

ESOA wants telecoms package to give satellite communications special attention

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Brussels, 23/10/2008 (Agence Europe) - Satellite operators want full recognition of the strategic role of satellite communications in the EU's telecoms package, scheduled to be examined by the EU Council of Ministers on 27 November 2008. At its AGM in Brussels on 16 October 2008, the members of **ESOA** (European Satellite Operators Association) stressed the unique nature of satellite communications that cover entire countries and continents without the geographical limitations of national boundaries and they therefore called on the EU institutions to recognise ITU, the United Nations' specialist body for IT and communications, as the reference regulator for the coordination and allocation of radio bands.

ESOA President Giuliano Berretta said that inappropriate recognition of the role and nature of ITU is a fundamental threat to the future of satellite services, whose commercial prospects are based first and foremost on secure coverage of a specified geographical area through a specific position in orbit and the capacity to serve that area into the long-term with a spectrum associated with the area concerned. For this reason, he said, satellite services require appropriate protection. **ESOA** regrets that the European Commission's initial proposals do not refer to special management of satellite communications or the vital role of ITU. Satellite operators were able in the end to convince the European Parliament to introduce some amendments on the role of ITU in first reading on 23 September 2008 and they urge Member States to follow suit on 27 November 2008. Operators are particularly concerned that in the name of 'technological neutrality,' the European Commission is preparing to open up band C (reserved at the moment for satellite communications) to other services like WiMAX, a new data transmission technology using radio waves that can be used for a range of different types of operations. Michael Butler of Inmarsat of the UK (an **ESOA** member) explained that **ESOA** did not rule out the option of working with WiMAX, but it was important for sensitive services not be affected by possible signal interference.