

## The Role of U.S. Delegates to the ITU and Related Organizations

Through their expertise and global relationships, U.S. delegates make a vital contribution toward achieving U.S. objectives at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). U.S. objectives are binding on all U.S. delegates and are met through the collaboration of technical, legal, and policy experts within government and the private sector. U.S. Government officials have traditionally relied on the private sector delegates to provide expertise on technical and commercial issues which the representative government agencies have limited familiarity.

The ITU has played a significant role in the development and deployment of telegraph, telephone and more advanced communications, including a fundamental role in the Information Technology revolution. Some of its decisions, such as radio spectrum allocations, represent binding treaty obligations, and some represent recommended global standards which have a direct impact on overall U.S. competitiveness and national security.

The working methods of the ITU underscore the need for technological expertise and continuity in the composition of U.S. delegations. Although the ICT world may seem “fast-moving,” the gestation period for the development of ITU standards, spectrum recommendations and decisions may in fact take many years. Important issues sometimes need three or four years – or longer – to conduct worldwide studies and consultations to arrive at broadly acceptable solutions or compromises. Many experts who are part of U.S. Delegations are from the private sector because they and their companies have the relevant long-term knowledge and interest.

These experts need to be available to the U.S. Government Heads of Delegation throughout the ITU process – from the preparatory meetings to the final negotiations. The U.S. economic and technical successes at the ITU have in large part been due to the availability of policy and technical expertise from the private sector. These private sector experts have the institutional memory and relationships that are vital to multinational negotiations and decision-making. These experts are also involved in the entire U.S. preparatory process.

Many of the Member States of the ITU send delegations with relatively little expertise in many technical issues and often have some discretion in determining which positions are appropriate for their Administrations. The U.S. Government representatives and private sector members cultivate trust and credibility in their relationships with foreign delegates throughout the extended committee and meeting process, which is of immense importance when the U.S. tries to persuade others to support its positions. Moreover, even those delegations with their own experts and significant national interests often prefer to rely upon and confer with experts with whom they have long-standing relationships.

U.S. Delegates have been traditionally chosen on the basis of individual and corporate expertise, commitment and their respective contacts with foreign countries. They have helped U.S. Delegations achieve an enviable record of successes. The United States ITU Association (USITUA) believes that the traditional role of private sector experts on U.S. Delegations has been, is, and will continue to be, a critical factor in the advancement of any U.S. Administration's telecommunications agenda.