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VIth Plenary Assembly



by
R. J. CROZE
CCITT

THE International Telegraph and Telephone Consultative Committee (CCITT) held its VIth Plenary Assembly from Monday 27 September to Friday 8 October 1976, at the Geneva International Conference Centre.

1. Participation in the Plenary Assembly

One hundred and three countries Members of the ITU were represented; 28 recognized private operating agencies participated in the work and 13 international organizations sent observers. Altogether, 470 delegates and observers attended the meetings.

The Vth Plenary Assembly held in Geneva in December 1972 was attended by representatives from only 86 countries, 26 recognized private operating agencies, 18 international organizations and 358 delegates and observers.

The corresponding figures for the IVth Plenary Assembly (Mar del Plata, 1968), were 72 countries, 25 recognized private operating agencies, 15 international organizations and 309 delegates and observers.

The figures thus show a steady and substantial increase in the participation of Member countries from one Plenary Assembly to the next, as well as in the number of delegates and observers (31% more at the VIth than at the Vth Plenary Assembly).

This serves as tangible proof of the increasing world-wide interest in the work of the CCITT and of its growing influence on the development of world telecommunications.

2. Organization and procedure of work

The Plenary Assembly was presided over by Mr. F. Locher, Director-General of Telecommunications of the *Entreprise des PTT suisses*, who was elected by acclamation. He was assisted by five Vice-Chairmen, Mr. A. D. Aithnard (Togo), Mr. P. R. H. Balduino (Brazil), Mr. A. L. Freeman (United States), Mr. H. Mirchandani (India) and Mr. P. Voronine (USSR).

In accordance with the Additional Rules of Procedure of the CCITT, four Committees were set up to submit to the Plenary Assembly proposals on various particularly important problems, as follows:

- **Committee A:** Organization and working methods of the CCITT
Chairman: Mr. D. Van den Berg (Netherlands)
Vice-Chairman: Mr. D. V. Doran-Veevers (Canada)

- **Committee B:** Work programmes of Study Groups

Chairman: Mr. B. Williams (United Kingdom)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. L. Katona-Kis (Hungarian People's Republic)

- **Committee C:** Budget control and financial needs of the CCITT

Chairman: Mr. C. Baudazzi (Italy)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. J. J. Hernández-G. (Mexico)

- **Committee D:** Handbooks and CCITT seminar activities

Chairman: Mr. A. Gravell (Australia)

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Ali Belhadj (Algeria)

For the first time, the Plenary Assembly also set up an Editorial Committee to prepare the texts of the Resolutions and Opinions adopted. This Committee was composed of:

Mr. J. M. Larochette (France),
Chairman

Mr. R. Coleman (United Kingdom)

Mr. A. Rodríguez-Díaz (Spain)

In addition to its inaugural meeting, the VIth Assembly held sixteen plenary meetings; Committee A met six times and Committees B, C and D, twice each. The heads of delegations held two meetings.

Mr. M. Mili, Secretary-General of the ITU, attended all the plenary meetings, thus demonstrating his interest in the work of the CCITT. Mr. R. E. Butler, Deputy Secretary-General of the ITU, and Mr. R. C. Kirby, Director of the International Radio Consultative Committee (CCIR), attended most of the meetings.

The work of the Plenary Assembly was divided into two main categories:

- consideration of the final reports of Study Groups; approval of Recommendations proposed by them and of new Questions to be set for study;
- discussion of problems of general interest and adoption of proposals, Resolutions and Opinions submitted by Member countries or Committees of the Plenary Assembly (often at the suggestion of the Director of the CCITT) on the general administration of the CCITT and its future and designed to improve its working conditions and efficiency, bearing in mind the need for economical management.

In addition, since the Director of the CCITT had announced his retirement on personal grounds, the VIth Plenary Assembly had to elect a new Director: Mr. L. Burtz (France) was elected on the third ballot by 56 votes out of 97 countries voting and 94 votes cast.

3. Results of the work of Study Groups

3.1 The VIth Plenary Assembly marked the end of a study period, 1973-1976, which was one of intense activity in the CCITT. One figure will suffice to give an idea of this development: 65% more contributions were received from participating organizations than during the preceding period, 1968-1972, and were dealt with by the Study Groups (4335 as against 2625).

Accordingly, the final meetings of the Study Groups—most of which were comprehensively and accurately reported in several 1976 issues of the *Telecommunication Journal*—submitted to the Plenary Assembly for approval 127 new Recommendations and 225 existing but considerably amended Recommendations (as against 67 and 199, respectively, to the Vth Plenary Assembly in 1972).

3.2 The fact that—for the first time and in pursuance of decisions of the Vth Plenary Assembly—the final meetings were held several months before the Plenary Assembly enabled the Study Groups to submit fully considered reports, which the Assembly generally approved without demur, making only minor amendments to a few Recommendations.

