

**DRAFT INTERNET SOCIETY CONTRIBUTION**  
**ITU Council Working Group on WCIT**  
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**Introduction**

The Internet Society (ISOC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution and use of the Internet for the benefit of all people throughout the world. Since 1992, ISOC has served as a global clearinghouse for technically-sound, unbiased information about the Internet, as an educator, and as a focal-point for a broad based community of interest engaged in Internet-related initiatives around the world. It provides the organizational home for the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), Internet Architecture Board (IAB) and the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF).

As a Sector Member of the ITU Telecommunication Standards and Telecommunication Development Sectors, ISOC respectfully submits this contribution to the ITU Council Working Group preparatory meeting for the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) for its consideration and action. The Internet Society believes that WCIT is a very important Conference and we look forward to participating actively in the preparations, consistent with the process set forth by the 2010 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Resolution 171.



The global communications environment has changed significantly since the 1988 World Administrative Telegraphy and Telephone Conference that crafted the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs). Since 1988, people around the world have come to interact and communicate in fundamentally different ways as a result of those changes. In particular, the Internet has grown from being a little known research project to become a major force in the world's economic and political systems, as well as in how people live, work and play in their daily lives. In economic terms alone, a recent report prepared for the Foreign Commonwealth Office<sup>1</sup> noted that if the Internet was treated as a separate sector, it would have a greater weight in global GDP than agriculture or utilities; its contribution to GDP is greater than that of Spain or Canada, and growing faster than the GDP of Brazil.

ITU Resolution 171 (Guadalajara, 2010) notes that “advances in technology have resulted in an increased use of IP-enabled infrastructure and IP-based services and applications presenting both opportunities and challenges for Member States and Sector Members” and that it may be necessary to update the ITRs in light of these changes. While the ITU Membership is still in the midst of preparations for the WCIT, the Internet Society has noted a number of draft treaty proposals that could have impacts for the Internet. In general, the Internet Society has grave concerns about the

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<sup>1</sup> See < [http://www.mckinsey.com/Insights/MGI/Research/Technology\\_and\\_Innovation/The\\_great\\_transformer](http://www.mckinsey.com/Insights/MGI/Research/Technology_and_Innovation/The_great_transformer)>

impact of some of these proposals upon the continued capacity of the Internet to promote growth and innovation. The Internet *is* different from the traditional telecommunication systems governed by the ITRs. This difference must be understood and respected if the Internet's benefits are ever to reach all of the world's people.

The Internet is characterized by several essential properties that make it what it is today – a global, unified network of networks that is constantly evolving, that enables extraordinary innovation, and whose robustness is based on a tradition of community collaboration and consensus. Those properties are analyzed and described in detail in Annex 1 “*What really matters about the Internet,*” which is offered to provide an overall context for this contribution. As the Internet grew and flourished, a proven and successful process has evolved for developing Internet policy at the global, regional, and national level. Consistent with the design of the Internet, that process works harmoniously *with* the Internet to assure its ongoing development. This process has provided the capacity to cope with the necessary and fast paced technological evolution that has characterized the Internet to date. We do not yet know where this innovation will take us. To take one example, 10 years ago who would have imagined the emergence of Facebook or Twitter? In the case of Facebook, in 5 years it attracted over 800 million users, interacting in over 70 languages. In February 2012, Facebook stated its intention to issue \$5 billion in stock, and to achieve market value of somewhere between \$75-billion and \$100-billion. To freeze the Internet in its present state has the potential to also freeze its potential for on-going innovation and growth.

The Internet Society strives to contribute constructively to the ITU WCIT preparatory process with the hope that the results of the WCIT itself will enable the continuing growth and innovation that is the future of global communications. In this contribution, the Internet Society offers its views on specific proposals found in CWG-WCIT12/TD-43. We respectfully request ITU Member States to consider this contribution carefully, and to accept the key points for inclusion during the deliberations leading up to and at the WCIT. The Internet Society will strive to update these proposals with further contributions, consistent with the process set forth in Resolution 171 as Member States continue their work to prepare for the 2012 WCIT.

### **What are the implications of these features for the International Telecommunication Regulations?**

Rapid change, which has come to characterize the Internet, requires openness and transparency in the environment. Any revisions to the ITRs should require Member States' commitment that their decision-making processes will be open, transparent and include public consultation.

The ITRs should enshrine a commitment to the use of open international standards. Interoperability, mutual agreement and collaboration are invariable requirements for the Internet's survival. Many standards development organizations contribute to the smooth

functioning of the Internet, so it is potentially damaging to impose a preference for some standards development organizations (SDOs) over others.

The ITRs should reflect what has been learned about what works best for telecommunication regulation in the 24 years since the WATTC. In particular, its text should seek Member States commitment that their regulatory regimes be non-discriminatory, technology neutral, and encourage competition.

Finally, to continue to benefit from what we know about the Internet, the ITRs should strive to be permissive, not restrictive. The text could be improved by committing to develop “soft” regulatory practices such as “codes of practice” and “guidelines” wherever possible, and always in an open and transparent manner.

Since 1988, the technology, providers, users and regulators of telecommunication networks and services have changed in ways that would have been unimaginable for delegates to the WATTC. Yet, the International Telecommunication Regulations have served the Member States of the ITU for nearly a quarter of a century without being revised. To the extent they have been a success, it has been a result of their addressing issues at a suitably high level. When deciding the eventual outcomes of the 2012 WCIT, it is vital to understand and, to respect the basic properties that have made the Internet an engine of creativity, productivity and growth. In that spirit, the Internet Society is providing comments on the proposals under discussion in Annex 2 of this paper.

**Annex 1:** Insert final version of *“What really matters about the Internet”* here. Currently posted to <http://internetsociety.org/internet-invariants-what-really-matters> .