



Journal Title: Telecommunication Journal

Journal Issue: vol. 42 (no. 11), 1975

Article Title: Low and medium frequencies and long-term planning

Author: M. Mili

Page number(s): pp. 644-649

This electronic version (PDF) was scanned by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Library & Archives Service from an original paper document in the ITU Library & Archives collections.

La présente version électronique (PDF) a été numérisée par le Service de la bibliothèque et des archives de l'Union internationale des télécommunications (UIT) à partir d'un document papier original des collections de ce service.

Esta versión electrónica (PDF) ha sido escaneada por el Servicio de Biblioteca y Archivos de la Unión Internacional de Telecomunicaciones (UIT) a partir de un documento impreso original de las colecciones del Servicio de Biblioteca y Archivos de la UIT.

(ITU) للاتصالات الدولي الاتحاد في والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم أجراه الضوئي بالمسح تصوير نتاج (PDF) الإلكترونية النسخة هذه والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم في المتوفرة الوثائق ضمن أصلية ورقية وثيقة من نقلاً.

此电子版（PDF版本）由国际电信联盟（ITU）图书馆和档案室利用存于该处的纸质文件扫描提供。

Настоящий электронный вариант (PDF) был подготовлен в библиотечно-архивной службе Международного союза электросвязи путем сканирования исходного документа в бумажной форме из библиотечно-архивной службы МСЭ.

Low and medium frequencies and long-term planning*

THE host of delegates attending the second session of the Regional LF/MF Broadcasting Conference now meeting in Geneva and the impressive number of countries they represent are proof that governments are more alive than ever to the fundamental role that broadcasting plays in the cultural, economic and social development of the peoples.

By a happy coincidence, this second session which is to prepare a plan for one of the longest-established radio services with which the ITU has to deal, comes in the fiftieth anniversary year of the first conference devoted to broadcasting.

For it was in 1925 that, on the initiative of the BBC, a conference on the subject was held in London. This conference, which gave birth to the International Broadcasting Union (IBU)**, decided that a European

conference to plan sound broadcasting should be convened in Geneva for 26 March 1926. The Plan it established came into force on 14 November of that same year.

However, it did not take long before it was realized that the authority of an inter-governmental organization, such as the ITU was necessary to give official status to agreements concluded among government administrations and not by private enterprises. So, from 1929 onwards, the ITU took matters in hand by convening the Prague Conference to revise the Geneva Plan.

The International Broadcasting Union was, in fact, a purely regional organization. And, although, in 1929, it changed its name in French to *Union internationale de radio-diffusion*, it was still a strictly European body—a fact which it recognized in 1950 by becoming the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).

Prior to this the IBU had taken part in the work of the Conference of 1927, held at Washington, under the chairmanship of that great man of science, Dr. van der Pol, a conference which led to the founding of

* Based on ideas developed by the Secretary-General of the ITU at the opening meeting of the second session of the Regional Administrative LF/MF Broadcasting Conference (Geneva, 6 October-22 November 1975).

** The IBU was created as an association of the major public broadcasting agencies or companies, such as the BBC, *Radio-Paris* and the *Société des émissions de Paris-Genève*.

the CCIR. Several other conferences were convened in later years to supplement or bring up to date the Geneva Plan.

First there was the above-mentioned European Radio Conference of Prague whose task was to distribute low and medium frequencies between the various European countries. The plan it produced, the Prague Plan, came into effect on 30 June 1929.

Then there was the Lucerne Conference of 1933 which extended the Plan to African and Asian countries bordering on the Mediterranean. The USSR was not included.

Entering into force on 15 January 1934, the Lucerne Plan, which concerned 35 countries alone, was signed only by 27 delegations duly represented at the conference.

Six years later, in 1939, the need was felt to hold another European broadcasting conference to bring the Lucerne Plan up to date and supplement it. This conference, held at Montreux, had as its basic document a frequency allotment plan drawn up by the International Broadcasting Union.

Owing to the painful and dramatic events of the Second World War, the Montreux

Plan, due to come into force in March 1940, was never applied.

It was not until after the Second World War, in 1948, that the last Conference on long and medium wave broadcasting finally met in Copenhagen, attended by the USSR with full voting rights and by the United States of America as an observer. It was unfortunate, however, that several other countries of Europe and the Mediterranean Basin were, for some reason or another, unable to participate.

The Copenhagen Plan, about which a great deal has been written and said in the last 26 years, was signed by only 25 delegations and was brought into force on 15 March 1950. You are all aware of the many difficulties involved in its implementation.

In view of the small number of countries which prepared and signed the Plan and the steadily increasing number of countries acceding to independence since the Second World War; considering also the range of long and medium waves and the fact that they are deflected back by the ionosphere which thus acts as a kind of prison so that the emissions of European broadcasting stations may be heard at considerable

distances, it became necessary to take steps as quickly as possible to revise the Copenhagen Plan so as to produce on the basis of new criteria a fresh plan which took all of the various factors into account.

Accordingly, at the Radio Conference in 1959 many countries proposed that a conference be convened as soon as possible in order to carry out this revision but, under the provisions of the Convention, a majority of the countries concerned, particularly those of Europe and the Mediterranean Basin, had to agree to hold such a conference.

At the request of numerous countries in Europe and the Mediterranean Basin participating in the Administrative Radio Conference of 1959, the Secretary-General of the ITU consulted the countries of the European Broadcasting Area at regular intervals in an attempt to obtain this majority.

