

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Fighting for Internet Freedom: Dubai and Beyond”
February 5, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

As we begin this subcommittee's first hearing in the 113th Congress, I want to welcome back our returning members and recognize our new colleagues: Leonard Lance, Cory Gardner, Mike Pompeo, Billy Long, Renee Ellmers, Bruce Braley, Peter Welch, Ben Ray Lujan, and Jim Matheson. I'd also like to recognize our returning Ranking Member Anna Eshoo and the subcommittee's new Vice Chair, Bob Latta. I look forward to working with all of you.

I also want to welcome our friends from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Chairman Ed Royce and Subcommittee Chairmen Ted Poe and Chris Smith and all the other members from Foreign Affairs Committee for joining us today on a matter of great importance: preserving a global Internet free from government control. And I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Bitange Ndemo, Permanent Secretary of Information and Communications for Kenya, for agreeing to participate by Internet stream today, which we thought was particularly fitting.

Governments' traditional hands-off approach has enabled the Internet to grow at an astonishing pace and become perhaps the most powerful engine of social and economic freedom and job creation our world has ever known. Under the current multi-stakeholder governance model, non-regulatory institutions manage and operate the Internet by developing best practices with public and private sector input.

This is not to say that the Internet operates outside the law. To be sure, illegal activity should be no less illegal simply because someone has used digital tools rather than ones of brick and mortar. But the structure of the Internet and the content and applications it carries are organized from the ground up, not handed down by governments. This allows the Internet to evolve quickly, to meet the diverse needs of users around the world, and to keep governmental or non- governmental actors from controlling the design of the network or the content it carries.

Yet at the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) in Dubai last December, billed as a routine review of an international treaty on traditional phone service, a number of nations sought to subject the Internet to international regulation. While disguised in language about broadband deployment, interconnection of networks, management of “spam,” cybersecurity, and access to telecommunications, at bottom the proposals could be used to justify economic regulation of the Internet and even government censorship.

This development was not unanticipated. Which is why I called a hearing last May in advance of the Dubai conference and why the subcommittee moved a resolution advocating adherence to the multi-stakeholder governance model. By the end of the year, both the House and Senate had unanimously passed the resolution, with only minor changes, expressing the sense of Congress that the U.S delegation should oppose international efforts to control the Internet.

Buttressed by this resolution, and facing a treaty that subjected the Internet to international regulation even though conference organizers had promised Internet issues were not on the agenda, the U.S delegation and 54 other nations refused to sign. Unfortunately, eighty-nine nations did sign the treaty and this is likely the start, not the end, of efforts to drag the Internet within the purview of international regulatory bodies. That's why this hearing will examine not only the implications of Dubai, but also draft legislation turning last year's resolution into the law of the land, officially making it the policy of the United States to promote a global Internet free from government control.

How can we use this legislation to further strengthen our nation's resolve? What impact will the Dubai treaty have, both on citizens of signatory nations and in countries that stood firm? What can we do to

strengthen the multi-stakeholder governance model and its support across the globe? These are some of the questions we will explore today.

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