

18th Conference of the International Amateur Radio Union, Region 3

Online event

Opening Remarks

20 September 2021

Mario Maniewicz
Director, Radiocommunication Bureau

General Sukit Khamasundara, Chairman of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission of Thailand,

Mr. Masanori Kondo, APT Secretary General,

Mr. Tim Ellam, President of IARU,

Mr. Wisnu Widjaja, Chairman of Directors of IARU Region 3,

Mr. Panit Chantrabhakdee, Chairman of the 18th IARU Conference for Region 3,

Dear colleagues and friends, a very good morning to all of you.

I am delighted to participate in the opening of the triennial conference of the International Amateur Radio Union, Region 3. Despite the early hour for me in Geneva, I chose to deliver a “live” address to acknowledge my appreciation for the important role that the Amateur Radio community plays in our society.

Moreover, IARU and ITU have been successfully working together for more than 90 years. Our joint work started in 1932, when IARU was formally admitted for participation in ITU activities. But even before that date, in 1927, the amateur radio received the first spectrum allocations by the ITU. Nowadays this fruitful cooperation continues to the mutual benefit of both organisations.

Over these years IARU has become a reliable partner of the ITU, a valuable contributor to the studies of its ITU Radiocommunication Sector and a long-standing actor in ITU’s World Radiocommunication Conferences.

IARU actively participates in the activities of ITU-R Study Group 5 and WP 5A following the developments of the amateur and amateur-satellite services and preserving their interests. During recent years, the radio amateurs are also taking part in Study Group 1 and its WP 1A meetings, especially in the discussions related to the interference from industrial sources, such as LED displays or Power Line Communications, which are of a great concern for the amateur community.

Currently, IARU has 160 radioamateur associations in all 3 regions of the world. It assists the activities of more than 3 million licenced operators, promoting their interests and safeguarding the spectrum for the radioamateur community.

Dear participants,

It is difficult to overestimate the social and technical value of amateur radio. It allows to establish direct communications among people of different countries using their home equipment. Amateur radio helps users to obtain basic knowledge of radiowave propagation, antennas, and transmitters. It permits to make small radio experiments that sometimes turn into a life's passion.

Amateur radio also serves as a good educational platform for young people, engaging them into the fascinating world of wireless communications, giving a valuable practical experience to learn how radio works.

Amateur radio is not only a hobby. It may play an important role in emergency communications and disaster relief operations. Over the years, many emergency centers are increasingly relying on radioamateurs, since they are capable of providing connections when all other types of communications go down.

The cases when radioamateurs can save lives are numerous. It may happen, for example, during hurricanes, or earthquakes, or fires, which lead to massive power failures and blockage of other means of communications. Another known example is intercepting the emergency signals from ships in distress, and relaying them to Rescue Coordination Centers. I am certain that in Region 3, having large oceanic zones and prone to extreme natural phenomena, the role of amateur radio in emergency communications is crucial.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ITU recognizes the importance and social value of radioamateur communications and enables their operation by providing necessary frequency spectrum and stable regulations at ITU's World Radiocommunication Conferences.

I would like to share with you several WRC decisions related to amateur radio since 2003:

- The World Radiocommunication Conferences held in 2003 reviewed Articles 19 and 25 of the Radio Regulations and harmonized the international regulations applicable to the amateur services;
- WRC-07 opened the frequency band around 136 kHz for amateur radio;
- WRC-12 allocated spectrum at 500 kHz band to the amateur service for assistance in disaster and emergency situations;
- WRC-15 made a new allocation to the amateur service in the 5 MHz band, bridging the propagation gap between the 3.5 MHz and the 7 MHz frequency bands;
- WRC-19 allocated the band 50-52 MHz to the amateur radio in Region 1, thus completing the harmonization of spectrum throughout the world.

To my memory, WRC-23 is the only Conference in the last 20 years that does not have an explicit agenda item for amateur radio. However, agenda items 1.2, 1.12, 1.14, 1.18, and 9.1 Topics A and B, are of vital importance for you. They consider new allocations in the bands used by the amateur services or adjacent to such bands.

I would also like to make use of this occasion to inform you about ITU's preparations for WRC-23. On 6 August, the ITU Council took the decision (No. 623) that WRC-23 will be held in the United Arab Emirates, either in Abu Dhabi or Dubai, from 20 November to 15 December 2023. The Council approved the agenda of the Conference. It is the same as contained in Resolution 811 of WRC-19, without any change.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made a considerable impact on all our activities, including the ITU-R preparatory studies for WRC-23. It is recognised that current virtual meetings may be less effective than in-person meetings. They have reduced working hours, and these working hours are not always convenient for many participants. There is also the lack of opportunities for informal discussions among delegates.

However, ITU has put in place several mitigation measures to improve the efficiency of virtual meetings. These include flexible hours and establishing correspondence groups, which undertake a large part of the activities during the intersessional period. As a result, the ITU Radiocommunication Sector and its Study Groups continue the preparations for WRC-23 according to the original plan and respecting the deadlines established by the first session of the Conference Preparatory Meeting in 2019.

Dear friends,

I have been working with the radioamateur community for many years and appreciate your enthusiasm, passion for radio, high competence, and professionalism. Clearly, the word 'amateur' is a great underestimation of what you are doing. Usually, radioamateurs are born engineers, with excellent knowledge of wireless communications and a strong aspiration to keep up to date with the latest emerging radio technologies.

These capacities of radioamateurs bring valuable expertise and a positive effect to ITU meetings, ITU-R Study Groups and World Radiocommunication Conferences, where readiness to compromise, aptitude to listen to others, as well as ability to find sound technical or regulatory solutions count a lot.

Dear colleagues,

Coming back to the triennial conference, I see that your agenda contains many important issues. It includes policy and strategy matters, technical and financial questions, nominations for the office of the directors and the secretary, preparations for WRC-23 and some others.

Let me wish you every success in your discussions and a very fruitful meeting. Thank you for your attention.