



WITSA's Statement of Policy on Internet Governance – March 2016

Document Purpose

This document has been prepared to provide policy guidance to WITSA members and other interested stakeholders on current issues regarding governance and regulation of the Internet and use of its services. It can be used as background for the development of policy by WITSA members and for discussions with government officials and policy influencers. It represents an extension to WITSA's 2011 publication: [Policy Actions to Deliver the Promise of the Digital Age](#)

Synopsis

The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) is the leading recognised international voice of the global ICT industry, whose members from over 80 nations represent more than 90 percent of the world ICT market. WITSA thus represents critical stakeholders in discussions on Internet policy, regulation and governance.

The Internet has been served well by the current collaborative, multistakeholder Internet governance ecosystem, which provides a light touch and effective regulatory environment. Multistakeholder organizations like ICANN, the Internet Society and the IETF, along with the policies of national governments contributed to the success of the Internet, demonstrated by the striking growth of Internet usage, its economic impact and the transformations it has enabled in economic, social and cultural development.

We recognize that there is more to be done, especially in promoting the roll-out of infrastructure to support Internet services in emerging economies. Continued work to strengthen enabling policy environments, to support open standards processes, and to address Internet policy through participation in the IGF, and other relevant fora is needed.

In 2012, WITSA expressed major concern over the ITU World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) which adopted the revised and controversial International Telecommunications Regulations (ITRs), which has been viewed by many as an attempt by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and Member States to take over the Internet. Ultimately, that treaty failed as 55 Member States, including the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and several other EU countries did not sign. Despite being the representative of a major global stakeholder in Internet governance and development, WITSA has no standing to participate in ITU decision-making, debates or even witness ITU deliberations on ITR proposals.

WITSA recognizes that other genuine concerns about harmful online activity are being raised within the ITU; and that some countries are calling for the ITU to become involved in information and content regulations. WITSA understands these concerns but believes national legislation reflecting national culture, combined with enhanced industry practices; and law enforcement and industry collaboration remain the most appropriate and effective ways of addressing them. Internationally, as the basis for multi-government action and collaboration, there is the [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#). WITSA believes it would be more effective for governments to consider concerns in the context of this existing treaty than to restart such considerations within the ITU.

About WITSA

[WITSA](#) is a leading consortium of ICT industry association members from 82 countries/economies around the world.

As the leading recognized voice of the global ICT industry, representing more than 90 percent of the world ICT market, WITSA aims to drive transformation and grow the industry, given that ICT is the key driver of the global economy.

WITSA's members' stakeholders comprise researchers, developers, manufacturers, suppliers, trainers and integrators of ICT goods and services. As such, they represent a large and obviously critical constituent group for whom the Internet represents place of business, their marketplace, and development domain.

The Internet in the Global Economy

The growth of Internet use, and the impact of this use on the global economy are astonishing. A recent study by [Booz & Co](#) states that *"In 1990, there were 100 million personal computers worldwide, 10 million mobile phone users, and less than 3 million people (about the population of Berlin) on the Internet. Most of them used dial-up modems. By 2010, there were 1.4 billion PCs, 5 billion mobile phone users, and an Internet population of 2 billion, about the size of India and China combined. Nearly all were connected with broadband or a handheld browser, and they were geographically and economically dispersed; more than half a billion people today connect online from Africa."*

Currently, over 40 percent of the world's population – about 3.2 billion people – were connected to the Internet in 2015, according to a report from the International Telecommunication Union¹.

In 2011, a [McKinsey](#) study showed the Internet accounted for 21% of the GDP growth of mature economies over the previous five years; and the [World Bank](#), in its report *"Information and Communications for Development 2009"*, shows access to telecommunications and the internet boosts global economic growth, and for every 10 percentage-point increase in high-speed internet connections there is an increase in economic growth of 1.38 percentage points for developing countries. McKinsey agrees, estimating that *"a 10 per cent increase in broadband household penetration delivers a boost to a country's GDP that ranges from 0.1 to 1.4 per cent."*

The impact of the Internet has been much greater than the data suggest. Availability of a global, ubiquitous, interoperable, affordable, reliable and fast network – indeed, a network of networks, providing hitherto unsurpassed redundancy – has created new industries and transformed virtually all others. As a vehicle for communications and connectivity to information resources and services, it collapses distance and time, creating new economic, social and cultural relationships. As a tool of trade and commerce, the Internet significantly ameliorates [Freidrich Hayek's "knowledge problem"](#), demonstrated, for example, where previously subsistence communities are connected to markets, enabling information exchange, trade and economic development. Clearly, the Internet is more than communications; the presence of the Internet creates new capabilities: mobile applications; cloud and grid computing now give people located almost anywhere on the planet low cost access to processing power and applications, decentralizing research and development from the developed world and enabling innovative services that come from emerging and developing economies. .

