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The regulatory front

Eberhard George (Germany), Chairman of Committee 4 (Regulatory and associated issues) of WRC-97 looks at the regulatory conclusions of the Conference in an interview with ITU News.

■ **Mr George, the broadcasting-satellite service Plan for Regions 1 and 3 has been cited as one of the success stories of WRC-97. What exactly happened? Which countries will benefit from the BSS replanning exercise and what are the next steps?**

I agree with you that the revision of the broadcasting-satellite service Plan, including the feeder-link Plan for Regions 1 and 3 was one of the milestones of the 1997 World Radiocommunication Conference. The Radiocommunication Bureau (BR) is to be complimented for its outstanding contribution to this success. The story goes back to Resolution 531 of WRC-95 which established guidelines for revising the Plan contained in Appendices 30 and 30A of the Radio Regulations. WRC-95 had also recommended new planning parameters and planning principles for carrying out such a review.

In summary the revised Plan had to be based on, among other things, a general reduction of 5 dB in e.i.r.p. (equivalent isotropically radiated power), an improved receive Earth station reference antenna pattern, the simultaneous planning of feeder links and downlinks using overall equivalent protection margins (OEPM) — step 1 of the planning exercise. The revised Plan had to provide for new countries and those countries having less than the minimum number of channels assigned by the 1977 BSS Conference — step 2 of the planning exercise. It was also to take account, as far as possible, of systems which were communicated to the BR under the Plan modification procedures — step 3 of the planning exercise.

After extensive work carried out by the Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R) between WRC-95 and WRC-97, and by this Conference itself, a revised Plan developed basically on the guidelines of

steps 1 and 2 was established after very difficult and sometimes extremely controversial discussions. One of the main points of concern was the unsatisfactorily low number of channels — in general five for Region 1 and four for Region 3 — provided by the Plan and a number of countries felt very strongly that the minimum number of channels should be increased to about ten at this Conference. However, this was completely impossible to achieve, due among other things, to lack of time at the Conference. In the end a compromise was



Eberhard George

course, it will benefit the new countries which had no entries in the old Plan, except if they had applied the modification procedure. But more generally, all countries will benefit through the introduction of the new technical parameters which give much greater flexibility for Plan modifications.

What are the next steps? As I have already indicated, the Plan revision, as adopted, was a compromise which provides a minimum number of channels per country and that additional capacity was sought. The Conference therefore decided that an inter-conference group should be established to consider the possibility of reviewing the Plan to provide all countries with a minimum of around

reached, one element of which is to examine the possibility of replanning on the basis of a greater number of channels per country. From a technical point of view, the Plan revision has also been extremely successful in that virtually all assignments have positive OEPM.

Now, who will benefit from the Plan revision? In the first place, of

ten analogue equivalent channels based on national coverage. Capacity for future additional requirements such as sub-regional systems is also to be taken into account. Systems already included in the Plan are to be protected and the Plan for Region 2 has to be preserved. The result of this inter-conference work will be submitted to WRC-99 with a view to deciding whether to convene a replanning conference that would take place no later than 2001.

■ **High-frequency broadcasting seems to be a perennial topic for World Radiocommunication Conferences. Any progress at WRC-97?**

Yes, definitely, there was substantial progress in this area and I am convinced that this successfully ends the lengthy debate on the issue of planning of HF broadcasting, which has now lasted for almost fifteen years. There are two major factors that make planning in this area so difficult: the lack of sufficient frequency spectrum for HF broadcasting and the variability of the ionosphere, which in my view is the most difficult transmission medium with almost unpredictable transmission characteristics.

The Conference adopted in Article S12 of the Radio Regulations the principle of planning by coordination. The procedure promotes the development of a voluntary coordination process among administrations with participation of broadcasters to resolve incompatibilities prior to the submission of the planned transmission schedule to the BR, which then will analyse the compatibility through software still to be developed.

The Conference also adopted principles and criteria for the development of Rules of Procedure by the Radio Regulations Board. Administrations are requested to support the BR in the preparation of these Rules of Procedure and of any accompanying computer software.

