

WRC-23

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Opening Remarks

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Mario Maniewicz
Director, Radiocommunication Bureau

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Second Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Chairman of the Dubai Media Council,

His Excellency Tala Humaid Belhoul, Chairman of Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA),

His Excellency Majed Sultan Al Mesmar, Director General of TDRA,

His Excellency Mohammed Al Ramsi, Deputy Director General of TDRA and Chair-designate of WRC-23,

His Excellency Mohammad Al Zarooni, Deputy Director General of TDRA and Dean of the WRC-23,

Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary General of the ITU,

Fellow Elected Officials,

Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the World Radiocommunication Conference of 2023!

We are delighted that the WRC-23 is being held here in Dubai, and we are very grateful for the generous hospitality of the United Arab Emirates in hosting one of ITU's largest and most important conferences.

Distinguished Delegates,

The ground upon which we stand today is a ground of visionary leaders. Since its foundation, the UAE has undergone an incredible transformation. Independent emirates have united to form a nation with one of the highest GDP per capita in the world. What were once coastal towns adjacent to sandy deserts, were transformed into thriving cities with iconic skylines.

This historic trading center has harnessed the advantages of the country's natural resources and the innovative strategy of the government to expand its infrastructure and diversify its economy.

Today, the UAE and other nations worldwide, are once again concluding a four-year journey to study and then revise the radio regulations in a manner that will support the introduction of new wireless technologies and their growing spectrum requirements, while continuing to protect the vital radio services we rely on today. Newer innovative technologies will allow us to better monitor our changing planet, and better connect communities and people everywhere: on land, at sea, in the air, and in space. About 14 radiocommunication services, both terrestrial and space, are on the agenda of the Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A new era of satellite systems has begun, supporting space exploration, space tourism, commercialization of space, broadband applications on land, ships and planes, satellite IoT, space research, remote sensing and observation, inter-satellite links, and even lunar and inter-planetary communications. Whether it is enhancing agriculture, bolstering national security, advancing radio astronomy, or increasing industrial efficiency, the space economy is flourishing.

Six decades ago, during the Extraordinary Administrative Radiocommunication Conference of 1963, the ITU Member States negotiated the first international rules, and allocated radio frequencies for use in space. Subsequent WRCs and RRCs have enhanced that regulatory framework and increased the amount of spectrum allocated to space services. Here, in 2023, the ITU is called upon again to update its international regulatory framework in response to the increasingly complex ecosystem of LEO, MEO, and GEO satellites.

As the opportunities in space seem immense and the future looks promising, only an appropriate balance between the efficient and equitable use of radiofrequency spectrum and satellite orbital resources for the various space services can safeguard access to space for all.

Furthermore, as we embark on new frontiers, whether on the Moon, Mars, or other celestial bodies, we must also strive to ensure that we do not leave anyone behind here on Earth.

Dear colleagues,

In recent years significant progress has been made to reach affordable, meaningful, and universal connectivity. However, despite the growing awareness of broadband's vital role for people and businesses, 2.6 billion people continue to lack access to the Internet.

WRC-23 will consider mobile services and applications that can provide affordable and widespread communication access to everyone and everything.

These include agenda items related to IMT identification, which might be among the most challenging ones of the conference due to the impact on the future of existing systems, such as those used by the aeronautical, maritime, broadcasting, satellite, and science services.

The ITU Member States will also consider accommodating High Altitude IMT base stations operating on stratospheric platforms – the so-called HIBS. This promising technology could be a cost-effective solution to extend broadband delivery to remote and underserved areas.

In keeping with tradition, the WRC-23 will examine advanced wireless applications to improve connectivity and safety of aviation and maritime transport, which is one of the main pillars of the global economy.

As we appreciate the advances in both space and terrestrial radio technologies, there is a visible trend of convergence and interaction between both services. Broadband delivery through mobile, broadcasting, satellite networks, or direct satellite-to-phone communications are just a few examples of this trend.

These developments also bring us to the necessity to carefully examine and agree on the agenda of the next conference, WRC-27, to respond to the most important advances in the radiocommunication industry and the challenges it is facing.

Dear delegates,

It is impossible to overlook the fact that COP-28 is occurring simultaneously with WRC-23. Climate change has become a pressing reality that we must confront. In fact, July of 2023 marked the hottest month ever recorded in human history, serving as an alarming call to the urgency of addressing climate-related challenges.

ITU plays a pivotal role in developing regulations and standards that influence how we monitor the environment. Radiocommunication technologies are instrumental for imaging and remote sensing, providing researchers with crucial data on various environmental factors, such as temperature, sea level, precipitation, deforestation, and greenhouse gas emissions. These insights are invaluable in our ongoing efforts to understand the dynamics and impacts of climate change.

Dear friends,

After four years of technical studies, extensive Working Party and Study Group meetings, as well as regional and national discussions, we are convening at the World Radiocommunication Conference of 2023, which is being held on schedule despite the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. I am most proud of this community that did not let this challenge deter us from meeting our objectives and timeline for convening this important quadrennial conference.

During this WRC-23, we bear the responsibility of updating the Radio Regulations, the 157-year-old, legally binding international treaty that governs humanity's use of this limited natural resource – the radiofrequency spectrum – whether on Earth or anywhere in space.

To achieve this, we have as a starting point the contributions to WRC-23, which encompass different regional and national proposals. We also have the views of many international organizations that have been provided to inform deliberations. Now, we must rise to the occasion and find common ground.

I count on the spirit of cooperation of the ITU Membership, and their thoughtful consideration of the various regulatory solutions proposed, to pave the way for introducing new radio applications while adequately protecting the incumbent services. These objectives, together with the increased harmonization of frequency bands for the various services and applications, remain key for the successful resolution of the agenda items of the Conference.

I trust your technical expertise, your wisdom, and our shared objective of developing regulations that go beyond immediate individual interests or temporary advantages, and leave a legacy of prosperity for billions of people across the globe.

To the delegates entrusted with the regulation of the radio spectrum, inspired by a country of visionaries, and by the spirit of tolerance embodied by the people of the United Arab Emirates, I invite you to honor this international endeavor and make WRC-23 a resounding success.

Thank you very much.