

**Will WRC-27 be the last WRC of its kind  
as we know it?**

**Or: How to keep the ITU relevant in an ever-faster  
changing world**

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# Introduction

**The pace of development of wireless technology is continually increasing**

**The pressure on use of spectrum is also continually increasing**

- However, the basic process of WRCs has not changed since 1992
  - Though delegates no longer receive paper copies of all documents

**The number of items on the preliminary agenda is increasing**

- The preliminary agenda for WRC-27 has thirteen items
- The agenda for WRC-23 has nineteen items
- If all thirteen items are important, then there will only be 'space' at WRC-23 for around six additional items

**WRCs are increasingly considering topics after national spectrum usage has started**

- The agreed text therefore often 'papers over' this divergent use
  - Rather than promoting harmonisation

# *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* definition of the ITU

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is an ancient and learned society on the planet earth, devoted to enabling earth beings to communicate without needing to meet face to face. It cannot yet have succeeded in this, because each year several great gatherings take place so that the gurus of the ITU can meet face to face.

At these meetings, called Working Parties, the ITU gurus present many long and learned papers. Why they do this is a mystery because they then only discuss the first page of each paper, and they argue at greatest length about the most trivial points.

A working party is the type of meeting of the ITU at which the real work gets done. They are so-called because, at these meetings, the delegates work and also party. The parties are known as social events. The work takes place between two ancient rituals known as the Opening and Closing Plenaries.

At the beginning of the twenty first century, earth beings had not yet perfected the art of telepathy, so they still communicated at these meetings using the amazingly primitive technique of photocopying.

*(Simon Pike, 2001)*

# Aspects of Radio Regulations for possible review

## Identification of spectrum for IMT

- The original identification of spectrum for IMT (then called FPLMTS) had a societal objective
- However, it has become more associated with promoting a technology ecosystem
- This has led to an imbalance with other applications in the Mobile Service
- It has no regulatory status, yet dominates the business of WRCs



## Definitions of Radiocommunication Services

- Many new applications do not map well to ITU service definitions
  - A single emission can support applications in several service categories
- But how can they be modified without destabilising the whole RR?

## Impact of receiver performance

- This is increasingly the limiting factor on spectrum utilisation
- But it is not (and probably cannot be) regulated by ITU

## Meaning of No. 5.340 “all emissions are prohibited”

## Comparison with COP 26

**COP meetings take place annually, but ‘main’ meetings have previously been roughly every five years**

- Similar to ITU WRCs and Study Groups

**However, COP26 agreed that countries should come back next year to submit stronger 2030 emissions reduction targets**

- Recognizing the urgency of the challenge of climate change
- There is no comparable process between WRCs

**A key element of COP conferences is ‘nationally determined contributions’**

- i.e. countries commit to what they will do
- In essence, through the Radio Regulations, Administrations commit to what they will not do
  - i.e. cause harmful interference to radio services in other countries



# Pictures from just before the COP 26 closing Plenary



See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYL7ga-ae1g>

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# Suggestions for enhancing the WRC process

## **The preliminary agenda for the Conference-after-next is a symptom**

- Almost no agenda item was postponed because of the time needed for studies
  - And do any studies need eight years?
  - How can the preliminary agenda avoid becoming a repository for issues that did not merit consideration at the next Conference?

## **Would it be possible to hold an interim WRC between main WRCs?**

- This could address straightforward items
- Or complete items from the previous full Conference
- Some satellite issues appear to be self-contained
- If it cannot complete an item, this could be carried forward to the next full Conference
- The Chairman could be the same as the following full Conference
  - Which would provide continuity and give them experience

## **How can more representative assumptions be defined for studies?**

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# Conclusion

**Unless the ITU can increase the speed of its decision making (i.e. making changes to the Radio Regulations), it will become less relevant in shaping global spectrum utilisation**

- It will increasingly endorse and document decisions that have been made nationally and Regionally.
- WRC-27 will probably take place as envisaged, because there is already an almost full agenda
  - But will there be the appetite for similar ones beyond then?