

ITU-CITC Forum on Connecting the World from the Skies

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Opening Remarks

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the International Forum on Connecting the World from the Skies, an event dedicated to airborne and space-borne connectivity platforms.

Let me start by recognizing and thanking the Communications, Space and Technology Commission of Saudi Arabia for organizing this event to discuss how several technologies, some of them already familiar to the general public, others maybe more disruptive, can bring connectivity to everyone, everywhere.

Not through terrestrial radio waves: this week, we focus on connectivity from the skies!

You may wonder what “From the skies” actually means. Well, it can mean large geostationary high-throughput satellites, satellite constellations in low Earth Orbit, or even airborne platforms like High Altitude Platforms, or HAPS.

The common propellant of all these systems is radio spectrum. To address the growing global communication requirements, the next World Radiocommunication Conference, which will be held at the end 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, has on its agenda the provision of additional spectrum for new applications and satellite systems.

WRC-23 will establish an international regulatory framework to allow satellite systems, used traditionally to provide fixed access, to also deliver services to moving earth stations irrespective whether they operate on ground, air or at sea. The conference will consider regulatory actions for the provision for inter-satellite links; and will improve the regulatory procedures for non-geostationary systems.

This makes it an ever more relevant conference for the radio community.

Dear colleagues,

Since the launch of the first satellites took place, we have witnessed a technological revolution and a boom in the satellite industry.

Manufacturing a satellite is more affordable and rapid than ever. Lower cost, simpler design, flexible launching, and payload-carrying configurations have removed the barrier to entry and generated an incredible surge in the number of small satellites launched over the last few years.

Large geostationary satellites now must literally “share the space” - and “share the spectrum” - with smaller satellites operating in non-geostationary orbits.

The ITU has been called upon to study the increasing use of spectrum and associated orbital resources in non-GSO orbits, the long-term sustainability of these resources, and the equitable access to, rational and compatible use of, the GSO and non-GSO orbit and spectrum resources.

Another revolution has been seen in the applications provided by satellite services. Public and private companies are launching satellite projects to promote not only Earth exploration, space research, satellite navigation and positioning, to monitor climate change and global warming, or for national defense. But also, applications have expanded to include Internet access, integration with mobile services and the Internet of Things (IoT).

In fact, the framework for 5G systems foresees various access technologies including a combination of different fixed, terrestrial and satellite networks interworking in IMT-2020. Each component will be fulfilling its own role, but will also be integrated with other components to provide service continuity as well as reinforced availability to achieve ubiquitous seamless coverage.

Dear participants,

During the next 3 days, you will get a better grasp of how satellite platforms can enable better coverage for 5G and beyond, discuss the road to 6G through the Skies, increase the reach of broadband Internet, or guarantee new applications like in-flight connectivity. You will also learn that the future of operations are not in silos but through integrated networks that seamlessly switch between space, airborne and terrestrial systems.

The mix of keynotes, discussions, panels, technology demonstrations and tutorials planned during the next three days is truly unique to this event, thanks to the desire of CST to provide a rich and diverse experience to all of you. I trust this will benefit all participants, in your endeavor to connect the world from the skies.

Thank you very much.