With regard to a possible advancement of the date of availability of the WARC-92 extension bands, that is 1 April 2007, the Conference decided that this was premature, but agreed that this question could be reconsidered by WRC-99 on the basis of possible sharing between broadcasting and the

fixed and mobile services using these bands, taking account of information on the occupancy of these bands by the fixed and mobile services.

Whilst the schedule for the introduction of single sideband (SSB) emissions was maintained, the Conference recognized that the conversion from existing double sideband (DSB) to SSB using current technology would not be economically attractive. It therefore decided to permit also the use of other spectrum efficient modulation techniques recommended by ITU-R in the HF bands between 5900 and 26 100 kHz allocated to the broadcasting service. This opens the door for digital techniques which, due to their inherent advantages, will undoubtedly replace analogue modulation techniques in the not-too-distant future for HF broadcasting.

■ ***The Radio Regulations went through a major overhaul at WRC-95 and were to be simplified further by WRC-97. What significant changes have been made and why did this Conference decide to delay the date of entry into force of the simplified Radio Regulations?***

This Conference successfully finalized the work that had started with the Voluntary Group of Experts on the simplification of the Radio Regulations. Whilst the basic decisions in this area had been taken by WRC-95, it was left to this Conference to review any issues remaining from WRC-95 in order to ensure consistency between all of the provisions of the simplified Radio Regulations. This was done, but it should be noted that one pending item, namely the possible transfer of the modification procedures of the Plans in Appendices S30 and S30A as

requested by a considerable number of administrations, was not carried out because other administrations had major difficulties with such an approach. This question will therefore be reconsidered by WRC-99.

As you will recall, WRC-95 had decided that the simplified procedures should provisionally apply as of 1 June 1998. Given the fact that a number of administrations had difficulties with, in their view, such an early date and because of practical difficulties with this date in relation to the date of provisional application of the Final Acts of this Conference — one set of regulations would have been in force for only about half a year — the Conference took the pragmatic and, in my view, very wise decision to modify the WRC-95

Eberhard George who holds a university degree in electrical engineering is a Senior Official in the Federal Ministry of Economics. He is responsible for all international frequency management matters and the national frequency allocation table. In this capacity, he leads the national preparations for World Radiocommunication Conferences. From 1990 to the end of 1997 he held the same position in the Federal Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, which has been dissolved following deregulation and privatization of posts and telecommunications in Germany with the remaining policy issues in this area being transferred to the Federal Ministry of Economics. Before his present post, Mr George held a number of other posts in the area of frequency management, including the fixed service, the maritime mobile service, and the radio monitoring service.

Mr George led the German delegation to the 1997 Radiocommunication Assembly as well as to WRC-97. He was deputy head of delegation at numerous WARC and WRCs as well as at the 1992 Additional Plenipotentiary Conference and the 1994 Plenipotentiary Conference. He attended practically all WARC, RARC and WRCs since the Maritime Conference in 1974 and held numerous positions as Chairman of Working Groups and Committees. Mr George has also been very active in the International Radio Consultative Committee (CCIR) and ITU-R Study Group work since 1972. He was Vice-Chairman of CCIR Study Group 8 from 1978 to 1986 and is Chairman of Study Group 8 since 1986. He is Germany's spokesman in the Radiocommunication Advisory Group.

decision and select a single date for the provisional application of both the simplified Radio Regulations adopted by WRC-95 and the Final Acts of this Conference. The new date is now 1 January 1999.

■ ***What other decisions were reached as a result of Committee 4 negotiations?***

With regard to the maritime mobile and maritime mobile satellite services, we made the neces-

sary modifications to the relevant regulations to enable the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS) to be implemented fully from 1 February 1999 in the context of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). We also revised Appendix S18, the maritime VHF frequency usage plan, to adapt it to current needs and provide for more flexibility in its application. Committee 4 also took the necessary decisions for the implementation of frequency adaptive systems in the MF and HF bands. ■
