

Sign-on Letter Opposing ITU Authority Over the Internet

September 6, 2012

Filed under

Tags: Array

The following letter voices the concerns of civil society groups and academics from around the world about the upcoming conference of the International Telecommunication Union. The undersigned organizations and individuals wish to express to member states and government delegates their concerns about the closed nature of the ITU process and about specific proposals that would threaten Internet openness and the exercise of human rights online.

Civil society organizations and academics are invited to join this call. To sign the letter, contact signon@cdt.org [1].

Civil society groups around the world are translating this letter and submitting it to relevant government officials in their countries. The letter is available in the following languages:

[Spanish](#) [2] ([CELE, Argentina](#) [3])

[Thai](#) [4] ([Thai Netizen Network](#) [5])

[Urdu](#) [6] ([Bytes for All](#) [7])

[Bangla](#) [8] (Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication)

[Chinese](#) [9] ([Human Rights in China](#) [10])

[French](#) [11] ([ISOC Québec](#) [12])

CDT's [ITU Resource Center](#) [13] offers a range of tools, analyses, and links to useful commentary on the ITU conference that can help users understand this complex issue.

To Member States and Government Delegations of the International Telecommunication Union:

In the interests of promoting and protecting global Internet openness and the exercise of human rights online, we write to urge International Telecommunication Union (ITU) member states and their delegates to the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) to refrain from expanding the scope of the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs) treaty to include the Internet.

At the WCIT, governments will consider proposals that would expand the scope of the ITRs to include the Internet. Such expansion could have a significant negative impact on the Internet's openness, its positive effects on economic growth, and the human rights of citizens.

As recently reaffirmed by the UN Human Rights Council, governments have a duty to protect human rights when making policy decisions for the Internet. However, while the ITU has extensive expertise in telecommunications policy and regulation, we do not believe that it is the appropriate forum to develop policies and standards that could affect the exercise of human rights on the Internet.

Further, the ITU maintains a relatively closed, non-transparent decision-making process in which only governments are allowed full participation. In contrast, the Internet has flourished under an open, decentralized model of governance, where groups representing business, the technical community, and Internet users as well as governments focus on different issues in a variety of forums. In keeping with the World Summit on Information Society commitments, we believe that such open, inclusive processes are necessary to ensure that policies and technical standards for the global Internet preserve the medium's decentralized and open nature and protect the human rights of its users.

In recent months, many civil society groups have urged the ITU to reform its process so that it is fully transparent and open to participation by all relevant stakeholders. Advocates have pushed for these

changes not only because we believe that transparency and participation are the best approach, even with respect to telephony, but also because we feared that certain countries' proposals would pose grave threats to human rights on the Internet. Leaked documents detailing proposals for the WCIT have confirmed these fears. Thus, we both continue to call on member states to provide full transparency and open participation to all relevant stakeholders as they prepare for the WCIT, and urge all delegates to reject proposals that would threaten openness and human rights online.

We call on member states to:

Hold a transparent, inclusive preparatory process for the WCIT that is open to all relevant stakeholders. We ask that governments:

- Publicly release WCIT proposals and position papers, documents from regional meetings they have participated in, and documents issued by other member states.
- Hold open, public consultations on the WCIT so that delegates may fully consider the interests of citizens as well as those of business and government.
- Inform citizens of the positions member states intend to take at the WCIT on key proposals made by other governments.

Oppose expansion of the International Telecommunication Regulations to the Internet. We ask that delegates:

- Rigorously examine proposals for their impact on human rights, Internet openness, innovation, and ICT access and development.
- Oppose proposals that would diminish the rights of users or limit Internet openness.

What Can I Do?

If you're able, please consider circulating the letter among your civil society colleagues or helping to deliver the letter to relevant government officials.

- Send the letter to government officials who are participating in the ITU process. [This link](#) [14] leads to a full list of ITU member states. By clicking on a member state, you will be taken to a screen that shows various government ministries associated with the ITU. Click on any of these ministries, and you will find a page of contact information for individuals in those ministries. You might also coordinate this effort with other interested civil society groups in your country.
- Circulate the letter among your networks – the letter is open for rolling sign-on, and interested groups should contact signon@cdt.org [1].
- Post the letter to your own website--add a [PDF \[15\]](#) of the letter, or a link to this page (where sign-ons will be added as they are received.)
- Translate the letter to the language of your country/region – we will post links to translations on this page.

Sincerely,

Access

Article 19

Association of Digital Culture, Taiwan

Asociación por los Derechos Civiles, Argentina

Association for Progressive Communications

Bytes For All, Pakistan

Cambodian Center for Human Rights, Cambodia

Center for Democracy & Technology, US

Center for Technology and Society - FGV, Brasil

Committee to Protect Journalists

Consumers International
Derechos Digitales, Chile
Eduardo Bertoni, Centro de Estudios en Libertad
de Expresión y Acceso a la Información (CELE),
Universidad de Palermo, Argentina
European Digital Rights
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Pakistan
Fundación Karisma, Colombia
Human Rights in China, US
Human Rights Watch
Index on Censorship
Internet Democracy Project, India
Internet Society - Bulgaria
Kictanet, Kenya
La Quadrature du Net, France
Nawaat, Tunisia
Open Rights Group, UK
Open Technology Institute, US
Panoptikon, Poland
Public Knowledge, US
Reporters Without Borders
Thai Netizen Network

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Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication
Bitbureauet, Denmark
Electronic Frontier Foundation, US
European Privacy Association
Free as the Web
Global Voices
Indonesia Online Advocacy
Instituto Bem Estar, Brasil
Instituto Nupef, Brazil
Internet & Telecom Consumer Association of Bangladesh
ISOC - Belgrade
ISOC - Philippines
ISOC - Québec
ISOC - Sweden
Kictanet, Kenya
LIRNEasia
Movimento Mega Não
OpenMedia, Canada
Spanish Internet Users Association
Sociedade Internet no Brasil (ISOC BR)

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- [ITU](#)

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Links:

[1] <mailto:signon@cdt.org>

- [2] <https://www.cdt.org/files/pdfs/CartaWCIT.pdf>
- [3] <http://www.palermo.edu/cele/noticias/carta-sociedad-civil.html>
- [4] <https://www.cdt.org/files/pdfs/opposing-itu-over-internet-thai.pdf>
- [5] <https://thainetizen.org/2012/10/opposing-itu-authority-over-internet/>
- [6] https://www.cdt.org/files/pdfs/WCIT_Urdu.pdf
- [7] <http://content.bytesforall.pk/>
- [8] https://www.cdt.org/files/pdfs/WCIT_letter_in_Bangla.pdf
- [9] https://www.cdt.org/files/pdfs/ITU_letter_CH_translation_HRIC.pdf
- [10] <http://www.hrichina.org>
- [11] http://www.isocquebec.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=53
- [12] <http://www.isocquebec.org>
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- [14] http://www.itu.int/cgi-bin/htsh/mm/scripts/mm.list?_search=ITUstates&_languageid=1
- [15] https://www.cdt.org/files/pdfs/Civil_Society_letter_September_2012.pdf