

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Hearing on "International Proposals to Regulate the Internet"  
May 31, 2012  
(As Prepared for Delivery)**

Nations from across the globe will meet at a U.N. forum in Dubai at the end of this year and, if we are not vigilant, just might break the Internet by subjecting it to an international regulatory regime designed for old-fashioned telephone service.

The Internet is the single largest engine of global change since the printing press. From its humble roots as a network to connect computers used for Department of Defense projects, the Internet grew to include research institutions, commercial services, and the public generally. It was once the government relinquished its grip on the Internet that it began growing exponentially, evolving into the "network of networks" that we know today.

With this expansion came the recognition that the organizational structure must evolve as well. Functions that had previously been managed by and for the U.S. government, like network addressing and domain name administration, were spun off to private sector entities that could be more responsive to the rapid changes in the Internet. Non-governmental institutions now manage the Internet's core functions with input from private- and public-sector participants. This structure, called the "multi-stakeholder model," prevents governmental or non-governmental actors from controlling the design of the network or the content it carries. The multi-stakeholder model also provides flexibility, enabling the Internet to evolve quickly. And this evolution continues at a staggering pace. Cisco estimates that by 2016 roughly 45 percent of the world's population will be Internet users; there will be over 18.9 billion network connections; and the average speed of mobile broadband will be four times faster than it is today. Weakening the multi-stakeholder model weakens the Internet, harming its ability to spread prosperity and freedom.

Yet this December at the World Conference on International Telecommunications in Dubai, the 193 member countries of the United Nations International Telecommunications Union will consider expanding the ITU's jurisdiction to the Internet, replacing the multi-stakeholder model that has served the Internet and the world so well. They will also consider imposing economic regulations on the Internet.

The ITU was originally formed in 1865 to govern international regulation of the telegraph. The ITU finally updated its charter in 1988 by adopting the International Telecommunications Regulations but, even then, the communications world was dominated by voice telephony. It was in that world the ITU developed "settlement rates" at which service providers compensated each other for exchanging phone traffic across national borders. The end result was high international call rates and a transfer of money to telephone companies run by foreign governments.

It would be inappropriate to apply an international regulatory scheme developed for the 1980s telephone networks to the vibrant and technologically diverse Internet. Such a regulatory regime ignores the reality of the architecture of the Internet. Unlike traditional telephony where the routing of circuit switched calls could easily be tracked, the networks that comprise the Internet do not adhere to political boundaries. Given the diversity of networks that make up the modern Internet, any implementation of an international regulatory regime would quickly become so complex as to become unmanageable. We also

live in a far more competitive world, making such economic regulation not only unnecessary, but counterproductive.

The Internet has prospered under the multi-stakeholder model absent the heavy-hand of government regulation. That model has enabled an Internet that creates jobs, brings a literal world of information to your fingertips, allows small businesses around the world to have a global reach, drives investment and innovation, and has even started a revolution or two. As the U.S. delegation to the WCIT takes shape, I urge the administration to continue the United States' commitment to the Internet's collaborative governance structure and to reject international efforts to bring the Internet under government control.

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