it is our duty to bridge the digital divide. We, at the ITU, plan to achieve this through our Connect the World initiative. We will begin this year with Connect Africa and then move to other regions of the world one at a time: Latin America and the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands.

Connect Africa, which will be held in Kigali, Rwanda, on 29 and 30 October 2007, will be launched under the patronage of His Excellency Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda, with the support of Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in partnership with the World Bank and the Global Alliance for ICT for Development (GAID), led by Mr. Craig Barrett, the Chairman of Intel, and other development agencies, and the UN family.

Connect Africa will not be a summit of resolutions; it will be a summit of actions based on the fact that the development of ICTs does not rely on charity but on sharp sense of business.
When talking about access to information, the future is definitely broadband communications. And one of the major challenges facing the global ICT community is bringing broadband to the all of the world citizens.

The vast majority of today’s broadband users are in the industrialized world. But broadband deployment is expanding in the developing world as well. Broadband is one of the key tools for development, because it increases the potential for generating content that is relevant to communities and produced in their languages. Eventually, people in even the remotest areas could become broadcasters and educators in their own communities and the wider world. We would, in fact, be going beyond information societies to create knowledge societies.

The rise of the Internet itself or the incredible take-off of short message service (SMS), which took the world by storm, are enough to remind us of one thing: that it is often the creativity of the users on the ground, rather than the foresight of market analysts, that sparks the beginning of a groundbreaking new trend. And understanding the global impact and demand for technologies is fast becoming a benchmark for successful investment and development. In this light, it seems indispensable to exchange and look at ways in which people and institutions around the globe have been using technologies to improve their work and lives.

We have another important challenge. We must build confidence and security in the use of ICTs. This is known as Action Line C5 of the Tunis Agenda of WSIS, for which ITU is the facilitator. Moreover, Paragraph 42 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society requires that measures undertaken to ensure Internet stability and security, to fight cybercrime and to counter spam, must protect and respect the provisions for privacy and freedom of expression.

This is why, on 17 May this year, I launched the Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA). It is a multi-stakeholder framework that will build on existing initiatives, partners and take full advantage of recognized sources of expertise. Its purpose is two fold --to identify commonly agreed global challenges to Cybersecurity and build national ICT security and emergency response centers regionally and globally.

The process started in Geneva last week, on 5 October, when the first meeting of the High Level Expert Group on Cybersecurity will be held. The anticipated outcome of this process is a framework to achieve the objectives of building confidence and security in the use of ICTs.

To conclude, the Madrid Telecommunication Convention, , laid a strong foundation for today’s ITU. We will continue to build on this foundation whether to bridge the digital divide or ensure peace in cyberspace. We will remain grateful to Spain for its historic contribution.

ITU’s own expertise in the area of information and communication technologies and applications is a great resource for the world community. And we look forward to Spain’s continued commitment to the ITU noble mission to connect the world.

Together let’s build the Information Society that we are all dreaming of.