Radiocommunications, broadcasting, transport: radio spectrum, regulatory framework

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PURPOSE : to set out the EU's position at the forthcoming World Radio Communication Conference 2003 (WRC-03). CONTENT : since the entry into force of the Radio Spectrum Decision in 2002, the European Commission will participate at the Word Radio Communication Conference as a non-voting delegate. The WTC is organised every three years by the International Telecommunications Union, a United Nations agency. As the Communication notes the WRC-03, to be held this summer in Geneva, will be the end of a process of preparation began immediately following the last WRC in Istanbul in 2000. The purpose of this Communication is to clarify the various agenda items open for negotiation linked to Community policy objectives. The Commission calls upon Member States as negotiating parties to support these positions during the forthcoming negotiations at the WRC-03. During previous WRC conferences new commercial satellite and terrestrial mobile systems urgently required sufficient globally harmonise spectrum in order to operate effectively. The upcoming conference is deemed to be less "crucial". Nevertheless a number of issues remain outstanding for which the Commission will be pushing the case for Europe. Matters of interest include, for example, the increasing importance of spectrum. The economic contribution of radio-based industries to the EU's economy has grown strongly in recent years most notably via the development of commercial mobile communications, such as GSM and of broadcasting networks. Similarly, there is increasing frustration with the spectrum "bottleneck". Since useful spectrum is essentially "full" spectrum management both internationally and nationally is about making choices and in particular the difficult balance to be struck between encouraging new innovative application whilst at the same time protection existing services. The Commission recognises that negotiations during WRC-03 are dynamic. Nevertheless, it urges national delegates to bear Community objectives in mind during the on-going discussions. They are: - the promotion of competition between alternative infrastructure platforms; - the consolidation of the single market (support for harmonisation); - the removal of technical barriers to international trade and - the basic principles of EC electronic communications regulation. Those EU policies related to matters discussed at WRC-03 include the Communities work on the information society, audiovisual policy, transport, civil protection coordination, the single European space and RT&D issues. The priorities for the Community at WRC-03 thus are: - protecting the allocations gained in WRC-2000 by IMT-2000 and GALILEO, relating to Information Society as well as to transport policy objectives (satellite radio navigation); - making progress towards regionally and globally harmonised frequencies for PPDR (Public Protection and Disaster Relief) systems relating to the Community policy in this field. - supporting the establishment of alternative wireless infrastructure platforms, in order to increase competition for the benefit of the consumer, as explained in the eEurope framework. In this context, a globally-harmonsied status for RLANs in the bands identified by Europe is essential. Lastly, the Commission urges the agenda for WRC-07 be streamlined whilst at the same time ensuring that European sensitive matters remain. They include harmonised allocations for passive science services (EESS, SRS and RA) above 275GHz, for aeronautical uses, and for public protection.