

Opening Remarks A14

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen and welcome to Kuala Lumpur! It is my privilege to express our appreciation and thanks to Dr Amal Punchihewa Director of technology of the Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union for the nice introduction to the Conference and in fact also for the offer of the ABU to host the present global conference here. Our thanks go to Nadeem and Ramlah and to the ABU team that has been responsible for the conference preparations.

You will be able to meet distinguished guests to the conference. Our colleague Hai Pham, Head of the Broadcasting Services Division in the Radiocommunication sector of the ITU is here for a Meeting between the ITU and so-called co-ordination groups. We are pleased that our colleague and friend Sharad Sadhu, who was instrumental in helping us introduce shortwave coordination to the Asia Pacific region has also come over to the conference.

Shortwave broadcasting today is sometimes said to be a relic of the past and that there is no sense for keeping it alive. This global conference provides a good opportunity to have a look at such claims. The distribution of media content in general is becoming diversified and international radio is no exception. But it is quite unlikely that any new technology will ever become such a distribution giant as was AM - and especially shortwave - during the long decades of the twentieth century. Naturally there is no way (and also in fact no reason) now to get back to this era - if only for the fact that the broadcast bands were severely overloaded and covered with interference then, there was an ongoing transmitter power war and no global coordination.

The present increasing number of distribution technologies and channels is appreciated by the media consumers since they can choose according to their context situation, e.g. location, personal preference, availability of equipment etc.

But there are situations where only one technology is effective. Shortwave radio is important for travelers and isolated people, and it reaches across the Digital Divide to the most disadvantaged and marginalised societies. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has underlined this role of wireless radio in the 2013 World Disaster Report: It said that the marginalised populations may not have the money or the knowledge to take advantage of the digital revolution. The report has noted that with only 6 percent of people in low-income countries using the internet in 2011 the digital divide was still stark, and therefore access to low cost media technology was really the key.

The public at large has been always accepting the life-saving role of radio broadcasting. This has been confirmed by statistical surveys - even during recent emergencies in Japan for example. The changes in media delivery and economic constraints have now led to cuts or complete closure of some terrestrial radio installations and this unique delivery platform might be irreversibly lost.

That is why the HFCC has accepted the invitation of the UN agency UNESCO and became its partner for the preparation of World Radio Day. A large part of items to the UNESCO website devoted to World Radio Day 2013 were provided by the HFCC and by its members. Emergency broadcasting and other humanitarian aspects of wireless radio

were highlighted in a number of contributions. The present global conference in KL is already registered on the UNESCO webpage devoted to the events relating to World Radio Day 2014.

Last year saw the opening of the debate on emergency radio broadcasting in the International Telecommunication Union. The work is under way in the Study Group 6 of the Radiocommunication sector on the Report on the Importance of Terrestrial Broadcasting in Providing Emergency Information to the Public. We believe that this development has been at least partly due to the publicity this subject received during the World Radio Day Celebrations in 2013. (Let me remind you therefore that Just before this conference we asked all members and contacts to take part again in the WRD on February 13th, 2014).

Let me warn you that the present ITU debate on the emergency broadcasting is not yet a guarantee that terrestrial radio is permanently incorporated in the disaster risk reduction agendas of UN institutions. The HFCC has now registered with the project of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and applied for the membership in the CDAC Network - which is a roof organisation for institutions that are dedicated to the provision of coordinated emergency communication and information to disaster stricken communities. The HFCC believes that the effort of all stakeholders with the common understanding of the need of this service will be required for its firm implementation into the framework of global Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

January 2014
Oldrich Cip
Chairman, HFCC