WITSA underscores all this has occurred under current open, transparent, multi-stakeholder and stewardship arrangements covering Internet governance. While continued evolutionary improvements are being made to strengthen participation, accountability and transparency, the progress achieved to date indicates these governance arrangements are both efficient and effective. The world today relies on the

¹ http://www.itu.int/net/pressoffice/press_releases/2015/17.aspx#.Vvn5B_krK71

effective functioning of the Internet to support both commerce and social interactions. The Internet governance mechanism are thus proven, and should not be upset lightly.

Statement of Policy Principles

General Principles

As a fundamental principle, WITSA supports evidence-based public policy, as set out above. That is, policy initiatives that are informed by established objective evidence. We also support transparency and broad consultation in the development and review of public policy. Proposals that do not meet this requirement must be opposed unless there is overwhelming public interest at stake.

WITSA has consistently advocated governance arrangements that ensure continued growth of the Internet, enabling access for all, anywhere, and which maintain incentives for technological innovation and service quality improvements. WITSA's principles are:

- To keep the Internet open and accessible to all of society;
- To ensure reliable and secure access to information and communications networks and services;
- To sustain the multi stakeholder nature of Internet Governance and to strengthen and broaden involvement and leadership of industry in relevant fora;
- To promote the wide adoption of an IP addressing system capable of supporting continued Internet expansion and new applications for the foreseeable future (IPv6);
- To ensure that Critical Internet Resources are distributed efficiently across the globe, to maintain the overall effectiveness of the network to its users;
- To ensure that global public policy and governing national systems enable the use of ICT products and services throughout societies.
- To promote rule of law and accountable enabling policy environments that support investment, innovation, and economic growth

Applying these principles, WITSA's views on the principal entities and organizations exercising governance or influence over the development of the Internet are set out below. In highlighting these, WITSA explicitly acknowledges the role of many entities within the Internet ecosystem, but highlights these in particular:

The Role of ICANN

Effective technical coordination is a necessary consequence of these principles. To enable this, WITSA strongly supports private sector led, multi-stakeholder coordination of the Internet's unique indicators, as implemented by the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers ([ICANN](#)).

This model has worked successfully since 1998 to provide governance of the Internet's unique indicators, such as IP addresses, domain names, and related services. ICANN is now a trusted steward of these indicators, based on bottom up coordination and consensus based policy development. All stakeholders are welcomed to attend and contribute to ICANN. At the same time, governments have an on-going supportive and advisory role within ICANN. Today, over 114 countries and several IGOs participate in ICANN. WITSA supports the increased participation of all governments in ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee.

WITSA supports and has participated in recent efforts made by the global community to further democratize the governance of ICANN. This is being undertaken to reinforce ICANN's multistakeholder core as the organisation transitions away from US Government oversight. This, together with ensuring greater accountability of ICANN is important because the TLD system and processes effectively vest ICANN with the capacity to affect competition policy, market entry conditions, price caps and some basic forms of consumer protection policy arising through the administration of domain names and related services. In turn, these decisions may also mean the organization has leverage over rights to privacy, trademarks and freedom of expression. Hence, the importance of broad and effective oversight, and to ensure ICANN's accountability for its actions is clear.

IANA Transition and Accountability: On March 14, 2014, the U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced its intent to transition its stewardship of the IANA functions to the global multistakeholder community. In its announcement, NTIA asked ICANN to convene an inclusive, global discussion to determine a process for transitioning the stewardship of these functions to the multistakeholder community. In supporting this change, WITSA advocated that any transition of the IANA contract and functions be considered and conducted in a deliberate and cautious manner, to ensure that no incremental risk or instability is introduced into IANA's functions, including to the root zone management process, and must recognize and respect other existing agreements related to the IANA functions.