3.3 Nevertheless, two points gave rise to lively discussions which resulted in the rejection or deferment of the proposed Recommendations.

3.3.1 Study Group I (Telegraph operation and tariffs) had proposed the abolition of press telegrams as a separate class. Many developing countries, supported by the observer for the International Press Telecommunications Council, pointed out that press telegrams were still useful to them and secured the retention of those telegrams as a separate class on an optional basis, with preferential charges.

3.3.2 Joint Working Party "Maritime mobile service" (GM SMM) was set up in 1974 to study the principles and methods of accounting, charging and operation for public correspondence in maritime radio-communications in accordance with the decision of the World Maritime Administrative Radio Conference, 1974, particularly with a view to simplifying the existing system of accounting. The Working Party had prepared a series of Recommendations to be applied before 1979, but three of the proposed provisions met with very strong opposition:

- a) abolition of international accounting for mobile station charges,
- b) unified responsibility for accounting,
- c) date of implementation of the Recommendations.

The Plenary Assembly finally decided to refer the draft Recommendations back to the SMM Working Party for reconsideration in the light of the discussions in the Plenary Assembly and with wider participation of all the countries concerned, so that final proposals could be submitted by 30 November 1977; the Working Party will therefore have to meet early in 1977.

4. Results of the work of the Plenary and its Committees. Various decisions

4.1 Restructuring of Study Groups and assignment of Questions for study

4.1.1 The Plenary Assembly and its Committees were anxious to simplify the organization of the CCITT and the working methods of the Study Groups, in order to increase efficiency and reduce the cost of operations. Some amendments to this end were introduced into the Additional Rules of Procedure of the CCITT.

4.1.2 Above all, as a result of the work of Committee A, the Assembly decided that the number of Study Groups and Working Parties was excessive: this gave rise to a greater number of meetings and, consequently, higher costs, and made co-ordination more difficult. The Assembly

considered that certain related tasks could be performed by a single Study Group and that joint working parties should be set up only when the nature of the Questions concerned prevented them from being examined in the one Study Group most closely concerned.

4.1.3 On the basis of the work of Committee B, the Assembly established the principle that every Question should be examined by only one Study Group, which would be responsible for making the necessary contacts with any other Study Groups that might be concerned. Accordingly, Questions must be drafted in such a way as to avoid all overlapping between Study Groups and Questions set for study must be distributed between the Study Groups without any duplication.

4.1.4 As an initial measure, it was decided to merge Study Groups II and XIII into a new Study Group which would deal with all problems relating to the operation and performance of the telephone network, whether manual, semi-automatic or automatic. All Questions concerning switching equipment maintenance were transferred to Study Group IV, which is now solely responsible for all aspects of telephone maintenance. Similarly, all tariff and accounting Questions were assigned to Study Group III, irrespective of the service concerned (telephone, telegraph, telex, data transmission, etc.).



At the Chairman's table, from left to right: Mr. L. Burtz, newly elected Director of the CCITT; his predecessor, Mr. R. J. Croze; Mr. F. Locher, Chairman of the Plenary Assembly, and Mr. M. Mili, Secretary-General of the ITU

"Special" Study Groups A and D became ordinary Study Groups, numbered XVII and XVIII, respectively, and Special Study Group C became the "Joint Committee on circuit noise and availability" (CMBD), along the lines of the other joint CCITT/CCIR Committees (CMV, CMTT).

Finally, Joint Working Parties CDF, CNC, MAT and SGO were abolished, either because they had completed their assignment or because the Questions studied by them had been allocated to various Study Groups.

4.1.5 Special Autonomous Working Parties GAS 3 and GAS 5 were retained, and a new Special Working Party, GAS 6, was set up to compile a handbook on the economic and technical aspects of the choice of switching systems. The new GAS is expected to speed up the standardization of the switching systems used at the national level, thus providing valuable assistance to the developing countries, which find it very difficult to choose among the large number of different systems available. A Resolution on the subject was adopted unanimously. At the same time a new Question was set for Study Group XI, on the Recommendations that can be made "to assist Administrations in the choice and standardization of automatic switching equipment for use in national networks".

4.2 Publication of the Orange Book and handbooks of the CCITT

The Plenary Assembly noted that the CCITT publications (Book and handbooks) had an inadequate circulation, mainly because they were too expensive. One of the primary aims should therefore be to reduce the price.

4.2.1 Orange Book

To avoid the considerable increase in the number of pages in the *Orange Book* that would result from the work of the Plenary Assembly, the following decisions were taken:

- a) all Recommendations, existing and new, will be published in the *Orange Book*,
- b) the *Orange Book* will contain the full text of all Questions set for study, but not that of any annexes thereto. The Questions with their annexes will be published in Contribution No. 1 of each Study Group for the new period 1977-1980,
- c) the documentary supplements appearing in the *Green Book* will not be reproduced in the *Orange Book*, but will simply be referred to,
- d) the volumes may be divided into booklets sold separately, whenever these booklets constitute a separate and homogeneous whole.

