

17 May 2012

Secretary-General Dr. Hamadoun Touré
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
Place des Nations
1211-Geneva 20
Switzerland

Dr. Alexander Kushtuev
Chairman of the Council Working Group to Prepare for the WCIT-12
Rostelecom Representative in Switzerland
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To Secretary-General Dr. Hamadoun Touré, the Council Working Group to Prepare for the WCIT-12, and ITU Member States:

The undersigned human rights advocates, academics, freedom of expression groups, and civil society organizations write to express our desire to participate in the preparatory process undertaken for the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT). The current preparatory process lacks the transparency, openness of process, and inclusiveness of all relevant stakeholders that are imperative under commitments made at the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). We ask that the Secretary-General, the Council Working Group, and Member States work to resolve these process deficiencies in several concrete ways.

The continued success of the information society depends on the full, equal, and meaningful participation of civil society stakeholders (along side the private sector, the academic and technical community, and governments) in the management of information and communications technology, including both technical and public policy issues. Indeed, WSIS outcome documents recognize the need for a multi-stakeholder approach in technical management and policy decision-making for ICTs.¹ The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society urges international organizations “to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly from developing countries, have the opportunity to participate in policy decision-making ... and to promote and facilitate such participation.”² And such participation depends on transparency and openness of process at every stage of substantive and procedural dialogue.

Yet there has been scant participation by civil society in the Council Working Group’s preparatory process for the WCIT so far, even as media reports indicate that some Member States have proposed amending the International Telecommunication Regulations to address issues that could impact the exercise of human rights in the

¹ See, for example, Paragraphs 58, 37, and 52 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

² Paragraph 52.

digital age, including freedom of expression, access to information, and privacy rights. Under the current process, civil society participation is severely limited by restrictions on sharing of preparatory documents, high barriers for ITU membership (including cost), and lack of mechanisms for remote participation in preparatory meetings.

As an important step towards fulfilling WSIS commitments for building a more inclusive information society, the undersigned request that the Secretary-General, the Council Working Group, and Member States:

- Remove restrictions on the sharing of WCIT documents and release all preparatory materials, including the Council Working Group's final report, consolidated reports from all preparatory activity, and proposed revisions to the International Telecommunication Regulations;
- Open the preparatory process to meaningful participation by civil society in its own right and without cost at Council Working Group meetings and the WCIT itself, providing formal speaking opportunities and according civil society views an equal weight as those of other stakeholders. Facilitate remote participation to the extent possible; and
- For Member States, open public processes at the national level to solicit input on proposed amendments to the International Telecommunication Regulations from all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, and release individual proposals for public debate.

We welcome Secretary-General Touré's commitment to creating a more inclusive information society and ensuring equitable access to ICT around the world. Collectively and individually, the undersigned human rights advocates, academics, freedom of expression groups, and civil society organizations work to fulfill this vision through a range of national and global institutions and we call for the same opportunity to engage at the WCIT, consistent with WSIS commitments. We urge you to ensure the outcomes of the WCIT and its preparatory process truly represent the common interests of all who have a stake in the future of our information society.

Sincerely,

Access

Article 19

Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Eduardo Bertoni, Centro de Estudios en Libertad de Expresión y Acceso a la Información (CELE), Universidad de Palermo, Argentina

Bytes for All, Pakistan

Canadian Internet Policy & Public Interest Clinic (CIPPIC)

Center for Democracy & Technology

Center for Technology and Society (CTS/FGV), Brazil

Centre for Internet & Society (CIS), India
Consumers International
Digitale Gesellschaft e.V.
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
Electronic Frontier Foundation
European Digital Rights
Freedom House
Global Partners & Associates
Global Voices Advocacy
Human Rights in China
Human Rights Watch
Internet Democracy Project, India
Internet Governance Project (IGP)
Kictanet, Kenya
Rebecca MacKinnon
MobileActive Corp
New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute
ONG Derechos Digitales, Chile
Open Rights Group
Panoptikon Foundation, Poland
Public Knowledge
Reporters sans frontières / Reporters Without Borders
World Press Freedom Committee

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