

21 February 2013

Open letter to ITU in ref. World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF-13) preparation process

Dear Secretary General Touré,

Recalling the Tunis Agenda (Paragraph 35, in particular), we, the undersigned members of civil society, write to urge the Secretariat of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to honor previous commitments to ensure meaningful and sustainable civil society participation in the World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF) in May 2013.

Civil society representatives in attendance at the WCIT in December welcomed the opportunity to meet with you. On that occasion, those representatives shared with you their concerns about several major challenges to participating in the WCIT, including the lack of any official standing for the public comments solicited prior to WCIT at the ITU's invitation, and the absence of mechanisms to support independent civil society participation.<sup>[1]</sup> We appreciated that the comments from the Public Views and Opinions page were compiled in an information note to members of the ITU, where you recognized the **“benefits from a greater civil society engagement at ITU”** and **committed “to take stock” and provide your membership with “some important recommendations” in line with the issues that civil society representatives raised.**

Yet, as preparations are underway for the WTPF, civil society finds itself facing familiar barriers to participation:

1) We request the opportunity to submit public comments on the Secretary General's report and draft opinions, in a manner similar to the Public Views and Opinions page for the WCIT, with the guarantee that these opinions will be entered into the formal record. There is no formal mechanism for civil society to independently make further contributions to the WTPF. Though a few of the undersigned civil society representatives participated in the Informal Experts Group, which provided commentary on earlier drafts of the report and Member opinions, civil society should have the opportunity, along with other stakeholders, to make further contributions to the final draft of the report and opinions that will be released on March 1st. The commentary, analysis, and exchange of views that occurs in the months leading up to WTPF will be essential to stakeholders' preparations for the Forum.

2) We request, as this is a Forum for “multistakeholder consensus” and debate (and not a treaty conference), that civil society be accredited or recognized in some manner so as to be able to fully participate as equals in this important multistakeholder event. There are significant barriers to entry for meaningful participation in the May 2013 WTPF meeting. We recognize that you have on a number of occasions encouraged member states to form multistakeholder delegations, but as representatives of civil society have expressed to you previously, civil society participation in national delegations cannot substitute for independent engagement.

Further, the process to apply to attend as a “public attendant” is unclear in so far as the criteria that will be applied to public attendants will be judged against, or whether public attendants will have speaking rights at the meeting. We ask that the ITU clarify the requirements for participating as a public attendant, and create a mechanism so that civil society can express their views independent of national delegations, as was done during the WSIS process. We also request that the WTPF be live-streamed to allow for civil society and members of the public who do not have the resources to travel to Geneva to follow remotely (this is absolutely essential if there is a lack of space in the venue).

The undersigned civil society organisations look forward to being able to fully participate in and contribute to the WTPF, both in the run up and the event itself. As we saw during the WCIT, there is significant interest among the Internet-using public in the policy and governance discussions that will be conducted during WTPF. Civil society has much to offer: as was mentioned during the IEG meeting, civil society has significant technical, human rights, and policy expertise that it wishes to contribute to these important Internet policy-related discussions. We appreciate this dialogue and look forward to further constructive discussion.

Sincerely,

Access, International

Africa Information & Communication Technologies Alliance (AfICTA), Regional  
ARTICLE 19, International

Association for Progressive Communications (APC), International

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

Center for Technology and Society at Fundação Getulio Vargas (CTS/FGV), Brazil

Center for Democracy & Technology, United States

Consumers International, International

Fight for the Future, United States

Fundación Karisma, Colombia

Global Partners and Associates, International

Hiperderecho, Perú

Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor (IDEC), Brazil

Instituto Nupef, Brazil

Internet Democracy Project, India

May First/People Link, International

ONG Derechos Digitales, Chile

OpenMedia International, International

Open Technology Institute, United States

Public Knowledge, United States

We encourage other civil society organizations and their members to endorse this statement. Please email [wtpfsignon@gmail.com](mailto:wtpfsignon@gmail.com) to add your support.

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[1] This [letter](#) gained the support of over 60 members of civil society globally. Civil society organizations and individuals from around the world have echoed these requests for transparency and multistakeholder participation in numerous letters and petitions over the past several months. See, e.g., the [Protect Global Internet Freedom](#) statement; the International Trade Union Confederation [petition](#); the “[Best Bits](#)” [statement](#); the post-WCIT civil society [statement](#); and the post-WCIT [letter](#) from groups in Dubai.