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THE ITU RADIO REGULATIONS AND WRC-15 CHALLENGES RELATED TO SPACE SERVICES

Abstract

This paper reviews the current ITU international radio regulatory framework for geostationary and non-geostationary satellite services, the ITU-R preparatory process, activities and challenges towards WRC-15.

During the last 50 years, from the first Administrative Radio Conference in 1963 and up to and including the last World Radiocommunication Conference, in 2012 (WRC-12), many ITU conferences have addressed the regulation of spectrum/orbit usage by stations of the space radiocommunication services. The ITU Member States have established a legal regime which is codified through the Constitution/Convention, including the Radio Regulations (RR). These instruments contain the main principles and lay down the specific regulations governing the following major elements: • frequency spectrum allocations to different categories of radiocommunication services; • rights and obligations of Member administrations in obtaining access to the spectrum/orbit resources; • international recognition of these rights by recording frequency assignments and, as appropriate, orbital positions used or intended to be used in the Master International Frequency Register.

The above regulations are based on the main principles of efficient use of and equitable access to the spectrum/orbit resources laid down in No. 196 of the ITU Constitution (Article 44), which stipulates that "In using frequency bands for radio services, Members shall bear in mind that radio frequencies and the geostationary-satellite orbit are limited natural resources and that they must be used rationally, efficiently and economically, in conformity with the provisions of the Radio Regulations, so that countries or groups of countries may have equitable access to both, taking into account the special needs of the developing countries and the geographical situation of particular countries". As indicated in the above provision, further detailed regulations and procedures governing orbit/spectrum use are contained in the Radio Regulations, which is a binding international treaty (No. 31 of the ITU Constitution). The preparatory process for the WRC-15 is carried out by Member States, within their national structures and the Regional Groups (CEPT, CITELE, APT, ATU, RCC and ASMG) and for space service related issues mainly in the ITU-R Study groups, (Working Party 4A (WP 4A), WP 7B and Joint Task Group 4-5-6-7 (JTG 4-5-6-7)) where specialists from telecommunication organizations throughout the world participate together with administrations. This paper will explore the many space related key issues at stake and the challenges at WRC-15 that concern the space community, and call for thoughtful reflection.