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Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) to retain “leap second”

New reference time scale to be considered by World Radiocommunication Conference in 2023

Geneva, 19 November 2015 – The ITU World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-15), currently in session in Geneva from 2 to 27 November, has decided that further studies are required on the impact and application of a future reference time-scale, including the modification of coordinated universal time (UTC) and suppressing the so-called “leap second”.

Leap seconds are added periodically to adjust to irregularities in the earth’s rotation in relation to Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), the current reference for measuring time, in order to remain close to mean solar time (UT1). A leap second was added most recently on 30 June 2015 at 23:59:60 UTC. The proposal to suppress the leap second would have made continuous reference time-scale available for all modern electronic navigation and computerized systems to operate while eliminating the need for specialized ad hoc time systems.

The decision by WRC-15 calls for further studies regarding current and potential future reference time-scales, including their impact and applications. A report will be considered by the World Radiocommunication Conference in 2023. Until then, UTC shall continue to be applied as described in **Recommendation ITU-R TF.460-6** *(https://www.itu.int/rec/R-REC-TF.460-6-200202-I/en)* and as maintained by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM).

WRC-15 also calls for reinforcing the links between ITU and the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM). ITU would continue to be responsible for the dissemination of time signals via radiocommunication and BIPM for establishing and maintaining the second of the International System of Units (SI) and its dissemination through the reference time scale.

Studies will be coordinated by ITU along with international organizations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM), the International Committee for Weights and Measures (CIPM), the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM), the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service (IERS), the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG), the International Union of Radio Science (URSI), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the International Astronomical Union (IAU).

“Modern society is increasingly dependent on accurate timekeeping,” said ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao. “ITU is responsible for disseminating time signals by both wired communications and by different radiocommunication services, both space and terrestrial, which are critical for all areas of human activity.”

“The worldwide coordination of time signals is critical for the functioning and reliability of systems that depend on time,” said François Rancy, Director of the ITU Radiocommunication Bureau. “ITU will continue to work with international organizations, industry and user groups towards providing coherent advice on current and potential future reference time-scales.”

Media Information:

- The World Radiocommunication Conference is in session, 2-27 November at the International Convention Centre Geneva (CICG).

- **Accreditation** *(http://www.itu.int/en/newsroom/wrc15/Pages/media-accreditation.aspx)* information is available in the **WRC-15 Newsroom** *(http://www.itu.int/en/newsroom/wrc15/Pages/default.aspx)*.

- UN Press accreditation is valid.

- Photo badges will be provided at Registration desks at the ITU Montbrillant Building on rue Varembé.

- Access to the meeting rooms are restricted.

- **Media accreditation enquiries:** pressreg@itu.int *(mailto:pressreg@itu.int)*

For more information please see www.itu.int/en/newsroom/wrc15/Pages/default.aspx *(http://www.itu.int/en/newsroom/wrc15/Pages/default.aspx)* contact:

Sanjay Acharya
Chief, Media Relations and Public Information
+41 22 730 5046
+41 79 249 4861
sanjay.acharya@itu.int *(mailto:sanjay.acharya@itu.int)*

Grace Petrin
Communication Officer
ITU Radiocommunication Bureau
+41 22 730 5810
+41 79 599 1428
brpromo@itu.int *(mailto:brpromo@itu.int)*

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