

Civil Society Coalition Asks ITU For a Seat at Global Telecom Conference

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With three months remaining until the World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) still has an opportunity to facilitate meaningful civil society participation in the event. This is the message that civil society groups worldwide are delivering in [a letter to Secretary General Touré](#) [2] this week. CDT strongly supports the letter and encourages other civil society organizations to sign on.

As we discussed [last week](#) [3], the WTPF brings together ITU government and sector members to discuss emerging telecommunications policy and regulatory issues from a global perspective. While the report and opinions generated at the WTPF are non-binding, they will inform future policy debates at the ITU, including the 2014 Plenipotentiary conference, where Member States will meet to potentially redefine the ITU's role in Internet governance. The WTPF gives stakeholders a prime opportunity to continue discussions on key issues of Internet governance and policy that emerged during December's [WCIT conference](#) [4].

The Secretary General is [on record](#) [5] noting civil society's important role in discussions of Internet and telecommunications policy. He has committed to providing ITU membership with recommendations for ensuring meaningful and sustainable civil society involvement in the WTPF. But time is running short, and civil society continues to face barriers to participation. The coalition letter focuses on two ways the ITU can more fully empower civil society voices in the forum.

First, we ask for the opportunity to formally contribute to discussions about the WTPF agenda over the next few months. WTPF discussion topics are largely set before the event through the Secretary General's [draft report](#) [6] and Member State opinions. Civil society must be able to submit public comments on these documents as part of the formal record. During the WCIT, the ITU offered a [public comment page](#) [7] that became a valuable space for members of civil society to offer their ideas and expertise.

Second, in the spirit of building a truly multistakeholder forum, civil society must be able to participate as equal stakeholders in the WTPF itself. While some national delegations will likely include non-governmental groups, members of civil society will not be able to voice independent perspectives in the forum. Civil society cannot fully contribute to the discussions if we are only allowed to participate as "observers".

The coalition letter has already received support from 20 civil society organizations from around the world. It is not too late for others to join the effort: Interested civil society groups can email WTPFsignon@gmail.com [8] to add their organization.

- [WTPF](#)
- [ITU](#)
- [Internet governance](#)
- [International](#)
- [global Internet freedom](#)

as you make no substantive changes and clearly give us credit. [Details](#).

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[2] <https://www.cdt.org/comments/open-letter-itu-ref-world-telecommunication-policy-forum-wtpf-13-preparation-process>

[3] <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/emma-llanso/1502wtpf-shades-wcit-next-big-internet-governance-conference>

[4] <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/emma-llanso/2012making-sense-wcit-it%E2%80%99s-complicated>

[5] <http://files.wcitleaks.org/public/S12-WCIT12-INF-0005!!MSW-E.pdf>

[6] <http://www.itu.int/en/wtpf-13/Pages/report-sg.aspx>

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