

# ITSO RESTRICTED

Contribution of the  
Director General

IAC-26-18 W/03/26  
26 February 2026

## STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ITSO FOR THE PERIOD 2026-2028

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Article IX(b) of the ITSO Agreement states that the “Assembly of Parties shall give consideration to the general policy and the long-term objectives of ITSO”.
2. The Forty-First Assembly of Parties (AP-41) decided to extend the Goals and Objectives of ITSO to 2026 and to approve the Strategic Plan for the period 2024-2026.
3. AP-41 also decided that ITSO should continue to operate in a manner consistent with the Goals and Objectives and Strategic Plan 2024-2026 on the understanding that the Director General shall prepare a new Strategic Plan for consideration at the Forty Second Assembly of Parties (AP-42), consistent with the views expressed by AP-41.
4. With the recent SES acquisition of Intelsat and other significant changes in the satellite industry, ITSO needs to adapt to the current environment in order to be able to continue to perform its obligations under the ITSO Agreement.
5. The Director General believes that the existing goals and objectives remain valid and were used in the development of the Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2028. The goals and objectives, to be approved by the Assembly of Parties, are being presented in document IAC-26-17. Furthermore, the Director General recommends the Strategic Plan outlined below to the Assembly of Parties for the Assembly’s consideration and approval.

### II. THE ITSO MANDATE

6. ITSO was established to ensure the provision of international public telecommunications services on a global, commercial, and non-discriminatory basis. ITSO’s mission is to ensure SES’s<sup>1</sup> successful performance of its public service obligations (PSOs), to safeguard the Parties’ Common Heritage and to promote the provision of existing and future international public telecommunications services to all users including lifeline countries and users, ensuring that global

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<sup>1</sup> This document uses different names for the private company to which the commercial operations of the international organization were transferred in 2001. The term “Company,” used in the ITSO Agreement, appears when referring to obligations under that Agreement. “Intelsat” is used when discussing the Public Services Agreement (PSA), which Intelsat originally signed. For periods after SES acquired Intelsat, the term “SES” is used, since SES now fully assumes all PSA obligations.

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connectivity and coverage remains non-discriminatory, and universally accessible, in line with the ITSO Agreement and the Public Services Agreement with SES<sup>2</sup>.

7. In July 2025, SES S.A. completed the acquisition of Intelsat, marking a historic transformation in the satellite communications landscape. The transaction created a global multi-orbit connectivity powerhouse, combining Intelsat's geostationary (GEO) infrastructure with SES's GEO infrastructure and medium Earth orbit (MEO) O3b mPOWER network. This development has major implications for ITSO's role, as the Organization must adapt to a new, more integrated operator while ensuring continued fulfillment of the PSOs.

8. ITSO now operates in a context characterized by rapid industry consolidation, technological convergence, and increasing geopolitical and regulatory complexity. The 2026-2028 Strategic Plan sets out ITSO's vision, goals, and strategic priorities in this new era, taking into account ITSO's obligations under the ITSO Agreement and a forward-looking approach that would entail further engagement on satellite issues.

9. In addition, the relationship between ITSO and the operator has changed significantly, becoming far more collaborative with SES. The previous complications with Intelsat, marked by a lack of cooperation, no longer apply. Instead, ITSO and SES now work together to ensure that SES remains successful in this competitive environment, enabling it to provide global connectivity and coverage and non-discriminatory access to ITSO Parties.

### **III. MISSION, VISION AND CORE VALUES**

#### **Mission**

10. ITSO's mission is to ensure SES's successful performance of its PSOs, to safeguard the Parties' Common Heritage and to promote the provision of international public telecommunications services, ensuring that global connectivity and coverage remain non-discriminatory, and universally accessible, in line with the ITSO Agreement and the Public Services Agreement.

