

## **2nd GE84 Optimization Workshop**

*Virtual event*

**28 September 2020**

### ***Opening Remarks***

**Mario Maniewicz**  
**Director, Radiocommunication Bureau**

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Mr. John OMO, Secretary General of ATU,  
Distinguished participants,  
Dear friends,

Good morning to you all.

It is a pleasure for me to address you today and open this virtual workshop session on GE84 optimization for this Coordination Group. The main purpose of this optimization is to achieve an efficient use of the FM band used by radio broadcasters and meet the increasing need for additional frequencies in African countries.

Radio is of paramount importance to the whole world, and even more so to Developing countries. This has been true since the first transmissions of public radio broadcasting in 1920.

With the invention and commercial development of the transistor in the 1950s and 1960s, radio services expanded in Africa and broadcasting in local languages begun. Still today, Radio remains the most used mass-communication medium with the widest geographical reach and the greatest audiences even when compared with the Internet, television and newspapers.

Radio and free-to-air broadcasting are more affordable than other forms of technologies, and together with the growth of community radios, they make information and culture accessible to all. Radio reaches everyone in every region, each gender and race, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, young and old.

The word “Radio” refers us to news, culture, education and, of course, to music! Music and dance are a vital part of everyday life in Africa, and many songs and choreographies have been crossing African borders thanks to the Radio.

It is important to bear in mind that Radio goes where newer technologies cannot. It is an extremely effective way of delivering information in rural and remote areas where information can educate, and even save lives in emergency situations. It is proving to be invaluable during the current Pandemic. Listeners are tuning into radio stations to receive the latest news and recommendations on how to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Dear friends,

The use of Radio services, today, is still growing in Africa and with this growth comes an increasing demand for additional frequencies.

The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, adopted by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in 2002 calls on African states to ensure: “An equitable allocation of frequencies between private broadcast uses, both commercial and community”. This Declaration also states that “community broadcasting shall be encouraged given its potential to broaden access by poor and rural communities to the airwaves.” This is still valid today.

Towards this end, the ITU Radiocommunication Bureau (BR), in collaboration with the African Telecommunication Union (ATU), launched a project for the optimization of the GE84 Plan for African countries, in East London- South Africa in July 2019. The project aims to achieve an efficient and equitable use of the 87.5-108 MHz (FM) band for analogue sound broadcasting and to allocate new frequencies to FM broadcasting.

The initial plan was to hold 4 frequency coordination meetings. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the current travel and meeting restrictions, physical coordination meetings are not possible. So, to move the project forward, we have decided to provide this 3-day online workshop.

I am very confident that Africa will pave the way to optimizing the FM band for sound broadcasting, in a similar way as it did for the replanning of the TV broadcasting in the UHF band which enabled the release of the 700 and 800 MHz bands to the Mobile service.

Dear colleagues,

I wish you all a fruitful workshop and I reiterate the commitment of the BR to support the region in its various Radiocommunication-related needs and initiatives.

I am looking forward to seeing you at future physical meetings!

Thank you very much.