

Joint ITU-R SG 6 – EBU Workshop “Broadcasting in times of crisis - 2023”

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Opening Speech

Presented by Joanne Wilson, Deputy to the Director,
ITU Radiocommunication Bureau

Mr. Chairman,

Dear friends and colleagues,

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening to you all. It is a real pleasure, on behalf of Director Mario Maniewicz, to welcome you all to this Workshop. The Director is currently on a mission and is unable to be with you here today. He sends his regrets for having to be away and well wishes for a stimulating workshop.

Let me start by thanking you, the Co-Chairs of this Workshop, Mr. Walid SAMI and Mr. Andy QUESTED, the Chairman of Study Group 6, Mr. Yukihiro Nishida, the EBU Director of technology & innovation, Mr. Antonio Arcidiacono, as well as other colleagues for all the work done in preparing this Workshop.

This Workshop aims at showing in particular the role of the terrestrial broadcasting platform in times of crisis, their synergy and complementarity with other radiocommunication systems, and to identify high-level requirements to improve the role of broadcasting in this context.

We are fully aware of the significance of this Workshop. As well known, extreme weather events compounded with climate changes, earthquakes, tsunamis, as well as pandemics and other hazards pose continued challenges to countries and communities. ITU-R plays an important role in emphasizing the critical function of

radiocommunications in disaster risk reduction and management and supporting its Member States. Holding this Workshop jointly with EBU, ITU-R is also paying tribute to the vital role of broadcasting in disseminating life-saving information during crises.

Thanks to its outstanding performance of high quality, universal availability, ultra-high resilience, and cost efficiency, since its inception, radio, and terrestrial TV broadcasting has been one of the most powerful and effective ways of delivering early warnings and alerting the public during emergencies and in times of crisis and disaster. Timely, relevant, and practical information supports effective response measures and saves lives. For people directly affected, it comes as a vital form of humanitarian assistance.

It is also well known for so many years when emergencies occur, the general public expects and is naturally prepared to receive information from broadcast radio services using small battery-powered AM and FM receivers. Radio broadcasting is considered by the general public as “the” most reliable means to access reliable, high-quality information every time, everywhere.

The resilience of distribution and delivery networks, which are less susceptible than other communication systems to failure at a single distribution point, especially as they are comprised of high-power Radio and terrestrial TV broadcasting transmitters with large coverage areas. Terrestrial TV and Radio broadcast infrastructure is highly robust and regularly remain operational even when other communications technologies fail, through emergency plans and facilities that broadcasters have to keep their signal on the air and their newsgathering and studio environments powered and operational in disaster situations.

Examples and experiences shared in today’s Workshop on disaster planning, preparedness, and relief from the broadcasting industry around the world manifest how broadcast television and radio transmission infrastructure can support first responders, governments, and the public at large in times of crisis.

We are delighted to see new digital broadcasting technologies and systems, such as DAB/DAB+, DRM, and EWS, which some speakers will present at this Workshop, allow the integration of the radio distribution chains into the public alerts plan or

enhance the universal availability of the broadcasting systems in the times of crisis. Meanwhile, even older technologies are still useful, for example, International Radio for Disaster Relief (IRDR) in the HF band. IRDR uses the unique propagation conditions of short-wave transmission that allows the dissemination of radio broadcasts to areas very far (hundreds or even thousands of kilometres) from the broadcasting station. ITU-R just approved the revision of Recommendation ITU-R BS.2107, based on the Radio Regulations, it recommends that the IRDR frequencies between 6 to 26 MHz listed in this Recommendation should be reserved for 24 hours per day, 365 days per year for emergency broadcasts.

We have also noticed that broadcasters are looking for new technical solutions without compromising on key principles enshrined by public broadcasters and authorities. At the end of 2022, ITU-R successfully approved a revised ITU-R Recommendation with the addition of two 5G broadcasting systems. 5G broadcasting could provide critical early warning, disaster preparedness, and response information, disseminated securely via ubiquitous IMT receiving terminals regardless of whether IMT infrastructure – cell towers, for example – are intact.

The application and development of global broadcasting hinge on the availability of sufficient spectrum and global standardization. ITU-R offers a tried-and-tested forum to enable cooperation, the key ingredient to establishing trusted, globally recognized standards. ITU-R's rules and procedures promote openness and transparency, bringing all members of the organization to engage in broadcasting standards development. ITU-R Study Group 6 and its predecessors were tasked with devising international standards, also known as ITU-R Recommendations, for end-to-end broadcasting. These standards lay the foundation for technical trust in the quality, safety and compatibility of radio and television broadcasting systems, which in turn support inclusive sustainable development for people and the planet. Together with ITU Radio Regulations, and various Regional Agreements, ITU-R Recommendations for broadcasting systems also enable the transmission of radio and TV programmes with high spectrum efficiency.

The upcoming World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23), taking place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, late this year, will consider fixed, mobile, and broadcasting issues in the UHF band with a view to reviewing spectrum use and the needs of existing services. Those discussions will encompass broadcasting in the 470–960 MHz frequency band in ITU Region 1, you are encouraged and welcome to participate in this discussion.

So, with this, Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by wishing you all a very successful meeting.

Thanks for your attention again.