

*The 1992 World Administrative Radio  
Conference: Issues for U.S. International  
Spectrum Policy*

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# Foreword

The radio frequency spectrum, like the ocean, the air, and space, is a common natural resource shared by the nations of the world. It is owned by no individual or government, and its use and development is not limited to or controlled by any one country or group of countries. Rather, ensuring the wise and equitable use of this vital international resource is the collective responsibility of the world community.

The radio frequency spectrum has been an integral part of domestic and international communications for more than 80 years. Radio waves make possible a wide range of communication and entertainment services, including AM and FM radio broadcasting, satellite and microwave communications, television—even baby monitors and remote garage-door openers. Today, a host of new technologies and services, such as digital audio broadcasting, high-definition television, and personal communications services, are vying with existing radio-based applications for a slice of the valuable, but crowded, radio spectrum. The World Administrative Radio Conference meeting in Spain in February 1992 (WARC-92) will attempt to reassign radio frequencies in order to take advantage of these new applications, while still accommodating the needs of existing users. The impacts of this will be felt throughout the U.S. economy and around the world. The standards and conditions set at WARC-92 will guide the development of radio-based systems and services well into the next century.

U.S. preparations for WARC-92 took place in a much different international context—political, economic, and social—than past WARC-92s. The geopolitical map of the world is changing rapidly with the dissolution of the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union and the rise of Japan and the European Community as potent economic powers. The International Telecommunication Union, the body that coordinates the use and development of the radio frequency resource worldwide, is embarked on a far-reaching restructuring of its functions and processes. These changes will force the United States to adapt its international radiocommunication policy in order to retain its competitive position and traditional leadership in spectrum policymaking. However, the present fragmented domestic structure for radiocommunication policymaking may impede the development of a broad long-term vision for future radio-based technologies and services.

Because of these concerns, OTA has prepared this background paper for the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. OTA acknowledges the contributions of the workshop participants, who helped clarify and focus the issues. OTA also appreciates the assistance of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the Federal Communications Commission, and the State Department, as well as the numerous individuals in the private sector who reviewed or contributed to this document. The contents of this paper, however, are the sole responsibility of OTA.

  
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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the workshop participants. The participants do not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this background paper. OTA assumes full responsibility for the background paper and the accuracy of its contents.

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Issues for U.S. International Spectrum Policy**

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