

1st ATU Preparatory Meeting for WRC-23 (APM23-1)

Virtual event

3-7 August 2020

Opening Remarks

Mario Maniewicz

Director, Radiocommunication Bureau

Her Excellency, Madam LIBOM LI LIKENG, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications of Cameroun,

Mr. John OMO, Secretary General of the African Telecommunication Union

Representative of the African Union Commission,

Director Generals, Delegates from Member States,

Representatives from Regional Economic Communities, from Associations of Regulators and from Regional Telecommunications Organizations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all.

It is a pleasure to be opening this African Telecommunications Union's first Preparatory Meeting for the World Radiocommunication Conference of 2023. As we move into a new study cycle, I want to recognize the achievements of the recent past and look into the objectives for the future.

As you all know, WRC-19 was a resounding success. It was one of the biggest conferences we have had, counting with over 3'400 participants representing 163 Member States and 129 organizations.

The Conference updated the Radio Regulations and opened the path for the introduction of new technologies such as IMT-2020 or 5G, High-Altitude Platforms, and large constellations of non-Geostationary Orbit Satellites. At the same time, the protection of the continued operation of existing services

remains a foundational requirement in international regulation of the radio spectrum. The outcomes of WRC-19 will accelerate the digital transformation of economies and industries and the digital inclusion of millions of people throughout the world.

Surely all these achievements would not have been possible without the contribution of the various Regional Groups. Reaching consensus for updating the international treaty that governs the use of radio-frequency spectrum and satellite-orbits takes time and effort. It requires a thorough preparatory process followed by serious negotiations during the conference. And the Regional Groups play a key role towards building the global consensus needed for decision-making at the Conference.

Now, looking forward, we have a new cycle ahead of us and the preparations for WRC-23 have already commenced. The ITU-R Study Groups and their Working Parties have begun to organize their work programs and initiate their studies using an online platform for remote participation in their meetings.

Virtual meetings have given the opportunity for many people who otherwise would not have been able to participate in ITU-R meetings to take part in the discussions. Statistics show that on average the participation in the ITU-R meetings has more than doubled with virtual sessions as compared to the physical ones. We are now working to improve virtual offline discussions to complement the progress achieved through the formal online sessions.

The use of online platforms has allowed the ITU-R Study Groups to keep on track with their work. For example, WP 5D has recently finalized its meeting and is aiming at the delivery of IMT-2020 specifications by this November, as originally planned. Allow me to recognize the contribution from imminent representatives of the region in the work of the Study Groups.

Even the Radiocommunication Advisory Group was held virtually for the first time. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Region for providing us with the Chairman of the RAG, Mr. Daniel Obam. He has always represented Africa with the highest standards.

In line with this approach, I applaud the great initiative of the ATU to convene this meeting virtually and begin Africa's Regional preparations for the WRC-23.

And in doing so, I encourage African Administrations to follow the guidance of the Gender Declaration approved during WRC-19, towards supporting greater participation of women in the National, Regional and International preparatory process for WRC-23. The Region is fortunate to have several female role models to look up to, so I am sure that it will succeed in this challenge as well.

Dear friends,

I cannot address your assembly on WRC topics without highlighting the impressive coordinated action of the African group during WRC-19 aimed at ensuring a successful resolution of agenda item 1.4. The adoption of Resolution 559 offers a one-time opportunity for countries having degraded resources in the BSS plan to regain a better reference situation.

I would also like to emphasize the commendable achievement of the African countries that submitted their request for application of the special procedure contained in Resolution 559.

As I first asserted during WRC-19 and reaffirmed during the RAG in May and the Virtual Consultation of Councillors in June this year, I carefully follow the implementation of this Resolution. I am making sure that all necessary BR resources are devoted to such activities by ensuring that the Bureau provides all possible assistance to requesting Administrations. Towards this end, early this year a team of 4 BR experts attended the ATU workshop on this topic. I was very pleased to note the positive outcome of this assistance when informed that all African countries submitted their requests. At its recent meeting, the Radio Regulations Board considered and made special accommodations, consistent with their mandate, to extend the benefits envisioned by Res 559 to a few countries that would have otherwise not been able to find suitable positions within the orbital arc under the provisions of this resolution, given their particular circumstances or geographical situation. Additionally, and consistent with the objectives of the WRC-19, the Board instructed the Bureau to

implement the safeguarding measures to ensure that no countries saw their EPM reference situation degrade as a result of others' submissions under Resolution 559.

These activities do not complete the implementation of Resolution 559. The Bureau is now going to process and publish all the submissions, so that the next phase of determining the final characteristics for inclusion in the List can be initiated. It is likely that another ATU workshop would prove useful to continue the regional coordination on this topic. The BR is looking forward to providing additional assistance to make that possible. We anticipate that final implementation of Resolution 559 will be an ongoing topic of discussion in the ATU in preparation of WRC-23, which will be able to decide on the final inclusion of Resolution 559 submissions in the BSS Plan.

Moving on to another very important point in the agenda of this meeting is the COVID-19 Action Plan and the ATU Strategic Plan.

During these difficult times of COVID-19, we have observed how vital digital technologies have become for economies, societies, and individuals around the world. And how digital exclusion can prevent people from working, studying, and even accessing basic health care information. The COVID-19 action plan will make sure radiocommunications are used to its best, in order to reduce the digital exclusion in Africa.

In addition, the ATU Strategic Plan encompasses a strategy for the introduction of digital sound broadcasting in Africa. This is a joint initiative of the ATU and ITU to optimize the Plan that regulates the use of FM sound broadcasting stations in Africa and Europe, the GE84 Plan. The BR has developed software for the plan optimization and will be providing necessary technical and regulatory assistance for its implementation. By September this year, we plan to start providing training for African broadcasters.

As you have noted, the ITU has been working closely with the African countries to support the deployment and expansion of both satellite and terrestrial systems in Africa.

I would like to conclude my remarks by reassuring you that we continue being at your disposal to provide assistance in radiocommunication-related matters, and to support the Region throughout the study period in the preparation for WRC-23.

Since you have a comprehensive agenda ahead of you, I will finalize by thanking the ATU for the opportunity of addressing you today. And, while wishing you fruitful discussions, I look forward to seeing you all face-to-face in the very near future.

Thank you very much.