#### **Vision**

11. ITSO's vision is for a world where, at least, one operator will always be obligated to honor Public Service Obligations providing global connectivity and coverage and non-discriminatory access to their system so that every ITSO Member State, including lifeline countries and users, can benefit from this, in addition to providing a trusted forum where ITSO Parties can exchange on relevant satellite issues regarding the provision of global public telecommunications services as they relate to the Core Principles.

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<sup>2</sup> The PSA was signed by ITSO and Intelsat in 2001 and once SES acquired Intelsat on July 18, 2025, the PSA became binding on SES as a successor of Intelsat in accordance with Article 13 of the PSA.

### Core Values

12. ITSO is guided by a commitment to **transparency** through open and accountable oversight and governance processes; **integrity** through honesty, ethical decision-making, and accountability; and **efficiency** through the professional and impartial delivery of results. It also values **consensus** through collective decision-making; **teamwork** by fostering internal and external collaboration; and **cooperation** by facilitating synergies.

### IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT RELATED TO SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY

13. The satellite communications sector is undergoing rapid change, driven by new technologies, innovative commercial models and the arrival of large non-geostationary constellations. These developments are expanding global connectivity and creating new opportunities for countries that remain underserved by terrestrial networks. They also require careful management of spectrum and orbital resources and strong cooperation among governments, industry and international institutions.

14. Low Earth orbit (LEO) systems are now being deployed at scale, offering low-latency broadband and new forms of integration with terrestrial networks, including emerging direct-to-device services. These capabilities are proving valuable opportunities for remote areas, emergency communications and digital inclusion. At the same time, GEO satellites remain essential in many countries around the world for guaranteeing universal coverage irrespective of the geographical location, providing stability and efficiency which can be complemented with the advantages of LEO systems.

15. In this multi-orbit environment, SES plays a critical role. Its combined GEO and MEO capabilities demonstrate how different orbital layers can work together to support national priorities, from inclusion to communications in motion and secure governmental services. The SES acquisition of Intelsat has created a powerful multi-orbit operator with global reach, but it also introduces new regulatory and oversight considerations. ITSO will work closely with SES to ensure SES's successful performance of its public service obligations, to safeguard the Parties' Common Heritage and to promote the provision of international public telecommunications services, ensuring that global connectivity and coverage remain non-discriminatory, and universally accessible, in line with the ITSO Agreement and the Public Services Agreement with SES/Intelsat.

16. The rapid growth of LEO, MEO and advanced GEO systems increases regulatory complexity, requiring ITSO to coordinate closely with SES, the ITU, the Notifying Administrations and ITSO Parties.

17. As global reliance on digital connectivity grows, satellite systems remain indispensable for universal access, disaster response and socio-economic development. ITSO can help governments ensure that the benefits of next-generation satellite technologies, particularly those offered by SES,

are shared equitably and support national development goals. The economic development of the ITSO Parties raises new demands for connectivity in any corner of their territories, increasing the demand for satellite solutions as the reliable and economical way to extend their terrestrial networks.

## V. THE ITSO ENVIRONMENT – ITSO STRENGTHS & ITSO CHALLENGES

18. The satellite environment is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by industry consolidation, technological innovation, policy evolution, and increasing geopolitical complexity. These developments create both opportunities and challenges for ITSO as it seeks to safeguard equitable access to satellite-based communications and uphold the Core Principles of the ITSO Agreement.

### **ITSO's Strengths**

19. The Preamble of the ITSO Agreement incorporates the principle set forth in Resolution 1721 (XVI) of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which establishes that communication by means of satellites should be available to the nations of the world as soon as practicable on a global and non-discriminatory basis. It also incorporates the principle embedded in the “Outer Space Treaty,” which states that outer space shall be used for the benefit and in the interest of all countries. The inclusion of these principles in the Preamble clearly reflects the ITSO Parties’ intent regarding the establishment and continuing operation of a global communication satellite system.

### *ITSO Governance and Groups*

20. ITSO is an intergovernmental Organization with 149 Member States. The widespread membership creates a unique but global convergence of interests in terms of the need for satellite technology as a mechanism by which ITSO Parties can be connected for the establishment and delivery of existing and future international public telecommunications services.

