

IARU E-LETTER

IARU Electronic Newsletter

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The ITU - International Telecommunication Union

ITU

If you were to ask most amateur radio operators what entity is responsible for granting privileges to use portions of the radio spectrum for amateur radio purposes the answer would likely be their own national telecommunication authority. However, that's only partially true. The ultimate authority for the use of the radio spectrum is the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). It is desirable that each amateur radio operator understand what the ITU is and why its work and decisions are important.

Most countries are Member States of the ITU and by way of treaty generally agree to be bound by the decisions of the ITU when it comes to the usage of the radio spectrum. Each country can decide that a certain use determined by the ITU may not apply in their own jurisdiction. It is not common for countries to do that but it is within their sovereign authority to do so.

The International Telecommunication Union is a United Nations agency that deals with information and communications technology issues. They have an extensive web site at www.itu.int that details much of their work. The ITU is based in Geneva, Switzerland and includes in its membership 192 Member States and more than 700 Sector Members and Associates.

ITU has coordinated the shared global use of the radio spectrum, promoted international cooperation in assigning satellite orbits, worked to improve telecommunication infrastructure in the developing world, established the worldwide standards that foster seamless interconnection of a vast range of communications systems and addressed other global concerns, such as mitigating climate change and strengthening cybersecurity.

The top staff official of the ITU is its Secretary-General, Dr. Hamadoun Toure who is also a licensed radio amateur with the call sign HB9EHT. There are three sectors in the ITU: Radio-communication (ITU-R), Development (ITU-D) and Standardization (ITU-T). The IARU is a Sector Member in both the ITU-R Sector and the ITU-D Sector. The IARU fully participates in both of those sectors by attending any and all meetings that involve issues that may impact the amateur or the amateur-satellite services. The Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Directors of the three ITU Sectors are elected to four-year terms by the Member States at

Plenipotentiary Conferences held every four years. The IARU is a recognized international telecommunication organization and is invited to participate as an observer at the Plenipotentiary Conferences. The most recent "Plenipot" was held in October, 2010 in Guadalajara, Mexico.

The ITU Council was established in 1947 under the name Administrative Council, following a decision taken by the 1947 Plenipotentiary Conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey, United States. The Council comprises a maximum of 25% of the total number of Member States, which are elected by the Conference with due regard to the need for equitable distribution of Council seats among the five world regions (Americas, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australasia). The current Council is comprised of 48 members.

The role of Council is to consider, in the interval between Plenipotentiary Conferences, broad telecommunication policy issues to ensure that the Union's activities, policies and strategies fully respond to today's dynamic, rapidly changing telecommunications environment. It also prepares a report on the policy and strategic planning of the ITU. In addition, Council is responsible for ensuring the smooth day-to-day running of the Union, coordinating work programs, approving budgets and controlling finances and expenditures. Finally, Council also takes all steps to facilitate the implementation of the provisions of the *ITU Constitution*, the *ITU Convention*, the Administrative Regulations (International Telecommunications Regulations and Radio Regulations), the decisions of Plenipotentiary Conferences and, where appropriate, the decisions of other conferences and meetings of the Union. The IARU has attended several ITU Council meetings in the recent past.

The ITU-R Sector is very important for radiocommunication services, including the amateur and amateur-satellite services. Every 4 or 5 years the ITU holds a World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) to revise the international Radio Regulations. It is the job of WRC to review, and, if necessary, revise the Radio Regulations, the international treaty governing the use of the radio-frequency spectrum and the geostationary-satellite and non-geostationary-satellite orbits. Revisions are made on the basis of an agenda determined by the ITU Council, which takes into account recommendations made by previous world radiocommunication conferences. The general scope of the agenda of world radiocommunication conferences is established four to six years in advance, with the final agenda set by the ITU Council two years before the conference, with the concurrence of a majority of Member States. The next WRC is scheduled for 23 January to 17 February 2012, just one year away.

Under the terms of the ITU Constitution, a WRC can:

1. revise the Radio Regulations and any associated Frequency assignment and allotment Plans;
2. address any radiocommunication matter of worldwide character;
3. instruct the Radio Regulations Board and the Radiocommunication Bureau, and review their activities;
4. determine Questions for study by the Radiocommunication Assembly and its Study Groups in preparation for future Radiocommunication Conferences.

There is a lengthy preparatory process for every WRC in which the IARU participates as a Sector Member. There are usually countless meetings dealing with each agenda item that has been determined to be on the agenda for a WRC. Many of those agenda items can, and do, have

a substantial impact on the amateur radio usage of portions of the radio spectrum. It is important for the IARU to participate to "protect our frequencies" and when the opportunity presents itself, to expand our spectrum.

ITU-R Study Groups and Working Parties address each agenda item on the WRC agenda and try to arrive at a consensus and recommendation(s) how the agenda item may be addressed or dealt with at the WRC. Studies are conducted many times to determine how a proposed new usage may impact the other services, or not. Each of these agenda items are thoroughly discussed for at least a couple of years leading up to the WRC. You can imagine how important it is for the worldwide amateur community that IARU participate in the entire study group/working party process.

ITU-D is where much of the ITU's work on disaster response takes place. The development arm of the ITU considers emergency telecommunications an integral part of its projects integrating telecommunications/information and communication technology in disaster predication, detection, and alerting. Emergency Telecommunications play a critical role in the immediate aftermath of disasters by ensuring timely flow of vital information which is much needed by government agencies, and other humanitarian actors that are involved in rescue operations and providing medical assistance to the injured. IARU's task in the ITU-D Sector is to ensure that amateur radio's role in disaster communications is understood and appreciated by the ITU members. The ITU-D Sector also conducts a worldwide conference. The current schedule calls for a World Telecommunication Development Conference every 4 years. In 2010, the WTDC was held in Hyderabad, India in late May and early June. IARU participated in the conference.

The ITU also sponsors regional and global exhibitions called TELECOMS. An ITU Telecom offers a global ICT community platform that gathers stakeholders from across the telecommunications/ICT sector to connect, collaborate and create the future ICT landscape. Forums or seminars related to ICT are conducted at the Telecoms and IARU has participated in such forums, usually on topics related to emergency communications.

In one of the ITU buildings, there is a permanent amateur radio station, 4U1ITU. 4U1ITU is the club station of the International Amateur Radio Club.

In an upcoming IARU E-Letter, I will describe the organization of IARU and how it works within the ITU and the regional telecommunication organizations like CEPT, CITEL and APT to ensure amateur radio's continued place in the radio spectrum landscape.

73, Rod W6ROD

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An archive of earlier issues is available at <http://www.iaru.org/e-letter/>.

If you have any information that would be appropriate to publish in this electronic newsletter, please contact me at w6rod@iaru.org.

Rod Stafford W6ROD
IARU Secretary

The IARU E-Letter is published on behalf of the Administrative Council of the International Amateur Radio Union by the IARU International Secretariat. Editor: Rod Stafford, W6ROD, IARU Secretary.

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