

ITU Key Messages for Advocates

This December, the world's governments will meet to decide whether the International Telecommunication Union—a UN agency—should become involved in governing the Internet. While the ITU plays an important role in promoting global ICT development and radio communications, some government proposals to extend the ITU's telecom treaty to the Internet pose grave risks to free expression, access to information, and privacy.

If ITU member states push to expand the agency's mandate to the Internet, users' fundamental rights could be threatened. These include:

- **Free Expression**

Some countries want to censor or block use of communications services in the name of national security or when 'sensitive information' is at risk.

- **Access to Information & Internet Neutrality**

A group of European telecom companies has urged the ITU to change the payment system for Internet traffic, a move that could harm Internet neutrality and limit access to information, particularly for users in less-developed countries.

- **Privacy**

Countries have proposed that the ITU treaty should require standards for identifying Internet users as they access information online, potentially eroding online privacy and anonymity.

The ITU is not the right place for making decisions about how the Internet works or how user rights will be defined.

- *The ITU treaty process is not transparent. Key information about what happens at the ITU is not available to the public. As a result, specific proposals have not been fully scrutinized to assess their costs and benefits, nor their impact on human rights.*
- *Governments control the ITU, and only government officials vote on policies. No government-dominated body should be making Internet policy decisions alone. Technology experts, human rights advocates, and Internet users need a voice in the Internet governance and policy debate.*
- *The ITU is not an appropriate institution to address complex issues of Internet policy or technical standards. The ITU does not have deep knowledge of Internet structure and functionality, nor does it have the expertise necessary to weigh the human rights implications of certain proposals.*

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