

WCIT Watch Day 8: Quite the RUCkus over Internet Proposals

by [Emma Llansó](#) [1]
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What looked to be a major plot twist in the story of the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) may have backfired, as a controversial set of Internet-related proposals failed to find support on the conference floor today, even among the proposals' alleged co-sponsors.

The plot thickened late Friday, when a group of countries including Russia, host country UAE, and China rocked the conference with by announcing that they had developed a new proposal (the "RUC contribution") that amounted to a complete re-write of the treaty, which governments have been working to amend, article by article, for the past year. A [leaked version](#) [2] of the text included a host of Internet-related provisions that, particularly when bundled together, would present significant threats to privacy and free expression online.

After an intense weekend of debate over the implications of this late-stage surprise, WCIT Chair Mohamed Nasser Al Ghanim announced at today's plenary session that the RUC contribution, which had yet to be officially introduced as a conference document, was off the table. In a striking statement, the delegation from Egypt, which had been listed as a sponsor on the leaked version of the RUC text, raised concern about the contribution:

"Egypt would like to reiterate that we never supported this document. We believe that the ITRs are and should continue to be a high-level treaty discussing high-level principles. The ITRs must be updated to fit our current times. We hereby confirm that Egypt's position remains as follows. Egypt has always supported and will continue to support the concepts of free Internet and has exerted all efforts to develop the Internet and its wide spread among its citizens. Content Regulation and censorship are not within the scope of the ITRs."

The Egyptian delegate also noted Egypt's position that "[t]he ITRs should not impede multi-stakeholder institutions such as ICANN or ISOC from continuing its functions effectively and should promote the continued vibrancy of the Internet and its impact on individuals and the society."

It was encouraging to see Egypt distinguish itself from the RUC group - a clear sign that the WCIT cannot be boiled down to a simple battle between East and West. The issues at stake are complex, and the diversity of viewpoints at this conference should not be underestimated.

While the RUC contribution's failure to launch is good news, many concerning proposals are still open for debate; the RUC contribution was largely a combination of existing individual and regional submissions. Deliberations over these issues continue, with delegates as well as members of civil society and the technical community weighing in. Over the weekend, ISOC warned that the Internet's future "[hangs in the balance](#) [3]," while a coalition of human rights advocates (CDT among them) [reiterated concerns](#) [4] about the lack of opportunity for independent civil society participation in the WCIT.

The Chair concluded today's meeting by announcing that a select number of delegation heads would be meeting tonight in private to hash out Document 50, the current compilation of the progress (or lack thereof) that working groups and informal ad hoc committees have made on each provision. Chair Al Ghanim cautioned that delegates wouldn't be allowed to leave until a text had been agreed - here's hoping delegates will be well-supplied with caffeine through what is sure to be a very late night.

Matthew Shears in Dubai for CDT contributed to this report

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