



IARU E-LETTER

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Special WRC Report Number Two

The procedures used by the Int'l Telecommunication Union (ITU) before and during a World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) seem complicated. They are somewhat complicated but they are understandable with a bit of background.

Each agenda item that will be decided at a WRC has been studied for at least 3 or 4 years leading up to a WRC. ITU Working Parties discuss the issues involved in the agenda item. Compatibility studies, sharing studies, experiments, etc. take place whenever needed so that discussions and decisions can be made based upon facts rather than opinions. Within a year prior to the start of a WRC an important meeting called the Conference Preparatory Meeting (CPM) occurs. The CPM report pulls together all of the information dealing with each of the agenda items and sets forth the various ways, if there is more than one, that an agenda item can be satisfied or decided. By the time of the CPM, most all of the arguments in favor of the agenda item and opposed to the agenda items have been thoroughly discussed in the many meetings that take place regarding each agenda item. When a national administration arrives at the WRC, decisions have generally been made by that administration whether to be in favor or opposed to any particular agenda items. However, it is usually not that clear cut. Some administrations may be in favor if certain adjustments or modifications are made to one or more of the proposed methods to satisfy the agenda item. In other words, discussions and negotiations really get started during the earlier stages of the WRC. For example, Administration X may withhold

support or opposition on a specific proposal until other administrations agree to support Administration X's position on other agenda items that Administration X is very interested in.

At the beginning of the WRC, each agenda item is assigned to a Sub-Working Group (SWG) to allow interested administrations and other interested attendees the opportunity to discuss the agenda item. This is the stage where most of the negotiations and compromises are made in order to arrive at a consensus as to how to decide the agenda item. The preferred way is to have a consensus by the SWG attendees. Many times the consensus is achieved by all parties realizing that the result may very well turn out to be a situation where "everyone is a little bit unhappy."

The flow of the work is that the output of the SWG goes to the Working Group level. After the WG level deals with the issue it moves to the Committee level. By the time the issue gets to the Committee level, revisions to the work done at the lower levels is generally not done. Once the agenda item passes the Committee level, it goes to the Plenary for two readings. If it passes the two readings the agenda item appears in the Final Acts of the WRC.

There are also times when a consensus by ALL parties is just not possible. An agenda item can move from the SWG stage to the Working Group stage where most administrations have reached a consensus on how to resolve the issue but there are still some administrations that are in favor of No Change (NOC).

Agenda Item 1.23. In the case of agenda item 1.23, there was a good deal of support among administrations at the SWG level for a secondary allocation to amateur radio just below 500 kHz. However, there was strong resistance by several administrations to the allocation based upon a stated concern that amateur operation in that portion of the spectrum could cause interference to Non-Directional Beacons. SWG 4C3 (the SWG dealing with agenda item 1.23) met 12 times over a period of ten days trying to arrive at a consensus on 1.23. Finally, a consensus was achieved on the issue by adding various footnotes dealing with the allocation that satisfied most of the administrations opposing the allocation. At the end of the day, there were still a couple of administrations opposing the allocation. As a result, the SWG elevated the issue to the Working Group level with 2 options to satisfy the agenda item:

- 1.) a secondary allocation to the amateur service in the band 472-479 kHz with certain operating conditions set forth in footnotes to the allocation, or
- 2.) No Change (in other words, no amateur allocation).

The proposal that has been agreed to by most administrations that support the amateur allocation calls for a worldwide secondary allocation to the amateur service at 472 to 479 kHz with a power limit of 1 watt e.i.r.p., but with a provision for administrations to permit up to 5 watts e.i.r.p. for stations located more than 800 km from certain countries that wish to protect their aeronautical radionavigation service (non-directional beacons) from any possible interference. Proposed footnotes provide administrations with opportunities to opt out of the amateur allocation and/or to upgrade their aeronautical radionavigation service to primary if they wish to do so. In addition to these protections for aeronautical radionavigation, the amateur service must avoid harmful interference to the primary maritime mobile service.

At the Working Group meeting, there was no shifting of positions so the matter was elevated to the next level to Committee 4 with the same 2 options. The Committee 4 meeting takes place on Tuesday, 7 February. I will report on the results of that Committee 4 meeting but based upon the results thus far, I am cautiously optimistic that the amateurs will have a new secondary allocation at 472-479 kHz.

Agenda Item 1.15. Another agenda item being carefully watched by the IARU is agenda item 1.15 dealing with oceanographic radar. One of the candidate bands for the placement of oceanographic radar is 5.250 to 5.275 MHz. There have been a number of administrations that have granted amateurs access to spectrum around 5 MHz. In fact, one of the bands listed by IARU as a future allocation is 5 MHz. If oceanographic radar is operating in the 5.250-5.275 MHz band, that may impact the ability of the amateurs to obtain an allocation in that area. The candidate bands have not been finalized as yet at the WRC.

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

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