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The Geostationary-Satellite Orbit Conference

The Final Acts of the World Administrative Radio Conference on the use of the geostationary-satellite orbit and on the planning of space services utilizing it (ORB-88) have been signed after almost six weeks of hard work that in reality were the culmination of efforts that began nearly a decade ago with the considerations and decisions of WARC-79.

In the revision of the Radio Regulations that has been adopted, the guarantee, in practice, of equitable access to the geostationary-satellite orbit—which was the basis of the Conference—has been given more concrete expression. In this respect, the Allotment Plan with its associated regulatory provisions is undoubtedly a major achievement.

This Plan has sought to find a balance between diverse requirements, such as, for example, flexibility and long-term assurance of access. Similarly, procedures have been revised to provide for multilateral planning meetings and this, with the relevant Resolution providing for the Administrative Council to monitor the application of these meetings, is another step forward.

These new approaches will no doubt be further refined in the years ahead, on the basis of the experience gained with their application in practice.

As for the general simplification of procedures applicable to all space services, experience will show how far the Conference has succeeded in this direction. Nevertheless, the reduction in the number of cases needing detailed co-ordination—because of the agreed higher threshold for the identification of such cases—should, in general, simplify the process of securing access to the orbit.

The broadcasting-satellite service feeder-link plan for Regions 1 and 3 which has been adopted, complements the feeder-link plan for Region 2 incorporated into the Radio Regulations in 1985. Thus these decisions complete the related world agreement adopted in 1977 for the direct broadcasting-satellite service.

Various other questions such as suitable provisions for high-definition television and satellite sound-broadcasting were also considered but it was thought best to leave them for appropriate decisions by a future competent Conference. Meanwhile studies have been stimulated, including those in the CCIR.

Overall, we can look with satisfaction on the results that have been achieved. The traditional spirit of international co-operation and understanding, which has been the hallmark of the Union's activities, has once again prevailed in spite of initial difficulties. This Conference will thus stand as another important milestone in the history of the ITU, and is a good omen for its future, in the context of the changing environment in which the adaptability of the Union is bound to be put to the test again. It is, of course, fundamental that the Union continues to find appropriate responses to the challenge of change, both structural and technological, in the realm of telecommunications of all kinds.

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