

ITU Video Script

On December 3rd, the world's governments will meet to update a key treaty of a UN agency called the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Some governments are proposing to extend ITU authority to Internet governance in ways that could threaten Internet openness and innovation, increase access costs, and erode human rights online.

Access and Fight for the Future partnered up to produce a video and petition to mobilize users to open up the process and demand that their governments reject dangerous proposals. The video and petition can be found at www.WhatIsTheITU.org. The video script is provided below to facilitate translation.

The Internet gives us the freedom to talk with friends, make art, start a business, or speak out against our governments -- all on an unprecedented scale.

This isn't a coincidence. The Internet's very design came out of open, inclusive discussions by a global community of scientists and engineers, so there was no pressure from above to lock it down. -

But now, a government-controlled international body is making a play to become the new place where the Internet's future gets decided.

It's called the "International Telecommunication Union" or ITU, and in December the world's governments will meet to decide whether to expand its mandate to making important decisions about the net. The ITU could pose a risk to freedom of expression online everywhere. Here's why.

First, the basics: Nobody owns the Internet. It's a collection of independent networks around the world -- anyone can build one!

The common standards on which the internet was built grew out of open, online discussions, not on the priorities of a particular government or company.

But now, let's meet the ITU. First, the ITU is old. Really old. Not CDs old. Not rotary phone old. Telegraph old, as in morse code. When founded in 1865 it was called "The International Telegraph Union".

Unlike the Internet, the ITU was not built on open discussions among scientists and engineers. That would have been difficult by telegraph.

Instead, only governments have a vote at the ITU. And these votes take place behind closed doors.

If governments succeed in giving the ITU more power to make decisions about the internet, we get an old-school, top-down, government-centric organization, replacing the open, bottom-up governance that made the Internet so world-changing.

And that's just the beginning of our problems.

The ITU is not transparent. The Internet was built from public-proposals on open email lists. But the ITU's draft proposals aren't public. And its "one country, one vote" model gives governments all the power. They get to make decisions about our internet without us even knowing what they're discussing - and then tell us once the decision is made.

What kinds of decisions will be considered at the ITU meeting this December? [show WCIT]
Well, here are some actual proposals that have leaked.

- *Cutting off internet access for a number of broadly defined reasons, violating international human rights norms.
- *Giving governments more power to monitor internet traffic and impose regulations on how traffic is sent.
- *Defining spam so broadly that could justify blocking anything from photos of cute cats to human rights campaigns.
- *New rules to charge online content providers to reach users, which could mean less content going to the developing world and blocking sites that don't pay up.

But the really scary part? The countries pushing hardest for ITU control are the same countries that aggressively censor the Internet.

- * In Russia, making a Youtube video against the government can get you two years in jail.
- * In China you can't even get to most social media websites, except the ones controlled by the government and monitored by their censors and informants.
- * Iran is trying to build its own national internet and email network to keep the entire population under its control.

Now the ITU also does good work -- they help the developing world establish telecommunication networks and expand high speed broadband connections -- and existing internet governance isn't perfect. The US has outsized influence and authority when it comes to this.

But we need to fix these problems in a way that preserves the openness, pragmatism, and bottom-up governance that made the Internet so great.

This December, our governments meet [show WCIT] to make their final decisions about the internet's future. It's up to us Internet users, in every country of the world, to tell them to stand for the open internet.

If everyone who sees this video speaks out and contacts their government, we've got a chance of winning. Help us share this video and visit this site to speak out and contact your government right now.

Let's use the internet's global reach to save it.

Tell your leaders to oppose handing over key decisions about the internet to the ITU.