21. The governance structure of ITSO is built upon several experts’ groups and an Assembly of Parties (AP). The AP is the main organ, appointing the Director General and directing the executive organ of ITSO as it deems appropriate, and is composed of all the 149 ITSO Parties. The AP gives consideration to general policy and long-term objectives of ITSO, and to matters which are primarily of interest to the Parties as sovereign States, and in particular ensures that the Company respects the Core Principles. The AP meets in ordinary session every two years. This important venue is also the space for ITSO Parties to exchange information on common matters of interest. In addition, the AP can establish Ad Hoc working groups as it was done at AP-40 and AP-41.

22. The Parties are also actively involved in ITSO matters between APs through the Advisory Committee (IAC), which was established at AP-27. The IAC, currently composed of 23 Parties and additional observers, provides consultative advice to the ITSO Director General on any matters for which the Director General requests advice.

23. In addition, ITSO has a Panel of Legal Experts (PLE). As per Article XVI(a) of the ITSO Agreement, all legal disputes arising in connection with the rights and obligations under the Agreement—whether between Parties or between ITSO and one or more Parties—if not otherwise settled within a reasonable time, shall be submitted to arbitration in accordance with the provisions of Annex A to the ITSO Agreement, and the AP elects the members of the PLE to facilitate this function.

24. ITSO also has a technical group that provides expert advice to the Director General. The Frequency Working Party (FWP) was created at AP-33 (2009), with the objective of advising the Director General on matters relating to the implementation of Article XII (e) (iv) of the ITSO Agreement<sup>3</sup> and on all issues arising from frequency management, in particular about the Parties' Common Heritage, in accordance with the Director General's duties under Article X (j) of the Agreement. The FWP is made up of one frequency expert from each of the five ITU regions, and additional frequency experts can also participate in its work.

#### *The Parties' Common Heritage*

25. The Parties' Common Heritage constitutes an essential and valuable resource that enables SES to provide international public telecommunications services in order to satisfy the performance of the Core Principles. This resource is therefore vital, ultimately enabling the long-term availability of international public telecommunications services by satellite. In this context, ITSO continues to play a crucial role in protecting the interests of the ITSO Parties with respect to the Parties' Common Heritage. The United States and the United Kingdom were each designated as a "Notifying Administration" and licensing jurisdiction for the Parties' Common Heritage resources. SES's right to use the Parties' Common Heritage frequency assignments associated with orbital locations is conditioned to the fulfillment of the Core Principles.<sup>4</sup>

26. In recognition of the importance of the Parties' Common Heritage, the Thirty-First Meeting (Extraordinary) of the Assembly of Parties (AP-31), during the period 20-23 March 2007 in Paris, France, approved an amendment to Article XII, paragraph (c)(ii) of the ITSO Agreement in order to protect the Parties' Common Heritage frequency assignments associated with orbital positions in case of adverse or unforeseen situations. The Amendment entered into force on 16 January 2017, allowing the ITSO Parties to ensure the continued availability of the space segment required for international public telecommunications services.

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<sup>3</sup> Article XII (e) reads as follows: "Each Party selected to act as a Notifying Administration [...] shall: [...] (iv) notify and consult with the Director General on ITU satellite system co-ordinations that are undertaken on behalf of the Company to assure that global connectivity and service to lifeline users are maintained".

<sup>4</sup> As the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC) made clear in its Order of Modification issued with regard to the Petition of the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization under Section 316 of the Communications Act, as Amended, IB Docket No. 06-137 (February 21, 2008), which amends Intelsat's licenses with respect to the use of the orbital locations "no entity shall be considered a successor-in-interest to Intelsat under the ITSO Agreement for licensing purposes unless it has undertaken to perform the obligations of Public Services Agreement".

