

Two resolutions

of the World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC 79) in favour of Red Cross Emergency Radiocommunications

The World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC 79), where the Red Cross was represented by an ICRC observer, completed its work on 6 December 1979 with the signature of the Final Acts, to which the new Radio Regulations (Geneva 1979) are appended. The members of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) now have to notify the ITU Secretary General of their approval of these Regulations. The Secretary General will then, without delay, inform the members of such expressions of approval.

In accordance with Resolution IX of the Twenty-third International Red Cross Conference, held in Bucharest in 1977, the delegates of the national telecommunication administrations and the ITU officials examined with sympathetic attention—to which the ICRC is pleased to pay tribute—the question of Red Cross emergency radiocommunications, as part of the work of several commissions of WARC 79.

The importance of this problem had been highlighted in an article published in the *International Review of the Red Cross*¹ shortly before WARC 79 began its work. It will be recalled that the Conference was being asked to recognize the need for Red Cross emergency radiocommunications and to agree that, should there be any redistribution of frequencies among the different services, it should not result in too substantial changes in the frequencies that the International Red Cross—and notably the ICRC—had been using for over fifteen years.

¹ March-April 1979.

The International Telecommunication Convention lays down the scope of the powers held by the World Administrative Conferences, which may only allocate the range of the electromagnetic frequencies among recognized "services", such as the regular service, the maritime and aeronautical mobile services, the radio-astronomy service, the amateur radio service, etc. Consequently, the national telecommunication administrations in each country are responsible for granting or assigning frequencies to those users who apply. These provisions explain why WARC 79 unanimously adopted *Resolution AF*, reprinted in full below, concerning the use of radio-telegraph and radio-telephone links by Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red-Lion-and-Sun organizations. The Resolution replaces and cancels Recommendation No. 34 of the 1959 World Administrative Conference.

By referring to this Resolution, those National Red Cross Societies wishing to set up their own emergency radiocommunication network can approach their national telecommunication administration to request allocation of the necessary frequencies. The Resolution does not have any major implications for the frequencies that the Swiss PTT authorities have assigned to the ICRC, nor for those that other national administrations have allocated to their countries' Red Cross Societies.

In the event of natural disaster, there may be a breakdown in communications, generally of a short-term nature. In such cases, WARC 79 has provided for relief organizations the use of frequencies on wavebands normally reserved for amateur radio services, and it also unanimously adopted *Resolution BN* relating to the international use of radiocommunication on wavebands allocated to the amateur service, in the event of natural disaster.

In adopting these two Resolutions—one for the extended usage of radiocommunication by the International Red Cross, particularly by the ICRC, in periods of crisis and armed conflicts, the other for radiocommunication during short breakdowns caused by natural disasters—WARC 79 has emphasized the need for a means of communication that is both reliable and protected from interference.

Several texts and Resolutions within the new Radio Regulations, which concern humanitarian activities, will be dealt with in a future article.

The ICRC will willingly provide interested parties with more detailed information on any questions related to emergency or other radiocommunication.

WARC 79 has once more demonstrated the very positive attitude that the national telecommunication administrations, the International

Telecommunication Union and all the other specialized international organizations adopt towards the Red Cross, and their keen interest in humanitarian problems.

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RESOLUTION AF

Relating to the Use of Radiotelegraph and Radiotelephone links by Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Red Lion and Sun Organizations

The World Administrative Radio Conference, Geneva, 1979,

considering

- a)* that the worldwide relief work of the Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Red Lion and Sun organizations is of increasing importance and often indispensable;
- b)* that in such circumstances normal communication facilities are frequently overloaded, damaged, completely interrupted or not available;
- c)* that it is necessary to facilitate by all possible measures the reliable intervention of these national and international organizations;
- d)* that rapid and independent contact is essential to the intervention of these organizations;
- e)* that for international relief work of the Red Cross, it is necessary that the national Red Cross (Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun) organizations be able to communicate with each other as well as with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies;

decides to urge Administrations

1. to take account of the possible needs of the Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Red Lion and Sun organizations for communication by radio when normal communication facilities are interrupted or not available;

2. to assign to these organizations the minimum number of necessary working frequencies in accordance with the Table of Frequency Allocations; in the case of fixed circuits between 3 and 30 MHz, the frequencies shall be selected as far as possible adjacent to the amateur bands;
3. to take all practicable steps to protect such links from harmful interference.

RESOLUTION BN

Relating to the International Use of Radiocommunications, in the Event of Natural Disasters, in Frequency Bands Allocated to the Amateur Service

The World Administrative Radio Conference, Geneva, 1979,

considering

- a) that in the event of natural disaster normal communication systems are frequently overloaded, damaged, or completely disrupted;
- b) that rapid establishment of communication is essential to facilitate worldwide relief actions;
- c) that the amateur bands are not bound by international plans or notification procedures, and are therefore well adapted for short-term use in emergency cases;
- d) that international disaster communications would be facilitated by temporary use of certain frequency bands allocated to the amateur service;
- e) that under those circumstances the stations of the amateur service, because of their widespread distribution and their demonstrated capacity in such cases, can assist in meeting essential communication needs;
- f) the existence of national and regional amateur emergency networks using frequencies throughout the bands allocated to the amateur service;

- g) that in the event of a natural disaster, direct communication between amateur stations and other stations might enable vital communications to be carried out until normal communications are restored;**

recognizing

that the rights and responsibilities for communications in the event of a natural disaster rest with the administrations involved;

resolves

- 1. that the bands allocated to the amateur service which are specified in No. 3499A may be used by administrations to meet the needs of international disaster communications;**
- 2. that such use of these bands shall be only for communications in relation to relief operations in connection with natural disasters;**
- 3. that the use of specified bands allocated to the amateur service by non-amateur stations for disaster communications shall be limited to the duration of the emergency and to the specific geographical areas as defined by the responsible authority of the affected country;**
- 4. that disaster communications shall take place within the disaster area and between the disaster area and the permanent headquarters of the organization providing relief;**
- 5. that such communications shall be carried out only with the consent of the administration of the country in which the disaster has occurred;**
- 6. that relief communications provided from outside the country in which the disaster has occurred shall not replace existing national or international amateur emergency networks;**
- 7. That close cooperation is desirable between amateur stations and the stations of other radio services which may find it necessary to use amateur frequencies in disaster communications;**
- 8. that such international relief communications shall avoid, as far as practicable, interference to the amateur service networks;**

invites administrations

1. to provide for the needs of international disaster communications;
2. to provide for the needs of emergency communications within their national regulations.

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This Resolution is supplemented, in the table of frequency band allocations, Article N 7/5 of the Radio Regulations, by the following practical provision which is the subject of Note No. 3499 A, reading as follows :

For the use of the bands allocated to the amateur service at 3.5 MHz, 7.0 MHz, 10.1 MHz, 14.0 MHz, 18.068 MHz, 21.0 MHz, 24.89 MHz and 144 MHz in the event of natural disasters, see Resolution BN.
