Statements of Pakistan Delegation
58th Session of the Scientific & Technical Subcommittee (STSC) of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS); 19 – 30 Apr 2021 Vienna, Austria

(Ms Sana Aijaz)

Agenda Item # 16: Examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit and its utilization and applications, including in the field of space communications, as well as other questions relating to developments in space communications, taking particular account of the needs and interests of developing countries, without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union

Madame Chair,

The Geo-Stationary Orbit (GSO) provides unique potential for access to communication and information, in particular for assisting developing countries in implementing social programmes to benefit the countries. The GSO is limited natural resource which may be available to all member states of UN / International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on equitable basis irrespective of their technical capacities and its use must be governed by the provisions of the United Nation's treaties and the ITU Radio Regulations (RR).

Madame Chair,

Although ITU has developed planned band regime (AP30/30A/30B) guaranteeing equitable access to GSO's orbital positions for member states with particular spectrum however it has certain technological limitations making it difficult to materialize. While for other spectrum i.e. unplanned band where the technology is mature, the current utilization of Geostationary Orbit is on the first come first served basis that has made this natural resource unattainable for countries that do not have the technology or are late in their application to ITU. Even a country cannot provide satellite service within its national territory in unplanned band without frequency coordination agreement from high priority foreign satellites. As per ITU's SRS database (IFIC No. 2938), registered unplanned GSO satellite filings are 1329 while Planned band GSO satellite filings are 292.

Furthermore, misuse of the suspension clause of ITU (No. 11.49) has further jeopardized the access of developing countries to frequency bands and orbital slots. Satellite operators perform satellite maneuvers for temporary operations at particular orbital slot for 90 days to fulfill ITU's condition and then remove the satellite claiming suspension of satellite operations for next 3 years under No 11.49. In some cases, this practice is repeated several times for an orbit slot thereby restricting the access of others to nearby orbit slots.

Pakistan believes that it is important to discuss this issue and reach consensus because this is contrary to the rule of equal access to orbit and spectrum resources to all nations.

Madame Chair,

Another area of concern is gradual allocation of Fixed Satellite Services (FSS) frequency spectrum to International Mobile Telecommunication (IMT) on sharing basis. ITU studies show that sharing of spectrum by IMT and FSS in the same region is not possible without putting severe constraints on both services. In addition, several countries have laid down roadmap for implementation of IMT service in their country in the bands not identified for IMT in the WRCs, particularly C-band 3600 - 4200 MHz which has been under trial for IMT in large number of countries since 2018. This situation is devastating for developing countries having limited satellite resources as their existing ground infrastructure and satellites continue to extensively use C-band. The delivery of various important services such as connectivity with other countries, TV programming to these regions, etc. relies solely on C-band. Satellite services would be wiped out

of the countries planning to implement IMT in 3600 - 4200 MHz, thereby hampering the utilization of geostationary orbit by developing countries.

Madame Chair,

Spread of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has severely affected the satellite program of developing countries which could results in loss of their rights at ITU to the geostationary orbit. Few have submitted requests to ITU for limited time extension of their rights on geostationary orbit due to delay caused by COVID-19 that constituted the force majeure. If these extensions are not granted then it may have devastating effect on the development of ICT infrastructure in developing countries through satellite technology.

Pakistan believes the delay caused by COVID-19 pandemic in utilizing geostationary orbit was beyond the control of any country, not self-induced, unforeseen, inevitable or irresistible. Therefore international bodies may facilitate the developing countries to the maximum extent.

Madame Chair,

The geostationary orbit is an integral part of outer space and its use should be governed by the provisions of the United Nations treaties on outer space and the ITU radio regulations.

Pakistan is of the view that, in order to ensure sustainability of the optimum utilization of geostationary orbit, it is necessary to uphold this issue on the agenda of the Subcommittee and to elaborate it further through the creation of appropriate working groups and intergovernmental panels, as necessary.

Thank you Madame Chair

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