WITSA supports proposals that ICANN continue to serve as the IANA Functions Operator and perform those services indigenously and through documented relationships with the Internet Engineering Task Force and Internet Architecture Board, housed in the Internet Society, and with the five Regional Internet Registries (RIRs). WITSA welcomes the March 10, 2016 IANA Stewardship Transition Plan² and the Recommendations to Enhance ICANN Accountability that were delivered to the U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)³. This plan provides for the continued stability and security of key technical functions that are central to the smooth operation of the Internet and facilitates strengthening of ICANN's accountability to its community. The plan also meets the criteria set by the NTIA in its original announcement. It is consistent with industry's unequivocal support for multistakeholder governance of the Internet, where the policies and technical processes are developed and implemented by an array of experts in a bottom-up approach, rather than handed down by governments or multilateral organizations. Through a lengthy and global, multistakeholder process, the community has reached consensus on a proposal that will provide operational stability, reliability, and continuity for the global Internet.

ICANN and the IANA functions are part of a larger Internet Governance ecosystem, and WITSA notes the importance of credible and appropriate

² <https://www.icann.org/stewardship>

³ <https://www.icann.org/stewardship-accountability>

multistakeholder engagement in all discussions about governance of the Internet. WITSA participates in ICANN policy and other governance consultations.

The Role of the IETF and the Internet Architecture Board

Since 1979, the entity now called the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) has served the Internet community with technical guidance as to the evolution of the Internet. Since 1986, the Internet Engineering Task Force ([IETF](#)) has played a pivotal role in the design, structure and functional development of the standards for the Internet, virtually from its inception, and is strongly supported by WITSA as a model for open, accessible consensus-based standards development. The IETF has consistently engaged and combined technical excellence, problem-solving focus, and agility with transparent meritocracy to enable the deployment of robust technical solutions that are central to the Internet's massive growth over the last 33 years. The IETF is open to all who are interested in contributing to the open standards development processes, including civil society, technical experts, businesses, academics, governments. Much of its work takes place online, thus ensuring that those interested in contributing and participating can do so. The IETF and the IAB are housed in an organizational framework provided by the Internet Society that also provides a fellowship program for IETF.

WSIS+10 & The Role of the IGF

The Internet Governance Forum ([IGF](#)) was created as a result of negotiations by Heads of State at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), in 2005. The IGF is a consultative process that engages all stakeholders, including governments on an equal footing. The IGF is also supported by WITSA as a valuable multi-stakeholder mechanism that allows a variety of views to be expressed through its open, transparent and informative processes. This allows a variety of views to be expressed, and the full range of experience and expertise to be shared so that all can continue to learn more about how to use, grow and expand, and protect the key communications and information resource that the Internet has become. As such, the IGF should remain consistent with its mandate for facilitating a dialogue and not engaging in the negotiation of formal documents or outcomes.

In the last few years, a number of spontaneous national and regional IGF initiatives have also begun to emerge, increasing the importance and influence of this unique open and interactive forum.

The United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society took place on December 15-16, 2015 at the UN Headquarters in New York. Along with several other organizations and individuals, WITSA on November 17, 2015 signed a joint statement on WSIS+10, conveying three key messages to contribute to negotiations in the final phase of the World Summit on the Information Society 10-year review process (WSIS+10).

WITSA remains fully committed to the extension of the UN Internet Governance Forum's (IGF) mandate to continue its important work, and the collective work to

support and successfully implement the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- **The IGF, harnessing the benefits of the community's diversity, has become a primary vehicle for** identifying issues and solutions through a collaborative approach, on an equal footing among the convened parties and in a free and open environment. The proliferation of national and regional IGF initiatives is a sign of its relevance, and an example of an inclusive, bottom-up approach to global issues, rooted in local communities. WITSA fully supports the IGF mandate renewal. In addition, further efforts to implement recommendations for improvements to the IGF will be essential for the community's ability to continue addressing complex problems, and the challenges of the future.
- **The multistakeholder approach, cooperatively developed since the inception of the Internet is *critical*** in achieving the WSIS goals. The Internet is one of our most important tools for sustainable development, improved human rights and good governance. The community must safeguard the principles of collaboration, openness, transparency and inclusiveness that have allowed the Internet to flourish.
- **There is still much work to be done, especially in connecting the unconnected.** Access to an open and inclusive Internet is a central issue of our time, and a fundamental tool enabling freedom of speech, access to information and empowering people in the 21st century. The newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals recognize the Internet and connected information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a critical enabler for economic and social progress. The close alignment between the WSIS action lines and these goals reflects the essential role of ICT and the Internet in advancing the 2030 agenda. To achieve these goals, and to ensure a secure and trustworthy Internet, it is crucial that the future of the Internet be shaped through an open, inclusive and truly multistakeholder process.