4.2.2 Handbooks

The Plenary Assembly unanimously recognized the great value of the handbooks (mostly prepared by the GAS) published

by the CCITT. It adopted an Opinion, prepared by Committee D, inviting the Secretary-General to undertake a study of methods of reducing the sales prices of handbooks and recommending that appropriate publicity be given them, at the national and at the ITU level, to promote their sale.

4.3 Financial needs of the CCITT up to the VIIth Plenary Assembly

Committee C, on budget control, examined in detail the report of the Director of the CCITT on the financial needs of the CCITT up to the VIIth Plenary Assembly; it studied several courses of action, some leading to an improvement in the work carried out in the forthcoming study period and others simply maintaining the degree of activity and efficiency at the same level as in the period 1973-1976.

The Plenary Assembly expressed its preference for the latter solution, while noting with regret that it already entailed, for 1978 and 1979, an excess expenditure of 50% over the annual limits set by the Plenipotentiary Conference, Malaga-Torremolinos, 1973. The reasons for this excess expenditure were, mainly, the increased cost of interpretation in five languages, the production of a constantly growing number of contributions and the corresponding increase in postage costs.

4.4 Terms of reference of the CCITT

4.4.1 Under Resolution No. 44 of the Plenipotentiary Conference, Malaga-Torremolinos, 1973, the VIth Plenary Assembly had to examine the definitions proposed by Study Groups CMV, I and II of the terms "telegraphy" and "telephony", which appear in the terms of reference of the CCITT under No. 71 of the International Telecommunication Convention.

After some discussion, the Plenary Assembly concluded that it did not seem possible to make amendments or additions to the definition of those terms in such a way as to make unambiguous provision for new telecommunication services.

4.4.2 It therefore proposed a new text of the terms of reference of the CCITT, using the term "telecommunication services" instead of "telegraphy and telephony". In the relevant Opinion adopted for submission to the next Plenipotentiary Conference, it specified the construction to be placed on the term "telecommunication services" in the definition of the terms of reference of the CCITT (excluding technical and operating questions relating specifically to radiocommunications which come within the purview of the CCIR): "*Telecom-*

munication services—Telecommunications which are provided by an administration or private operating agency and intended mainly as a public correspondence service, and which are subject to appropriate remuneration. These services include several branches such as telephone, telegraph, data transmission and leased circuit".

4.5 Plan Committees

After hearing descriptions of the activities of the World Plan and Regional Plan Committees, the Plenary Assembly held a long debate on their future, their terms of reference and the conditions and location of their meetings.

Unanimous agreement was finally reached on a Resolution that the Director was requested to submit to the next session of the Administrative Council. In this Resolution, the Plenary Assembly adopted the views of the World Plan Committee on the terms of reference, functions and working methods of the Committees; proposed that the *status quo* be maintained in respect of the locations of Regional Plan Committee meetings in their own regions, provided the Council would be able to allocate the necessary funds; suggested the organization of a symposium in conjunction with World Plan Committee meetings; and invited all administrations to take a more active part in the work of the Plan Committees.

4.6 CCITT patent policy

4.6.1 The difficult problem of patents gave rise to lively and wide-ranging discussions, both in Committee A and in plenary.

Study Group IX and Special Study Group A had submitted proposals for the mapping out of a common patent policy designed to cope with the difficulties which had arisen on several occasions in the areas of the most rapidly evolving and modern technical development and for the adoption of a Recommendation on patented items or protected systems.

4.6.2 The problem was unanimously recognized to be worthy of attention, but diametrically opposed views were expressed, and were crystallized in two drafts. One provided that "a Recommendation which necessarily involves a system which is the subject of a patent, or where the essential implementation of such a system is the subject of a patent should be adopted and remain in effect only if the patent holder makes available non-exclusive, non-discriminatory licences to any interested applicant on fair and reasonable terms", whereas the other stated that "patented devices and methods can be included in CCITT Recommendations only in those

cases where patent holders agree to grant licences to the Members of the ITU without time limits, free of charge and on a non-discriminatory basis”.

4.6.3 It proved impossible to reach any agreement, and the Plenary Assembly finally decided to bring the problem to the attention of all administrations, to invite them to submit proposals to the VIIth Plenary Assembly and to request the Secretary-General and the CCITT and CCIR Secretariats to continue to study the question together with other interested international organizations with a view to reaching conclusions. Perhaps the next Plenipotentiary Conference will have to settle the problem definitively in 1980.