*Partnerships*

27. In order to fulfil some of the objectives of ITSO’s Goals and Objectives, ITSO collaborates with other organizations. Since 2010, ITSO has been implementing its Capacity Building Initiative. The objective is to assist ITSO Parties in creating the necessary conditions for the effective use of satellite-based international public telecommunications services, in line with their ICT goals and policies. The Capacity Building Initiative has been implemented in partnership with several international organizations, including ITU.<sup>5</sup> In addition, in the past ITSO partnered with the Inter-American Development Bank and developed a study on “The Provision of Satellite Broadband Services in Latin America and the Caribbean”. This kind of work and partnerships enable ITSO to raise awareness about satellite issues, which is essential to ITSO’s main purpose of global connectivity and coverage.

**ITSO’s Challenges**

*ITSO Budget*

28. The 25<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Parties (AP-25) in November 2000 decided that, if ITSO continues beyond 12 years, the Company would annually fund ITSO in an amount to be negotiated, in good faith, by the Director General of ITSO and the Chief Executive Officer of the Company, based on the principles and financial expenditures of ITSO during the initial 12-year period. The annual funding of ITSO by Intelsat, S.A. after the twelfth year would not exceed US\$ 1.8 million (Year 2013 dollars).

29. The matter of sustainable funding for ITSO remained a challenge until 8 December 2025 when the Director General of ITSO and the CEO of SES entered into a three-year funding agreement of \$1.2 million per year over the next three years (FY2026, FY2027 and FY2028), which ensures the much-needed financial stability and continuity to ITSO.

30. Although the current funding agreement is better than the previous ones, the amount funded is still lower than the budget approved by AP-41 for FY 2026 of \$ 1.355 million and is well below the cap of \$1.8M (Year 2013 dollars) referenced in Article 14 of the PSA.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, ITSO continues to face financial constraints and remains heavily dependent on the goodwill of the Company. While now the relationship with SES is better than the one with Intelsat, and although

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<sup>5</sup> The Capacity Building Initiative has been implemented in partnership with a number of international organizations, including: (i) The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), (ii) The Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (CTO), (iii) The African Telecommunications Union (ATU), (iv) The East African Communications Organization (EACO), (v) The South African Development Community (SADC), (vi) The African Union Commission (AUC), (vii) The Technical Regional Commission for Telecommunications (COMTELCA), (viii) The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), (ix) American University Washington College of Law (AUWCL), (x) Associação de Reguladores de Comunicações e Telecomunicações (ARCTEL), (xi) The Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), (xii) The West Africa Telecommunication Regulators Assembly (WATRA), (xiii) The International Organization of Space Communications (Intersputnik).

<sup>6</sup> If funding were based on the cap referred to in Article 14 of the PSA, the current level of funding could be as high as US\$ 2.4 million (FY 2018 budget of US\$ 1,8 million with the inflation reflected, using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, amount from July 2017 compared to July 2025 [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm))

the Director General negotiated a better funding agreement, ITSO would find itself in a vulnerable position if the Company were to cease negotiating in good faith, as was the case with Intelsat since 2019. ITSO can enter into arbitration against the Company, but for that ITSO requires funding and given Intelsat's previous replenishment of the contingency fund on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019, the PSA imposes no further obligation for additional replenishment of the contingency fund at this time.<sup>7</sup> Looking ahead, ITSO faces a major challenge as the Organization currently lacks a dedicated financial mechanism to finance any future arbitration.

*Information submission by the Company*

31. In accordance with the provisions of Article 3 of the PSA, the Company is required to submit reports to ITSO on a regular basis detailing the actions undertaken by the company to fulfill the Core Principles to demonstrate that it is meeting its commitments of global connectivity and coverage and non-discriminatory access.<sup>8</sup> Taking into account the more collaborative relationship with SES, as well as the changing satellite environment with SES being a multi-orbit provider, the Director General shall coordinate with SES to ensure that the information required under Article 3 of the PSA is provided.

