

# INTELSAT

In this article, you can read all about INTELSAT, formerly called ITSO, as part of the science and technology segment of the UPSC syllabus.

## Origin of INTELSAT

- The International Telecommunications Satellite Organisation (INTELSAT) has its origin in the International Telecommunications Consortium which was founded in 1964 by the telecommunications agencies of nations.
- The Consortium, the first worldwide system of its kind, was open to all members of the ITU, and its management resided in the US Communication Satellite Corporation (COMSAT).
- As membership expanded, it was decided to create a formal organisation. As a result, Intelsat was established by two international agreements concluded at Washington in August 1971, effective February 1973; the Agreement with four annexes, establishing the Organisation itself, was signed by participating states; and the Operating Agreement, with one annexe, was concluded among states and public and private telecommunications bodies designated by the states.
- At present, over 140 countries participate as full members; while another 45 are non-signatory users.
- By the 1990s, building and launching satellites was no longer exclusively a government domain and as country-specific telecommunications systems were privatized, several private satellite operators arose to meet the growing demand.
- In the U.S., satellite operators such as PanAmSat, Orion Communications, Columbia Communications, Iridium, Globalstar, TRW and others formed under the umbrella of the Alliance for Competitive International Satellite Services (ACISS) to press for an end to the IGOs and the monopoly position of COMSAT the US signatory to Intelsat and Inmarsat.
- In March 2001, the US Congress passed the Open Market Reorganization for the Betterment of International Telecommunications (ORBIT) Act to privatize COMSAT and reform the role of the international organizations.
- In April 1998, to address US government concerns about market power, Intelsat's senior management spun off five of its older satellites to a private Dutch entity, New Skies Satellites, which became a direct competitor to Intelsat. To avert the US government's interference with Intelsat, Intelsat's senior management unsuccessfully considered relocating the IGO to another country.

## **Objectives of INTELSAT**

The objective is to “Ensure the performance of Core Principles for the provision of international public telecommunications services, with high reliability and quality. Promote international public telecommunications services to meet the needs of the information and communication society.”

## **INTELSAT Structure**

- INTELSAT consists of the Assembly of Parties, Meeting of Signatories, Board of Governors and an Executive Organ.
- The Assembly of Parties gives “consideration to those aspects of INTELSAT which are primarily of interest to the parties as sovereign states”.
- Meeting once every two years, the Assembly formulates policy and long-term aims.
- The Meeting of Signatories is primarily concerned with financial, technical and operational matters, and includes other parties who are signatories to the Agreements.
- The Board of Governors is composed of 27 members and provides management policy direction. The Governors are appointed on the basis of contribution, which is not less than a specified investment share, as well as on regional considerations.