

## VOA Special English Development Report

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR POOR NATIONS

This is Bill White with the VOA Special English Development Report.

Last month, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced an effort to expand the use of information technology in developing countries.

Mr. Annan suggested forming teams to teach people in poor countries how to use the computer communication system known as the Internet. The teams would be made up of volunteers--people who are not paid for their work. The teams would be called the United Nations Information Technology Service. Mr. Annan also proposed the establishment of a system called the Health InterNetwork. He said computers with Internet links would be set up in 10,000 hospitals and medical centers in developing countries. The system would provide these centers with the most recent medical information. Mr. Annan said medical groups including the World Health Organization and the Web MD Foundation support this idea.

Another proposal from the UN chief deals with international reaction to major destructive events of nature and other emergencies. The proposed effort is called "First on the Ground." It would provide special wireless telephones and other communication links for aid workers in disaster areas. These communication links would be protected from interference. The Ericsson communications company of Sweden would lead the project. The International Committee

of the Red Cross also would be involved.

Secretary-General Annan said the use of information technology could lead to major progress for developing nations. And he said such technology does not require a lot of money. He said a small investment in technology education could bring important information to poor people. He said all intelligent people could gain from information technology. And he said intelligence is spread equally among people around the world.

Mr. Annan warned governments not to try to stop people from using the Internet or other technologies to gain information. He said such efforts would fail. He urged government leaders to open their countries to a new period of technology and information.

Mr. Annan announced his proposals as a part of his Millennium Report to the UN General Assembly. World leaders have agreed to meet at the UN in September. They will consider Mr. Annan's proposals at that time.

This VOA Special English Development Report was written by Caty Weaver. This is Bill White.

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