

## International Telecommunications Union

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is one of the oldest and largest of the bodies which are designated as Specialized Agencies of the United Nations. It has been in existence since 1865 and its membership now comprises 79 states and 9 non-self-governing territories. In 1947 an International Conference at Atlantic City reorganized the Union, gave it a new constitution — the Atlantic City Convention — and provided for its status as a Specialized Agency.

The supreme body of ITU is the Plenipotentiary Conference which meets only once every five years. The first such conference took place in 1947; the second will meet in Buenos Aires in October 1952. The Plenipotentiary Conferences consider questions relating to the Convention, establish broad lines of policy on technical and administrative questions, and set up work programmes for the Union. Continuing supervision of the Union's activities is maintained by the Administrative Council, comprising the representatives of 18 member states, which meets annually. Canada has been a member of the Administrative Council since 1947. Subordinate to the Administrative Council are the following bodies: the Secretariat with about 150 employees, permanently established in Geneva; the International Frequency Registration Board, also in Geneva; and three International Consultative Committees on Telegraphs, Telephones and Radio. All of these bodies report independently to the Administrative Council.

As set forth in the Atlantic City Convention, the functions of ITU are to promote international co-operation in the improvement and rational use of telecommunications, and to promote the development of technical facilities so as to increase the efficiency, usefulness and extent of telecommunications services. Within this rather broad designation of responsibilities the activities of ITU fall into a pattern which includes on the one hand well-defined and continuing functions performed on a day-to-day basis, and on the other hand activities related to an important contemporary problem concerning the use of radio frequencies.

The daily functions performed by the Union are essential to the normal operation of the various international communications systems of radio, telephone and telegraph. They involve the collection and circulation to member states of current information on rates, routings and serviceability of equipment. They also involve responsibilities arising from the pattern of international agreements and rules for the handling of commercial telegraph, telephone and radio traffic. These relate particularly to safety and distress, international accounting and payment for the handling of messages, and the registration of radio frequencies. As a further continuing responsibility, ITU provides to member states expert technical assistance and advice on certain types of telecommunications problems.

The other side of ITU's work is concerned with the difficult problem of the allocation of radio frequencies to various services and national systems, in all bands of the radio frequency spectrum. Before the end of the last war the use of radio had so increased that