

## Civil Society Pressures ITU to Uphold Human Rights, Increase Transparency

November 15, 2012

Digital rights advocates around the world are working to make their voices heard at the upcoming treaty conference of the International Telecommunication Union. [Leaked documents](#) [1] include proposed treaty revisions that could place limitations on online privacy, free expression, access to information, and ICT use around the world.

CDT has joined civil society partners in warning Internet users and governments of the risks that these policy changes could pose. Over 120 organizations have now signed an international “unity statement” drafted by a coalition of digital rights groups ([Access](#) [2], [CDT](#) [3], [Fight for the Future](#) [4], [Free Press](#) [5], and [OpenMedia](#) [6]) and open for sign-on by any person or civil society organization. From Bahrain to Belarus to Bolivia, groups from 55 countries have signed on, representing a truly global concern that revisions to the ITRs could threaten the exercise of human rights online. Read and sign the statement [here](#) [7].

Prior to the UN-sponsored Internet Governance Forum (IGF), CDTers Kevin Bankston and Emma Llansó joined an international group of Internet governance experts at “Best Bits,” a meeting where participants drafted a set of recommendations for specific measures the ITU should take to increase transparency and multistakeholder participation within the ITU and at the upcoming conference. Echoing the global unity statement, the group also called on ITU Member States not to adopt treaty revisions that could have a negative impact on “affordable access to the Internet or the public’s rights to privacy and freedom of expression.” NGO and individual stakeholders can endorse the Best Bits statement [here](#).

Human rights leaders have also expressed concern about the ITU conference. In recent speeches, both UNESCO Director of Freedom of Expression and Media Development Guy Berger and Dutch Human Rights Ambassador Lionel Veer have said that treaty revisions could lead to further controls and restrictions on human rights. The treaty has also been a hot topic for debate among [members of the Freedom Online Coalition](#) [8].

Not surprisingly, the ITU Secretariat has a different view. At the IGF, ITU Secretary General Hamadoun Touré tried to quell civil society fears, stating “WCIT-12 is not in any way going to be challenging Article 19, or indeed any other article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” But the revised treaty could contain expansive and ill-defined cyber-security policies – measures that governments could use to justify human rights violations in their countries. As the ITU conference approaches, all citizens who have a stake in Internet openness – human rights defenders, tech experts, academics, and online entrepreneurs – alert their governments and fellow citizens to the dangers ITU decisions could pose for human rights online.

*Several of [CDT's ITU analyses](#) [9] refer to the possible human rights consequences of the proposed revisions to the ITRs.*

- 
- [ITU](#)
- [Human Rights and Liberties](#)

**Source URL:**

<https://www.cdt.org/blogs/ellery-biddle/1511civil-society-pressures-itu-uphold-human-rights-increase-transparency>

**Links:**

[1] <http://wcciteleaks.org/>

[2] <https://www.accessnow.org>

[3] <http://cdt.org>

[4] <http://fightforthefuture.org/>

[5] <http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2012/11/07/protecting-the-open-web-net-activists-unite/>

[6] <http://openmedianow.net>

[7] <http://protectinternetfreedom.net/>

[8]

[http://www.minbuza.nl/binaries/content/assets/minbuza/en/the\\_ministry/declaration-final-v-14dec.pdf](http://www.minbuza.nl/binaries/content/assets/minbuza/en/the_ministry/declaration-final-v-14dec.pdf)

[9] <https://www.cdt.org/content/cdt-analyses-key-itu-proposals>