

## **WSIS TalkX – World Radio Day 2022**

*Virtual event*

### ***Remarks***

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Distinguished WSIS TalkX panellists,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning/good afternoon/good evening to you all. I am thankful for the invitation to speak during this WSIS event, which is part of ITU's contribution to celebrating this year's World Radio Day.

Observed every year on 13 February, World Radio Day celebrates the unique power of radio to connect people and bring them closer to their community — even amid pandemics, natural disasters, and emergencies. It is also a day to raise awareness of the importance of broadcast radio; to encourage decision-makers to enhance access to information through radio; as well as to improve networking and international cooperation among broadcasters.

The 2022 edition of World Radio Day, which was celebrated yesterday, focused on "Radio and Trust".

With more than a century of history behind it, the humble radio remains one of the most trusted and widely used media for communication around the world.

Radio continues to provide quick and affordable access to real-time information, along with coverage of national and local news, opportunities for distance learning and, of course, entertainment programs.

Accessible anywhere and anytime, radio reaches a broad and diverse audience of both literate and illiterate listeners. Research in developing and developed countries, points to radio as a powerful and trusted source of information.

This is especially so with the rising threat of fake news propagated over the Internet and social media platforms. People around the world are more often tuning into radio broadcasts as a familiar, reliable news source.

In times of emergency and disaster, radio broadcasting is one of the most powerful and effective ways of delivering early warnings. Timely, relevant, and practical information supports effective response measures and saves lives. For people directly affected by disasters, it comes as a vital form of humanitarian assistance.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, too, radio has kept people connected and entertained, ensured continuity in learning, helped fight misinformation, and disseminated critical health information.

Distinguished participants,

This year marks 127 years since the first radio transmission was made by Guglielmo Marconi in 1895 on the Isle of Wight, which led eventually to the signing of the International Radiotelegraph Convention in 1906. Since then, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has played a central role in advancing the medium worldwide, establishing and updating international regulations on the use of the radio-frequency spectrum and, from the dawn of the space age, the associated satellite orbits.

As you may be aware, ITU is the custodian of the global treaty on spectrum management known as the Radio Regulations. Updated every three to four years by the World Radiocommunication Conference, this treaty facilitates equitable access to and rational use of the radio spectrum, ensures the availability of frequencies provided for distress and safety purposes, and promotes interference-free operations of the myriad of radiocommunication systems.

They also prescribe how radio equipment and systems must operate to ensure reliable coexistence among radio services of different administrations and to enable the most efficient utilization of today's increasingly crowded airwaves.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Just two weeks ago, the International Telecommunications Union and the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) completed the two-year GE84 Plan optimization project for Africa. This was a major milestone for broadcast radio in Africa.

International radiocommunication experts assisted African countries in identifying new frequencies between 87.5 and 108 megahertz (MHz), to facilitate the expansion of FM radio broadcasting services across the continent.

The project registered an 85 percent success rate for submitted FM frequency assignments, which means that over 18,000 assignments can now be used without causing or receiving harmful interference. The project's success helps to secure the long-term sustainability of African radio broadcasting and paves the way for the introduction of digital sound broadcasting in Africa.

Compared to the broadcasting plan first established in Geneva in 1984, this new achievement represents a considerable step forward. It was made possible thanks to high levels of participation, intensive involvement of representatives from the African countries, and efficient discussions throughout the project period. People across the African continent will surely benefit from access to this vital communication tool.

Dear participants,

Radio amateurs have a long history of community service, including providing critical communication links during disasters and emergencies. We celebrate their contribution to radio on April 18 every year. Amateur radio operators have the means to establish emergency communication networks wherever and whenever needed, even under stringent circumstances.

In addition, during the current pandemic, amateur radio has been a way to maintain social contact while complying with social distancing rules.

From the 25 countries that formed the International Amateur Radio Union in 1925, the organization has grown to include over 160 member societies worldwide. Today, amateur radio has more than three million (3,000,000) licensed operators.

Dear friends,

As the world and radio change together, ITU will continue to serve as the steward of global airwaves, ensuring we can connect safely, sustainably, and innovatively for centuries to come.

Accessible and affordable, radio can reach practically everyone, everywhere. Its loyal listeners include people in big cities, those in small towns and villages, those in rural communities, and even those in the most isolated places on the planet.

So today, more than ever, it is true to affirm that radio leaves no one behind!

I thank all of you for being here today.