32. In addition, for the Parties' Common Heritage to continue to be utilized in accordance with the ITSO Agreement, ITSO needs to receive information on the anticipated utilization of the orbital slots of the Parties' Common Heritage, either from SES or from the Notifying Administrations, to perform its obligations under Article XII (c)(ii) of the ITSO Agreement. The timing of the information is critical, and the AP-41 Working Group has offered some guidance in this regard, as contained in document IAC-26-15.

*Protection of the Parties' Common Heritage*

33. One major challenge is still related to ensuring the protection of the Parties' Common Heritage, in the context of the amended Article XII (c) (ii) of the ITSO Agreement. Since 2017, when the amended Article XII (c)(ii) entered into force, ITSO has been in a better position to ensure that the satellites of the Company fleet and their corresponding Common Heritage frequency assignments associated with orbital positions cannot be transferred to third parties without those parties first entering into an appropriate public services agreement with ITSO.

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<sup>7</sup> Article 14.01 of the PSA also stipulates that if ITSO's contingency fund is below the initial US\$ 500,000 level, the Company shall contribute an additional amount to bring the fund to its original level of US\$ 500,000, adjusted for inflation (relative to 2013 values). Intelsat was requested in July 2019 to provide full replenishment in the amount of US\$ 424,689 (bringing the contingency fund level up to US\$ 640,000). Although this amount was paid by Intelsat to ITSO on 4th December 2019, the entire contingency fund was subsequently depleted to cover the costs of arbitration. Unfortunately, due to Intelsat's bankruptcy, the arbitration proceeding was terminated without resolution of the policy concerns that ITSO had raised.

<sup>8</sup> This has been a contentious issue with Intelsat in the past when Intelsat stopped providing information to ITSO in 2005. At that time the issue was brought to the 30<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Parties (AP-30) in 2006, and it was decided that the Company reports should cover aspects such as: network plans; deployment and service offerings; customer base and growth; revenue, earnings and projections; and, quality of service. Intelsat restarted to submit the information until the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2018, when Intelsat stopped providing the Director General with the complete Quarterly Monitoring Indicator information, as agreed and set out in the decision of the AP-30.

34. ITSO is expected to be able to identify any circumstances under which SES is unable to discharge its obligations with respect to its utilization of the Parties' Common Heritage assets. For this, ITSO needs to work in close collaboration with the Notifying Administrations, SES and the ITU. The AP-41 Working Group has been studying this issue and will provide their report to AP-42 with potential solutions that ITSO might need to implement. In addition, ITSO has been working closely with the Notifying Administrations and SES to ensure that any relevant information is shared with ITSO in a timely manner.

35. Finally, the increased interest and pace in launch of non-geostationary constellation satellite systems have prompted some satellite operators to re-evaluate their future plans concerning purchase of spacecraft, as they examine the breakthrough advances in high-throughput technology and at the same time to assess the potential of small-satellite constellations. These market changes may influence decisions regarding not only the choice of geostationary satellite systems but also the optimum utilization of orbital resources. As such, ITSO's ability to protect the Parties' Common Heritage resources is directly linked to the ITSO Parties' continuing need for the availability of these resources to meet their international public telecommunications requirements.

## **VI. THE TIME FOR INSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION**

36. The time has come for ITSO to initiate a process of institutional modernization and adaptation. The complexity of the current telecommunications environment demands an organization that can adapt quickly and respond to the needs of the ITSO Parties. In addition, due to the still lower level of funding, ITSO needs to continue to look for ways to increase efficiency and reduce costs wherever possible.

37. Internally, ITSO will continue to modernize its administrative, financial, and communication systems to further improve efficiency. Externally, ITSO will maximize its available resources to strengthen strategic partnerships with SES, the ITU, regional organizations, development banks, academia and other multilateral bodies.

