

1st Central America and Caribbean coordination meeting relating to the use of the VHF band (174-216 MHz) and the UHF band (470-806 MHz)

**Managua, Nicaragua
8 – 10 March, 2017**

**Opening Speech by François Rancy,
Director, Radiocommunication Bureau, ITU**

Excellencies,

Dear participants and colleagues,

It is a privilege to address you in this opening session of this very important event.

I am very pleased to be among you today and wish you a warm welcome to the 1st Central America and Caribbean coordination Meeting relating to the use of the VHF band (174-216 MHz) and the UHF band (470-806 MHz) taking place here, in Managua for the coming 3 intense days.

The decision of holding these Regional Frequency Coordination Meetings came following the discussions held in the ITU/CTU Regional Radiocommunication Seminar, and in the Central American Summit on Digital Terrestrial Television and the Digital Dividend where COMTELCA Members adopted the “San Salvador Declaration” on 26 July 2016.

The process that you (we) are starting, comes as a way forward to facilitate the transition from analog to Digital Television (DTT) and the allocation of the Digital Dividend in the VHF and UHF bands by ensuring a compatible operation between existing radiocommunication services before formal notification of the relevant frequency assignments to the ITU according to Article 11 of the RR.

As you all know, the transition to digital terrestrial television and the allocation of the resulting digital dividend constitute a challenge of major importance for all countries. Transition to digital television started nearly 20 years ago and has now reached a point where low cost digital receivers are available universally. The availability of HD video devices in nearly every smart phone means billions of people are now able to become digital TV content providers.

The time of analogue broadcasting is now coming to an end. It has actually been switched-off for several years in many countries. 28% of countries around the world have completed the analogue switch-off (54 countries out of 197) and 22% are now in the process of switching off the analogue broadcasting.

The transition from analog to digital broadcasting, in addition to providing much higher quality and a wider offer of contents, enables a much more efficient use of spectrum. It therefore

entails the possibility of releasing a large part of the UHF band for other uses, which represents the digital dividend.

Moreover, due to the outstanding propagation characteristics of the UHF band, its use by broadband mobile provides a key opportunity to bridge the digital divide and therefore a strong impulse to economic and social development in all countries, especially in developing countries.

It is also clear that these propagation characteristics mean that interference propagates over large distances, which requires special efforts at regional level for coordinating the use of frequencies by neighbouring countries.

This coordination is key for harmonizing the use of spectrum so that the co-existence of services as well as roaming and interoperability, are possible.

The transition to digital television and the allocation of the digital dividend, in addition to requiring close regional coordination and cooperation, also present social, legal, regulatory, financial, communication and technical challenges.

As always, ITU will keep promoting best practices in the use of spectrum and introduction of new provisions in the Radio regulations, when it is required. Our common goal is to enable the development of broadcasting while protecting other services. This way we will prove long term assurance for investments in radiocommunication systems.

I am therefore very happy that, with the support of COMTELCA, CTU, CITEL and the kind hospitality of the Administration of Nicaragua, the ITU is able to launch today the frequency coordination meetings between the administrations of Central America and Caribbean in order to face all these challenges and address them in the best possible manner, taking advantage of the experience of other regions and countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you a very fruitful and successful coordination meeting.

François Rancy