The African VHF Broadcasting Conference which met in Geneva in 1966 also adopted a resolution drawing the attention of the Administrative Council:

“to the need to consider convening at a suitable date a regional conference of the

countries in the African Broadcasting Area and the European Broadcasting Area, the countries in the western part of Region 3 and the countries of the Middle East which do not belong to the European Broadcasting Area, for the purpose of preparing a common broadcasting plan covering the frequency requirements of all the countries in the above-mentioned areas.”

The necessary conditions were therefore fulfilled to enable the Administrative Council at its 1973 session to extend to Regions 1 and 3 the terms of reference of the Conference which is to revise the Copenhagen Plan.

A majority of Member countries in favour of convening the conference having been obtained in the consultation carried out in 1973, the Council arranged to convene a first session of the conference in the autumn of 1974 and a second session in 1975.

Experience has shown that the preparation for earlier conferences of this nature had not been thorough enough, so the Council decided in 1961 that, in future, such conferences should be preceded by preparatory

sessions; the status of these sessions differed somewhat from one meeting to the next, but in every case they considerably facilitated the work required of the planning conference itself. The first session in 1974 was convened for this very purpose and all will recall the conscientious and scrupulous manner in which it formulated the technical standards and planning procedure that will greatly facilitate the establishment of the Plan itself.

What was achieved was all the more remarkable in view of the many obstacles that had to be overcome to ensure unanimously adopted conclusions.

A great deal of the credit for this preparatory work is due to the CCIR whose texts, particularly those of the XIIIth Plenary Assembly, were used in preparing the Report which served as a basis for the first session.

Applying the technical standards established by the first session, the IFRB has done a great deal of valuable spade work in close co-operation with the competent services of the ITU General Secretariat.

The Regional Broadcasting Unions also made an outstanding contribution to the

success of the first session and I have no doubt that, once again, they will be of very real assistance in evolving the plans we need.

* * *

But let us reflect for one moment on the task before us and what it means in a far wider context.

To begin with, I think we all realize that this is the first time the ITU has had to prepare a plan designed to meet the immediate and vital needs of so many human beings.

The population of Africa, Asia and Europe taken together is 3235 million. And when we consider that broadcasting is directed at the individual listener and that long and medium waves have so wide a range, I wonder whether any international conference has ever before had the task of serving the basic needs of so many.

Not only will the plans which issue from this conference affect more than six-sevenths of the population of the globe, they will also concern a very large area—so large in fact that when it is time for people at one end to go to bed, the people at the other end will have already started their working day.

The contrast is just as great when it comes to seasonal variations, for the new plan will cover areas where seasonal variations are very slight and where the day is of almost constant length but must also be suitable for areas where during winter the sun never really rises above the horizon while in summer the sun may not set for several months on end.

All these variations will have to be taken into account, especially as far as the propagation of radio waves is concerned.

Furthermore since broadcasting is only part, though an essential and integral part, of the extremely diverse field of telecommunications, the planning envisaged must itself fit into a plan of general action to be undertaken by each government within its own national sphere.

Low and medium frequency broadcasting is part of the national telecommunication systems. For many countries the role it plays and the priority to be given to it are vital.

However in certain cases and countries the administrations concerned may not yet have been confronted with the need to examine in detail the relative priority to be accorded to this type of broadcasting compared with

television or FM sound broadcasting. It is less likely, although a certain number of countries have such plans, that all administrations will have an overall plan covering all telecommunication services.

We may, therefore, well ask ourselves whether over the next few years the work of the ITU should not be concerned with elaborating an integrated telecommunication policy at the international level?

As Secretary-General of the ITU, I am convinced that it should. I feel certain that if we adopt this course, and it is obvious that it will take many years—perhaps 10 or 20—we shall ultimately facilitate the work of the Union by giving it time to carry out the adaptation of its activities which is absolutely necessary.

If each country is called upon to consider, *at the highest level*, the question of establishing a comprehensive telecommunication infrastructure, it cannot help becoming aware of the fact that its neighbours are confronted with similar problems.

This idea, which I am launching for the first time is neither unreasonable nor premature. The Secretary-General of the Union, placed in a central position and frequently faced

union activities

with problems which arise, considers that such possibilities should be envisaged without delay and that a co-ordinated effort should make it possible to concentrate on limited and clearly defined objectives.

We thus come to a situation where the will to progress bears within it the seeds of certain differences of opinion. This is a situation we can only master if we stand back far enough to take a balanced view.

Since it is often very useful to view things in historical perspective, let us remember that, when the Union was established more than 110 years ago, telegraphy was the only means of telecommunication, so that any decision adopted on the subject affected the entire, but restricted, field of telecommunications of the time.

Telecommunications have now expanded so enormously and have taken on such varied forms that they can no longer be said to be confined to telegraphy, telephony, telex or broadcasting. This is why we must make fresh efforts within the Union to co-ordinate our activities at the very high level of general government policy as was the case in the early days of the International Telegraph Union.

If we fail to do so, and if each of us confines himself to the requirements of his own particular service or a very narrow sector of his own responsibilities we risk losing sight of the objectives for which our Union was established.

The inevitable result would be that regional organizations or other bodies would take over. But such organizations would be completely unequipped to provide the best solutions to the problems encountered, since they have neither the resources nor the data for co-ordinating all the needs to be met by international telecommunications. Furthermore, they would at the very least interfere with the normal activities of our Union and might, in one way or another, impair its efficiency or even pose a threat to its very existence.

Hence an enormous task awaits us to ensure the complete success not only of a regional conference such as that being held in Geneva but also of the future activities of the ITU. Knowing the co-operative spirit which has always reigned in our Union, I am not the least worried about the ultimate success of our enterprise.

M. MILI