

Report
IARU Region 2
Executive Committee Meeting
September 29 & 30, 2012
Curacao

The IARU Region 2 Executive Committee carries out the activities of IARU Region 2 in the interval between the triennial General Assembly meetings of the IARU Region 2 member societies. Region 2 encompasses all of the Americas and is divided into seven areas, each represented by a Director who is a member of the Executive Committee. Each area, other than Area B, consists of several member societies. ARRL is the sole member society in Area B.

IARU Region 2 is similar to ARRL in that the Region officers, with the advice and assistance of the Executive Committee implement adopted policies and administer the affairs and activities of the organization between general meetings.

In addition to the R2 officers and directors the meeting often includes an IARU officer and a representative from IARU Region 1 and Region 3. IARU Secretary, Rod Stafford, W6ROD, and Region 1 President Hans Blondeel Timmerman, PB2T, also attended this meeting.

The 2012 R2 EC meeting was held at the Curacao Marriott located just outside Willemstad, Curacao. The journey was uneventful except for unexpectedly long layovers in Miami, both going and coming and an additional plane change due to mechanical difficulties.

This meeting like most R2 EC meetings covered two days, beginning Saturday September 29, 2012. Region 2 meetings have been "paperless" for several years with all reports, papers and other documents available only in electronic form. Director's reports outlined the status and vitality of member societies. Officers reported on their particular duties, their efforts to encourage new societies and their work with regional administrations to support amateur radio and defend amateur frequencies. This work involves participation in regional authority meetings, primarily CITEL, and amateur efforts at the international level, most recently at WRC12.

Success at WRC's to continue depends upon vigilance and active participation in the maze of preparatory meetings and working groups working between WRC's. Regional officials work in conjunction with IARU and ARRL in the ongoing effort to protect the interests of amateur radio. Region 2 President Reinaldo Leandro, YV5AM, and Vice President Jose Arturo Molina, YS1MS, ably represent Region 2 at CITEL meetings. In addition to being an active and experienced amateur President Leandro is a retired

member of the Venezuelan Foreign Service is particularly well suited to deal with officials from administrations through out the region.

A recent example of the success is the adoption of an agenda item to consider a 60 meter amateur allocation at WRC15. Though an international 60 meter allocation has been discussed in the past Cuba unexpectedly and without prior notice suggested the WRC15 agenda item at WRC12. The surprise proposal looked as if it might die for lack of support. The good relations and prompt action of IARU and Region 2 officials were a significant factor in securing support within Region 2 administrations for adding the proposal as a WRC15 agenda item. Maintaining good relations and support for amateur radio throughout the Region is essential because we never know when we will the need the support from our friends will arise.

As noted above each Director reports on activities within his area. Most societies in the region are having difficulty maintaining membership. Reasons vary though a common thread is the difficulty in attracting younger members. Other technologies and the cost of obtaining and keeping an amateur license are frequent factors. In some countries in Central and South America the annual cost of an amateur license is simply beyond the means of most young people who may be interested in amateur radio. Fortunately some administrations are beginning to understand the ability of amateur radio to provide communications in emergencies and disasters. That realization is causing some administrations to reduce some of the barriers to increasing their amateur populations.

Region 2 Secretary, Ramon Santoyo, XE2KK, and Treasurer, Noel Donawa, 9Y4YD, reported on their meetings with the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader in Aruba just before the EC meeting. Aruba has not held licensing exams and Aruban citizens have not been able to obtain licenses for a number of years. With much of the Caribbean in the heart of the hurricane belt one of the strongest argument for encouraging an active amateur radio service is the demonstrated history of amateurs to provide emergency communications in the aftermath of hurricanes. The Prime Minister and Opposition Leader acknowledged this is a problem that needs to be addressed and expressed support for a change in licensing policy.

The need to train and retain young people in technology and engineering to promote economic growth and the ability of amateur radio to generate interest in those fields is also being recognized. At the end of the Saturday EC session Brett Ruiz, PJ2BR, and other members of VERONA, the IARU member society of Curacao, gave a presentation of recent activities of their society. Though a small society VERONA is extremely active. They have complete coverage of the island with VHF and UHF repeaters, including data repeaters. Though available for routine communications the prime purpose for the system is availability in the event of emergency or natural disaster. VERONA has a good working relationship with their national Red Cross and has a dedicated meeting and operating space in the Red Cross facility. By chance a VERONA member learned a local company was deactivating its satellite earth station and was planning to salvage the dish antenna. Members of VERONA were able work a deal with the company and the local Technical University to have the 10 meter dish moved to the school premises with the understanding VERONA would provide assistance to the staff in planning a

communications class in return for providing a class for club members in C language programming and use of the dish for EME experiments. This in turn led to students from the university joining VERONA. This is a model of how an active amateur radio group can attract young members and foster interest in technology through amateur radio.

I presented the EC with a proposal for an Emergency Communications Workshop to be held in conjunction with the Region 2, 2013 General Assembly next September. ARRL Mike Corey, KI1U, Emergency Preparedness Manager, prepared the proposal. The workshop would focus on the natural disasters and emergencies most commonly experienced in Region 2 and would emphasize sharing plans and practices that have proven successful in responding to these challenges and developing procedures for societies to assist one another in time of need. The proposal was enthusiastically received.

Noel Donawa, 9Y4X, the Area E Director asked about the possibility of using ARRL certified VE's using ARRL VE exams as a basis for license exams in smaller Region 2 countries. At present ARRL VE's administer exams in for US licenses in Trinidad and Tobago and other small countries in the region. In some of these countries the local administrations accept a US or a UK license as a basis for issuing a license to its nationals but don't have an internal process for administering examinations. In some former British colonies UK exams and licenses were typically used, but the cost of the UK license has become prohibitively expensive. This request assumes the country administration would approve the procedure. Essentially the amateur would appear at an ARRL VE session as now. The person would take the exam and complete the FCC Form 610VEC if they wanted a US license, but if they didn't desire an FCC license they would still receive a CSCE for any passed test elements. The examinee could then take the CSCE to their local administration and if acceptable the local administration would issue a license relying upon the CSCE from the ARRL VE team. I agreed to speak with ARRL HQ to see if this was a viable approach.

As part of my Area B report I mentioned the addition of WPX as a participating award in Logbook of the World.. Logbook is generally well liked and widely used throughout the Region. The change in volume and use of paper QSL card has had an impact on some regional societies that have traditionally relied upon handling of incoming and outgoing QSL's as a significant club/society benefit. There is recognition that electronic QSLing is here to stay but there are other impediments to utilization of LoTW. The process is getting a trusted QSL certificate is daunting for some older amateurs. The fact some of those interested in securing a LoTW account don't speak English and may be intimidated by the process is also a deterrent. A suggestion was made that local "trained experts" fluent in Spanish and English could help bridge the language and LoTW understanding gap and restore local club/society to a place the in the QSL process.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Bellows, KØQB
ARRL IAVP