

The clock is ticking ...

BY DR ALI EBADI

With less than a month to go before the 2015 World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-15), the satellite industry needs to intensify what it is already doing for what may be at stake.

Critically, C-band is on the chopping block yet again. Subsequent to their limited success in gaining C-band spectrum at WRC-07, the International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) industry has become more aggressive in lobbying their demands. This time, IMT argues there is exponential growth for mobile spectrum demand.

Despite having significant assigned but unused spectrum, IMT is campaigning for even more spectrum based on unrealistic traffic densities. This has led to unreliable and misleading spectrum demands. The IMT is also seeking that the satellite bands be shared when ITU studies have proven, theoretically and statistically, that the satellite signal will be lost when IMT shares the satellite bands.

The reallocation of C-band would pose a threat to global communications, especially in Asia. C-band is critical to Asia given the region's diverse communication needs and the unavailability and unsuitability of terrestrial connectivity to meet these needs.

Satellites, in particular, solve these challenges with their unique benefits over terrestrial fibre. They can serve extremely large, geographically diverse areas with large populations via a single beam. Compared to the higher frequencies, C-band is rain-resilient, which is an important consideration in Asia's tropical and equatorial regions.

The satellite industry has so far done a good job in ensuring that regulators in Asia understand the importance of C-band. There have been joint efforts between CASBAA WAG (Wireless Action Group), GVF (Global VSAT Forum) and ESOA (EMEA Satellite Operator's Association), who played key leadership roles in ensuring a

positive outcome for the satellite industry.

Now as we approach the final leg to the preparation of WRC-15, the satellite industry needs to ensure that regulators understand the importance of C-band satellite services across Asia, and how users would be severely affected should C-band spectrum be reallocated.

In addition to fighting for C-band, the satellite industry will also be focusing on two other issues. One is the additional Ku-band spectrum allocation. This is in response to the growth in demand for Ku-band applications such as DTH, VSAT, video distribution, broadband networks, Internet services, satellite newsgathering and backhaul links that has triggered a rapid rise in spectrum demand.

Simultaneously, this issue will address the mismatch of Ku-band spectrum between its uplink and downlink frequency allocation, as well as an un-harmonised amount of spectrum between ITU regions.

The other issue relates to Ka-band. This band enables smaller end-user antennas (VSATs), increased mobility, and higher bandwidths and speeds. This makes it valuable for communication applications including trunking and cellular backhaul services, broadband access, HTS and government communications.

Unfortunately, IMT is pushing for future conferences to consider identification of the Ka-band for IMT under Agenda Item 10 of the conference. The satellite industry should equally focus its efforts on this band and ensure that only the bands above 31GHz be considered for the IMT application.

The satellite industry will have its hands full at WRC-15, addressing the above-mentioned critical issues as well as others. Every effort will be made to ensure and protect the best interests of the satellite community.

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