

United States of America

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

Stakeholder Consultation

In advance of the 1-2 October 2015 meeting of the Council Working Group on International Internet-Related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet), the ITU will host open online and physical consultations to which all interested stakeholders can make contributions on the topic of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs). These open consultations are a result of consensus achieved at the 2014 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference.

Although the United States favors a fully multistakeholder approach to all Internet-focused discussions, these consultations will ensure that our discussions are informed by the subject matter experts and practitioners that continue to play the largest role in operating and building information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure. Incorporating their views will enrich our discussion.

Member States should feel encouraged by the diversity of responses from the global community. The open online consultation has received contributions from all regions of the world, and from all stakeholder groups including private industry, civil society, the technical community, and governments themselves. These contributions represent perspectives well beyond what governments alone could provide. They will serve as the basis of meaningful and productive conversations at the open consultation and the meeting of the CWG-Internet.

The United States appreciates the efforts of all contributing parties and looks forward to participating in these dialogues. Looking ahead, the CWG-Internet should explore ways to proactively encourage and foster broader and more robust participation by non-governmental stakeholders in these consultations.

Lessons Learned

The online consultation highlighted key lessons regarding IXPs and the cooperation required to establish them, the policy environments they need to flourish, the benefits they engender, and the resources available to parties who wish to deploy one in their country or region.

Cooperation among and between governments, industry, and the technical community has been fundamental to the development of policy environments that have led to the proliferation of IXPs worldwide. This approach has succeeded without any single body managing IXP design, development, or standardization, but via a bottom-up process led by the network (and IXP) operators who participate in the IXP. Contributors emphasized the importance of this multistakeholder process in developing a policy environment conducive to the creation and operation of IXPs. This notion was

previously captured by ITU Member States in Opinion 1 of the 2013 ITU World Telecommunication Policy Forum, which noted “that effective IXPs often emerge where Member States have adopted multistakeholder policy processes, as IXPs rely on cooperation among relevant stakeholders”.

Further, contributors importantly noted that while IXPs are an important part of the Internet ecosystem they should not be viewed as a “magic solution” for improving Internet access in a country or region. Supportive public policies must first be put into place. Such policies include measures to lower barriers to entry, promote competition among service providers, induce and protect private investment, and facilitate free flows of information between users and networks and across borders.

Contributions from stakeholders illustrate that IXPs can, inter alia: reduce costs from traffic exchange between networks, improve the quality of Internet services and drive demand by reducing delay and improving end-user experience, and create favorable environments for local Internet infrastructure and service development.

It is also evident from the contributions that parties interested in establishing IXPs have a wide variety of technical organizations, industry partners, and civil society organizations (several of whom contributed to this consultation) from which they can seek advice, training, and capacity building. These organizations are active in all regions of the world and understand the needs of local Internet communities and their economic and policy environments. Support of these organizations is critical for continuing the build out of IXPs, particularly in the developing world.

Moving Forward:

As was decided at the fifth meeting of the CWG-Internet in February 2015, the online and physical open consultations, and further discussion at the CWG meeting itself, will “elaborate and exemplify on the challenges faced and identify widely accepted best practices for the design, installation and operation of IXPs”. We expect that these discussions will also shed light on how governments, in particular, through multistakeholder processes, can effectively enable the local environment to support the operator-driven creation and operation of IXPs. The CWG-Internet, bearing in mind its terms of reference, should seek to make this information publicly available.

The United States requests that the Chairman of the CWG-Internet include as an appendix to his final report the complete text of all contributions to the online consultation, the consolidated report of consultation responses drafted by the Secretariat (per instructions in Resolution 1344), and as available, the transcript of captioning recorded during the consultations. This request is made without bias to existing instructions to the Secretary General on disseminating the report in Resolution 102 (Rev. Busan 2014) and reporting requirements to Council found in item (3) of the CWG-Internet’s Terms of Reference. The United States also requests that the Secretariat continue to host the publicly accessible webpage of the CWG-Internet website dedicated to this topic.

The United States also encourages all members of the CWG-Internet to participate in and contribute to the Internet Governance Forum’s Best Practice Forum on creating an Enabling Environment for Establishment of IXPs.

The information submitted to the open consultation should prove a valuable resource. The compilation may especially be of interest to ITU-D Study Group 1 and ITU-T Study Group 3, which have ongoing work in this area.

Looking ahead, the United States urges the ITU and the Chair of the CWG-Internet to ensure a full day is allocated for the open consultation to allow as fulsome a discussion as possible and to take advantage of the time of non-governmental stakeholders who are traveling to Geneva for only one day.

Next Topic:

Taking into account Annex 1 of Council Resolution 1305, the United States proposes that the next meeting of the CWG-Internet and the corresponding online and physical open consultations consider the topic of connectivity.

Access to the Internet is integral to economic growth and vibrancy, and an important force for civic participation, transparency and accountability around the world. Although significant and ongoing progress has been made with respect to connecting the world's people to the Internet, additional efforts on the part of all stakeholders are needed to connect the unconnected. In light of the UN Summit on Post-2015 Development Agenda and the impending adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, stakeholders are invited to elaborate and exemplify on the challenges and opportunities for improving international Internet connectivity.