4.7 Miscellaneous

The Plenary Assembly also considered such varied questions as the allocation of telex destination codes, the publication of Instructions for the operation of the public telegram and telex services, relations with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) for the standardization of low-frequency cables and the establishment of an International Union of Radio Science (URSI)-ITU liaison committee.

Within the scope of this article, it is impossible to do more than to mention them and to report that the most pragmatic approach was adopted, with a view to reaching simple and practical solutions.

5. Conclusions

The VIth Plenary Assembly worked under excellent conditions. The indications given above show that important results were obtained; some far-reaching Resolutions were adopted.

We can therefore conclude by using the words of the Chairman, Mr. Locher, who said the following in his closing address:

“We are thus on the threshold of a new study period. Telecommunications are playing an increasingly important part in the world, and it is our duty to improve them and to make them more accessible to an ever wider public. The rapid and reliable transmission of information has become indispensable for a large number of human activities. Trade, the press, transport, meteorology and tourism, to mention only some of the economic sectors, depend on the services that we

make available to them. We are on the right path: the introduction of more and more sophisticated equipment, the opening of new services and the extension of national networks are the most tangible proofs of this. But we cannot stop there; we want always to do better. Moreover, we must subject our actions to self-criticism, since our clients are our judges and assess our work without any indulgence. Accordingly, the more efficient our work is the more willing citizens and governments will be to support our efforts by placing the necessary resources at our disposal.

In order to give us full satisfaction, however, our work must go beyond the limits of mere utility. We shall be happy if our telecommunication networks, by making it possible for people to see and hear each other—in a word, to communicate—from afar, will enable them to come closer together, to understand each other better and to improve their relations. We wholeheartedly hope that our efforts will be crowned with success and that we will thus contribute together to making our world more and more human”.

(Original language: French)

news

ITSC for the United Arab Emirates

□ An advanced electronic telephone switching system, the international transit switching centre (ITSC) has become operational in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates.

This installation is thought to be one of the first in the world using a stored programme controlled exchange with a solid-state matrix.

The new ITSC provides facilities for improved international communications and the introduction of direct distance dialling with the neighbouring States of Bahrain and Qatar. This service can be expanded beyond the borders of the UAE as soon as equipment is installed in the neighbouring countries.

The ITSC, supplied by GTE International Incorporated, is said to be smaller, more flexible, more reliable and less expensive than the conventional electromechanical equipment currently used in international trunk switching centres.—GTE.

More 'phones for North Sea

□ The British Post Office is to link a further 10 North Sea oil and gas platforms to the United Kingdom's telecommunications network, and the rest of the world.

The equipment, tropospheric scatter from Marconi, is part of the second phase of the Post Office's scheme to introduce high reliability communications to the North Sea

and is scheduled to start coming into operation from the summer of 1977.—United Kingdom Post Office/Marconi.

Direct links from United Kingdom to Japan and Iraq

□ The British Post Office has initiated a direct dialling service from the United Kingdom to Japan and Iraq. However calls from those countries to the United Kingdom will still have to be made through the operator.—United Kingdom Post Office.

Nicaraguan telecommunications expansion

□ The *Dirección General de Telecomunicaciones y Correos de Nicaragua* (TELCOR) has placed an order for telecommunications equipment which will increase the country's telephone communications capability by some 72%.

Initially the system will supply telephone facilities to remote communities in a 480 km area in the central and northern Atlantic regions of the country.

Present plans call for a high capacity system to provide 300 voice channels in the first instance with the capability for eventual expansion up to one video and 960 voice channels. The contract, to RCA Limited of Canada, calls for the supply of some 20 stations of 2 GHz equipment as well as supervision of the installation and a training programme for the Nicaraguans who will operate and maintain the system.—RCA.

Crossbar for Sudan

□ To meet the ever increasing demand for telephone communications the Government of Sudan has placed an order with Nippon Electric Company Limited (NEC) for 25 crossbar exchanges.

These exchanges, with a total capacity of 29 200 circuits, are scheduled for installation in Khartoum and other important cities by October 1977.—NEC News.

United Kingdom's last manual exchange

□ The United Kingdom's last manual telephone exchange, at Portree village on the Isle of Skye, has been replaced by an automatic exchange. The manual exchange had been in service since 1948.—United Kingdom Post Office.

PCM for Pakistan

□ A digital microwave radio system in conjunction with a pulse code modulation (PCM) voice/data multiplexer is to link the main terminal, in Karachi, of the Sui Gas Transmission Company Limited (SGTC) 480 km Sui gas pipeline with the maintenance centres at Dadu and Shirkapur as well as compressor stations and block valve sites along its length.

Forming the Indus right bank pipeline backbone radio telecommunications system the 11 station microwave system, to be supplied by the Canadian Marconi Company, will operate in the 1.7 to 1.8 GHz band in frequency