

Opening address by the Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau BR Workshop 6 May 2009

Dear colleagues and friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this BR workshop on the efficient use of the spectrum/orbit resource, the first such event ever organized by the Bureau. Allow me also, at this stage, to particularly thank the Chairman of WP4A for having agreed to shorten the working party's meeting by one day to allow this event to take place.

This BR workshop may be considered as a natural follow-up to a successful session that the Bureau was invited to chair on the same issue, at the EMC Symposium 2008 in Wroclaw, Poland, which shows that it might now be time to openly discuss issues often qualified as "sensitive" and hopefully make progress in adapting and improving the international satellite regulatory registration framework at the next WRC. It would be marvelous if, together, we could prove that there is no truth in the phrase: "the more things change, the more they remain the same".

Indeed, the use of space radiocommunication services has progressed considerably over the years and, as a consequence, in recent years it has become increasingly difficult for administrations to obtain suitable new GSO positions and frequencies in both the planned and non-planned satellite services and fully coordinate them in application of the relevant provisions of the Radio Regulations. Efficient use of the spectrum/orbit resource is one of the most crucial challenges facing the international community in efforts to promote worldwide telecommunication development and achieve the connectivity access targets set by the World Summit on the Information Society.

Here are few examples of the issues at stake:

A broad survey of the ITU Space Radiocommunication Stations (SRS) database, which contains information on satellite networks submitted to the Radiocommunication Bureau (BR), shows that less than 20% of networks for which advance publication information (API) is submitted will successfully complete the notification and recording procedures.

What then is the purpose of this inflation of "paper API" submissions at the beginning of the international registration process?

Regarding requests for coordination, the Bureau is receiving filings for satellite networks with characteristics far beyond what may be considered reasonable for normal operations and the delivery of expected services, even allowing for a flexibility factor with regard to forecast use.

For example, some coordination requests include characteristics of steerable beams for which the service area is restricted to the territory of one or a few administrations, whereas the area over which these beams can be steered is defined as worldwide. Moreover, some antenna gain contours, submitted in coordination or notification notices, may contain high gain areas outside the service area (the same approach is also adopted for planned services). This leads to almost absurd coordination requirements. For a particular satellite network received in June 2007, the coordination requirement consisted of 40 administrations and 600 networks.

Completion of coordination for such requirements is extremely difficult – a euphemism for "impossible"! At the notification stage, therefore, most if not all frequency assignments will be recorded in the Master International Frequency Register (MIFR) provisionally under No. 11.41. For example, one notification of a satellite network received in December 2005 and fully recorded in the Master Register indicated coordination agreement with a single administration and requested

the application of No. 11.32A and 11.41 for 34 administrations. In this regard, the Bureau is also witnessing an increase in complaints of harmful interference (some of them involving frequency assignments recorded under No. 11.41).

In actual fact, independent information available today on the real use of the spectrum/orbit resource shows some divergence from the corresponding information submitted by administrations to ITU. This means that “paper satellite” issues – or, more precisely, fictitious frequency assignments recorded in the MIFR - still exist, with the majority of such assignments recorded with the indication that they have been brought into regular operation in accordance with the notified satellite network characteristics.

Space spectrum resources tend more and more to be considered as an administration or company share value, which may to some extent, impede competition and hinder the introduction of new and more spectrum-efficient technologies.

In order to tackle these problems the Radiocommunication Bureau has felt obliged to issue a Circular Letter CR/301 dated 1 May 2009 requesting all administrations to review the use of their recorded satellite networks and urging them to remove unused frequency assignments and networks from the Master Register. This is in the best interest of all administrations and operators and, at the initiative of some administrations; the Bureau is currently pursuing action along these lines in several cases. Some cases of this nature have also been examined recently by the Radio Regulations Board.

The challenge for ITU, and thus for administrations and the satellite community, is to be able to continue carrying out the vital work of recording frequency assignments in the Master Register, thereby ensuring that frequencies and orbital positions associated with those assignments are compatible and do not result in interference. The questions behind this challenge and being put forward for this workshop are:

- Do ITU and the Radio Regulations, through the existing procedures for the registration of frequency assignments for space services, bring added value to administrations and the satellite community?
- What mechanisms and practical strategies can be employed to ensure efficient use of the spectrum/orbit resource and improve the existing international satellite spectrum management systems?

Rising to the above challenges will require the combined efforts of all members of ITU. One of the unique advantages of ITU is that it brings together all members of the satellite telecommunication community. Let us therefore work hard together.

Thus far, there have been few forums in which all those with an interest in the efficient use of the spectrum/orbit resource can get together to discuss the issue. I hope that the example set by the BR workshop will be emulated in other countries around the world, at national and regional levels. If it is, ITU and the satellite community will surely find it easier to tackle the challenges facing us.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I wish you every success in your discussions and exchanges of views today.

Valery Timofeev
Director, Radiocommunication Bureau