

United States of America

RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF SECTOR MEMBERS IN THE RADIOCOMMUNICATION SECTOR

1 Introduction

Council 2009 considered several items in follow-up to the 2008 World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly which have the potential to impact the functioning and membership of the Radiocommunication Sector. This paper seeks to highlight some of these issues and engender discussion from an ITU-R perspective. Understanding potential implications of such issues is important as the Director, BR and the Membership prepare for Council and the 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference.

2 Admission of Academia as Sector Members

Council 2009 reviewed a recommendation of the Director, TSB to admit academia, universities, and associated research establishments as members of the ITU-T Sector Members for a vastly reduced level of contribution: 1/32 unit (CHF 1'987.50). This proposed action is in furtherance of Resolution 71 (WTSA-08). Council decided to seek the views of its Financial Regulations Working Group on this proposal and to further consider extending it to ITU-R and ITU-D Sectors. After the financial analysis is undertaken, Council is invited to forward a recommendation to PP-10, including amendments to CV Articles 19 and 33, to implement this proposal on a permanent basis to all three Sectors of the Union.

While academia is, without doubt, an important contributor to the ongoing work of all of the Sectors of the Union, ITU-R may wish to analyze whether this far-reaching action is needed to promote enhanced engagement of academia and whether there are potential negative impacts on the membership and operations of the ITU-R.

Currently, members of academia actively participate in activities of the Union, including the ITU-R, on national delegations and as invited participants. Furthermore, they are often engaged by Sector Members, including operators and manufacturers, to support specific topics based on their expertise. Academia may already join the Union as Sector Members or Associates.

Further engagement of academia could be stimulated through outreach by the Union, Member States, and Sector Members. Other possibilities include offering fellowships, hosting workshops, calling for papers. Indeed, Document C09/30r1 describes robust participation of academia in the T-Sector's work, but wishes to add them to the membership of the Sector.

To modify the basic instruments of the Union to allow academia to obtain the full rights of Sector Membership without bearing the obligations of Sector Membership, including making the contributions required of current ITU-R Sector Members, could be problematic. If academic organizations may join without offsetting the costs of their participation, the impact will be to transfer their costs onto other contributing parties, including Member States and Sector Members.

Finally, how is a member of academia to be accredited? To whom would they be accountable? Would their participation enhance to work of the ITU-R, which is often constrained by lack of resources, or distract it from urgent tasks of WRC preparation and development of technology driven Recommendations and Reports. Would the current balance of work and resources of the R-Sector be upset by this potential sea change?

Such questions should be carefully discussed and considered in the precise context of the work and the membership of the Radiocommunication Sector. The unique character and the successful operation of the R-Sector must be maintained and protected.

3 Admission of Sector Members from Less Developed or Least Developed Countries at Reduced Levels of Participation

In a parallel effort to expand the membership of the ITU-T, WTSA-08 Resolution 74 seeks Council to support allowing Sector Members of developing countries to join on the basis of a far-reduced level of contributory unit – 1/16th unit (CHF 3'975). It also noted that criteria would have to be developed to prevent multi-national companies operating in developing countries and other non-indigenous companies from benefiting from this reduced fee. Moreover, WTSA recommended that such practice be extended to the ITU-R. Again, amendments to the Convention by the Plenipotentiary Conference would be required to implement such changes to the Union's financing and membership.

Council agreed that further study was needed and again sent the recommendation to its Financial Regulations Working Group for financial analysis. Some countries wished to limit the discount to Sector Members from Least Developed countries or countries of less than 2000 USD per capita. Some agreed that such should be applied to the ITU-R. Council agreed that this proposal should be considered together with the other proposals

on admission of academia and proposals to change the ratio for Sector Member contributions from 1/5 to 1/4.

Although the goal of increasing membership is entirely laudable, it is nevertheless important to consider how such a proposal would impact the Radiocommunication Sector and its current membership. Again, adopting different categories for Sector Members would alter the balance of rights and obligations.

As was the case with the admission of academia, admission of other Sector Members at vastly reduced contributory levels potentially upsets the careful financial balance of the Sector wherein each Sector Member is to offset its price of participation. Simply put, if some members pay far less, then the others will have to pay far more. The full implications of this needs to be understood before any action is taken.

Moreover, what criteria would be applied to ascertain which Sector Members would be able to be admitted at the reduced rate and which would not? How would one determine whether the Sector Members is truly “indigenous” or supported by a foreign company? Indeed, is it appropriate to assume all “indigenous” companies from lesser developed countries cannot afford the cost of Sector Membership but all companies from developed countries can?

4 Conclusion

The WTSA has made potentially far-reaching recommendations to increase membership and to reduce contribution levels in order to advance policy interests of the T-Sector. The ITU-T also recommends the application of its proposed changes to the Radiocommunication Sector. However, no ITU-R body has studied these proposals nor recommended their application to the Radiocommunication Sector. The Radiocommunication Assembly has not studied or supported such proposals.

The United States recommends that all Members of Radiocommunication Sector and the Director BR consider these proposals carefully, including the overall implications for the membership, stability and operations of the Radiocommunication Sector, and provide views to Council and the Plenipotentiary Conference, as appropriate.