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RAG looks at Minneapolis conclusions

Yoshio Utsumi, ITU's Secretary-General, opened the seventh meeting of the Radiocommunication Advisory Group (Geneva, 22–26 February 1999) which was also addressed by Bob Jones, Director of the Radiocommunication Bureau (BR). RAG was meeting for the first time since the Minneapolis Plenipotentiary Conference last autumn. It used this opportunity to review the Minneapolis decisions which are relevant to its work. This article highlights some of the conclusions of the meeting.

Status and mandate of RAG

The role and functions of the Union's Advisory Groups are now clearly spelled out in the Convention. RAG noted the provisions regulating its mandate and will, at its next meeting in the year 2000, develop its own procedures, including those governing the election of its

RAG structure

Chairperson: Michael Goddard (United Kingdom)
Vice-Chairpersons: Alexander Kushtuev (Russia) and Idrissa Samake (Mali)

Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons and their terms of office.

ITU-2000 Recommendations

On the ITU-2000 Recommendations endorsed by the Conference, a number of Sector Members expressed disappointment that the increased rights and obligations for industry fall short of their expectations.

RAG welcomed the decision of the Conference to introduce an alternative procedure

where Member States and industry can approve Questions and Recommendations on an equal footing, provided that they have no regulatory or policy implications. The advisory body has invited study group Chairpersons to review their areas of study with a view to identifying subjects with no regulatory or policy implications. RAG will then consider the need or otherwise for a Sector-specific procedure for approving Questions and Recommendations.

RAG also discussed the new status of "associates" which the Conference created to allow for small entities to participate in given study groups and their subgroups, when mutual interests exist. In this regard, RAG has invited BR to undertake studies and report to the next Radiocommunication Assembly in the year 2000 on the costs that may be considered when this new category of Members participate in a limited range of activities of the study groups of ITU's Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R).

Cost recovery

RAG noted the report of the first meeting of the Council's Working Group on the implementation of cost recovery for satellite notifications, held in January 1999. At this stage, RAG does not favour extending cost recovery to other areas of activity in ITU-R. Instead, it has suggested to first gain experience with cost recovery for satellite network filings.

Strategic, financial and operational plans

The BR was commended for its 1999 Operational Plan and for introducing key performance indicators which will complement the quarterly reporting process already in place. The plan is being used as a management tool.

Another important result for industry from the Minneapolis Conference was the decision to establish a reporting process to provide feedback to Members on the use of their contributions for greater transparency and accountability. RAG had its first opportunity to comment on the general considerations for the development of the ITU-R biennial budget for 2000-2001. While RAG recognized the efforts being made to manage the limited resources effectively, it felt that the suggestion to reduce the meeting time of the Radiocommunication Assembly from five to four days might be difficult to achieve and will review the matter at its next meeting.

Documentation

The BR has been advised to establish guidelines for authors on layout, length, and distribution of documentation in response to a resolution of the conference to cut down on documentation. In the case of long documents, short summaries should be provided, with the rest of the material being contained in an annex. RAG has encouraged BR to post all temporary documents on the Web as soon as they become available.

Steps to improve efficiency of WRCs

RAG agreed that knowing the organizational structure of world radiocommunication conferences ahead of time would be beneficial to all those involved in preparing these events.

Notwithstanding the responsibilities of the Secretary-General, every effort should be made to reach informal consensus on the conference structure and possible chairpersons for the various committees and working groups through RAG and meetings of informal groups. At any rate, the final decision on these issues rests with the WRC itself.

In the case of WRC-2000, RAG expressed support for two substantial committees on regulatory and allocation matters. Discussion will continue on the need for a separate Working Group

on IMT-2000 matters and a separate Committee on Appendices S30 and S30A of the Radio Regulations. The importance of the work of the Working Group of the Plenary in dealing with future WRC agendas was underlined.

Use of electronic format and limiting the number of paper copies

RAG has called on BR to make every effort to facilitate the trend towards the use of documentation in electronic format. To this end, some thought should be given to limiting the number of paper copies of documents distributed to administrations prior to conferences and to offering them electronic files on diskette or CD-ROM. One way will be to ask administrations, prior to conferences, if they can accept documents only in electronic format.

Regional preparations

RAG agreed that coordination at the regional level should be continued and strengthened where possible as it provides a unique opportunity to explain issues, exchange views, identify key issues, and resolve conflicts. Where adequate arrangements do not exist for regional coordination, BR should encourage their development and facilitate the convening of regional and inter-regional meetings, resources permitting. RAG also recognized the value of the participation of Sector Members in regional preparations.

Given that not all ITU Member States belong to regional organizations, schedules of regional and inter-regional meetings should be more widely publicized, if possible using ITU facilities (Web site).

As this was likely to be the last meeting for Klaus Olms, Head of the Radiocommunication Information Systems Department, as Secretary of RAG, the meeting thanked him for his steadfast commitment and support. Mr Olms has served as RAG's Secretary since its establishment in 1993.

RAG will hold its next meeting in Geneva in the second half of January 2000. ■