The contribution of the private sector - as a major investor and innovator - is vital to the attainment of the 17 SDG goals. With continuing cooperation and the right policy environment, we can do much more to address remaining gaps and connect the next billion, and ultimately, everyone on the planet.

WITSA applauds the December 16, 2015 agreement at the United Nations' 10 Year Review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS +10) High-Level Meeting that endorses the global multistakeholder community's collective management of the Internet and extends the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) for another 10 years as a global platform for multistakeholder discussion of Internet public policy issues.

The Role of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

WITSA recognizes the role of the CSTD in the review and assessment of the progress made in implementing the outcomes WSIS, and welcomes the request made by the General Assembly in its 10-year review of implementation of the outcomes of WSIS for the continuation of this role taking into account the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Also, WITSA values the request made by the General Assembly to the Chair of the CSTD, through the Economic and Social Council, to establish a working group to develop recommendations on how to further implement enhanced cooperation as envisioned in the Tunis Agenda.

The Role of the ITU

WITSA supports the ITU in its traditional roles of coordinating the shared global use of the radio spectrum, promoting international cooperation in assigning satellite orbits, working to improve telecommunications infrastructure in the developing world and in establishing worldwide communications standards. However, the ITU's current state-based structure, opaque operational processes, and inability to yield effectively to calls for more openness, transparency and multi-stakeholder participation that has been central to the development of the Internet means it is ill-equipped to play a more central role in Internet governance without fundamental reform.

WITSA welcomes the new Emerge Partnership, which was launched with a joint 'Communiqué' during Day 2 of ITU Telecom World 2015 in Budapest, Hungary. Along with INTEL Corporation, Silicon Cape Initiative, UNICEF Innovation, the ITU and other stakeholders, WITSA is pleased to participate in this initiative that will focus on increasing the innovation capacity of small firms in the ICT sector, and encouraging the spread of digital social innovation (DSI) which is helping to improve lives. The partnership also seeks to enable entrepreneurial ecosystems that leverage a multitude of local, national and regional stakeholders, as well as the policy and resources needed to create and sustain private-sector and SME led innovation and economic growth.

Broadband Commission for Digital Development

WITSA supports the important work being undertaken by the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, which was set up by the ITU and UNESCO in 2010 in order to boost the importance of broadband on the international policy agenda as expanding broadband access in all around the world is imperative to accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. WITSA also applauds the Commission for its multi-stakeholder approach to promoting the roll-out of broadband through its cross-sector representation of its 51 Commissioners.

NETmundial Initiative

WITSA recognizes the NETmundial Initiative's role in providing a neutral and independent platform for all stakeholders to share issues and solutions and to strengthen Internet governance capacities in the spirit of the NETmundial Principles.

Statement of Position

WITSA supports current Internet governance arrangements. While current Internet Governance arrangements are by no means perfect, they have managed, efficiently and adaptively, to address issues that have arisen in the rapid deployment and uptake of Internet services over the last 33 years. In particular, the key governance bodies have proven to be agile, consultative and flexible, while championing transparency and multi-stakeholder engagement.

The success of the Internet is rooted in the way it was built and able to grow: an open platform for innovation and sharing of ideas. It is this openness that has defined the Internet from the outset and has enabled it to become such a strong tool for positive change through new ideas and services that make a real difference to people all around the world. WITSA supports an environment of co-existence among the entities that are developing standards, and policies affecting the Internet and online services, and communications networks.

WITSA is concerned by emerging and potentially troubling trends, driven by technological developments, government policies and commercial practices, that risk fragmenting the Internet at multiple levels. Though the Internet remains stable and generally open and secure in its foundations, if left unattended, these emerging risks could undercut the Internet's unprecedented capacity to facilitate human progress. Particular areas of concern include IPv6 transition difficulties, blocking of new gTLDs, alternate root systems, content filtering and blocking, digital protectionism, forced data localization requirements, cross-border data-flow restrictions, national Internet segmentation in the name of "cyber-sovereignty", walled gardens and geo-blocking.

WITSA urges all stakeholders to understand the implications of these trends, and to undertake a structured multistakeholder dialogue about their nature, scope and potential impact.