38. Through these efforts, ITSO will strengthen its role as the intergovernmental organization mandated to ensure that SES fulfils its Public Service Obligations, safeguards the Parties' Common Heritage and promotes the provision of international public telecommunications services. In doing so, ITSO will help guarantee that global connectivity remains non-discriminatory, reliable and universally accessible, in accordance with the ITSO Agreement and the Public Services Agreement. At the same time, ITSO will continue to serve as a trusted global forum where all ITSO Parties can share their perspectives and uphold equitable access to satellite communications.

## VII. THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAM

39. The Director General proposes the following Action Program for the period 2026 to 2028, based on the existing goals and objectives, for the review and approval of the Assembly of Parties:

### **Goal 1: Maintain the continuity of the provision of international public telecommunications satellite services.**

40. While the supervisory functions of ITSO will continue to be exercised through the PSA, a commercially successful SES remains the best assurance that it will comply with its Public Service Obligations.

41. To ensure the successful performance of its Public Service Obligations by SES, the Director General proposes to implement the following action program within existing budget resources:

- (i) Collaborate with SES for continued performance of the Public Service Obligations.
- (ii) Monitor the financial performance of SES.
- (iii) Work with SES, the ITU and national regulatory authorities to promote an enabling regulatory environment.
- (iv) Monitor the development of non-geostationary based services and the mechanisms associated with the provision of global connectivity.
- (v) Assist ITSO Parties and SES, if and when required, in interfacing with each other.

### **Goal 2: Protect the Parties' Common Heritage orbital locations and associated frequency assignments.**

42. To achieve this goal, the Director General proposes to implement the following action program within existing budget resources:

- (i) Review with SES and the Notifying Administrations, on a regular basis, the anticipated utilization of the orbital slots of the Parties' Common Heritage considering SES' satellite deployment plan.
- (ii) Implement the decisions of AP-42 that relate to the Parties' Common Heritage.
- (iii) Review with SES, where necessary, the status of inter-system coordination as it relates to the Parties' Common Heritage.

- (iv) Continue to work with ITSO Parties to address all issues arising from the Parties' Common Heritage and collect the views of ITSO Parties on these issues.
- (v) Contribute to the implementation of Resolution ITU-R 69 concerning the "Development and deployment of international public telecommunications via satellite in developing countries" and follow up on WRC decisions that are relevant to SES and to the ITSO mission.
- (vi) Follow WRC preparations and monitor the impact of WRC decisions on SES and on the Parties' Common Heritage, in collaboration with SES, the Notifying Administrations and ITSO Parties.
- (vii) Seek the advice of the Frequency Working Party on all relevant matters.

**Goal 3: Contribute to the promotion of a global information and communications infrastructure.**

43. To achieve this goal, the Director General proposes to implement the following action program within existing budget resources:

- (i) Actively engage with partners and contribute to key global forums to advance the provision of satellite services.
- (ii) Participate in activities undertaken by the UN, the ITU and other ICT actors to ensure the continued availability of resources for the provision of satellite services.
- (iii) Promote with telecommunications policymakers and regulators the key role played by satellites.
- (iv) Work with partners in cost effectively meeting the requirements for capacity building programs.
- (v) Assist ITSO Parties in navigating new developments in the satellite industry.
- (vi) Consider the new potential scope and activities which will be likely derived from the recent updates of the ITU-R Resolution 69, both by ITU-R and ITU-D, by establishing closer cooperation with these organizations and carry out joint activities.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

44. The proposed Strategic Plan for ITSO for the period 2026-2028 will serve as the cornerstone as we rebuild ITSO after the challenging times since 2019. As we have entered into a new era with SES, with a more positive partnership, the proposed Strategic Plan should enable ITSO to achieve its Goals and Objectives.

45. Given the decisions of the Forty-First Assembly of Parties (AP-41), the recent developments and notably the SES acquisition of Intelsat, the Director General believes that the existing goals and objectives remain valid and were used in the development of the Strategic Plan for the period 2026 to 2028. With the foregoing considerations, the Director General proposes a Strategic Plan covering the period 2026-2028 to the Assembly of Parties for the Assembly's consideration and approval.