The Fifth ITU World Telecommunication Policy Forum

Geneva, 13-16 May 2013

Background

What is the World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF)?

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is a Geneva-based specialized agency of the United Nations that has been operating since 1865. Its mandate has evolved since the days of telegraph, and it now has responsibility for a range of telecommunication standards, treaty-based authority over global use of the radiofrequency spectrum, and a program to promote expansion and use of telecommunications in the developing world. It is an inter-governmental agency, with 191 member states. It also has more than 700 non-governmental sector and associate members[1] who may participate in a limited way. ISOC is a member of two sectors: the Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) and the Development Sector (ITU-D). The ITU has a wide-ranging work program in these sectors, and is governed by the outcomes of each sector's World Conferences, and the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference that sets overall strategy and renews the treaty instrument governing the organization overall. These are usually held every four years in a rotating pattern. Sector members can participate in study groups and sector conferences, but only Member States may speak or vote at the Plenipotentiary Conference.

The World Telecommunication Policy Forum (WTPF) was established by the 1994 Plenipotentiary Conference as a new type of meeting to provide a less formal venue for discussion than these treaty conferences. It does not meet regularly, and its outcomes are non-binding. Unlike other global ITU meetings, the WTPF is jointly organized by ITU Member States and Sector Members, and permits government and non-government members an opportunity to freely discuss and exchange views and information on new and emerging policy and regulatory matters arising from the changing telecommunication environment. It has met four times in 1996 on Global Mobile Personal Communications by Satellite (GMPCS), in 1998on Trade in Telecommunication Services, in 2001 on Internet Protocol (IP) Telephony and in 2009 on Confronting the Crisis.

In general, the WTPF has been a useful way of introducing countries to these new issues and helping them to understand what policies and regulatory approaches can help them to benefit from global developments. Although the WTPF cannot produce prescriptive regulatory

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[1] Sector members can participate in the work of the sector of which they are members (Telecom Standards, Radiocommunication or Development sectors). They are also entitled to receive restricted information, reports, etc. Associate members can only participate in the particular study group(s) of which they are members. This category was introduced as a lower cost option for private sector firms from developing countries. More information is available from http://www.itu.int/members/index.html> particularly the left hand navigation bar.

outcomes or outputs with binding force, it prepares reports and, "where appropriate," opinions for subsequent consideration domestically by member states, and at relevant ITU meetings. By Decision 562, the 2011 Council decided that the Policy Forum would discuss all the issues raised in Resolution 101 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010), Resolution 102 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010), and Resolution 133 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010). In consequence, the 5th WTPF will look at **"International Internet-related public policy matters"** but the specific theme of the conference and the issues addressed by the WTPF have not been finalized and will depend on the work of the Informal Group of Experts who will convene to draft the initial documents for the conference to consider.

PREPARATIONS FOR WTPF 2013

The Secretary-General, who is the elected head of the ITU, was instructed by the Plenipotentiary to organize the WTPF. To assist him, he invited an "Informal Expert Group" (IEG) to help prepare the final report of the Conference. ISOC has applied to be a member of the IEG and stands ready to actively participate in this informal group. ITU staff prepares a series of drafts of the report, each subject to a round of comments from the IEG. The drafts are posted to the ITU web site for review by Member States and Associate Members.

The final Secretary General's report should be published in March 2013. A more detailed agenda for the Forum is also under preparation. In addition, a one-day Information Session will be organized the day before the WTPF, which will be an opportunity for expert speakers to educate attendees about the subject matter of the Forum. The final outcome of the Forum will be the Chair's report, based on the IEG's opinions and the discussions occurred during the Forum. One item of note is that the 2013 WTPF will be held in conjunction with the WSIS meeting so that attendees will be able to participate in both events and as such there will be a greater concentration of "internet" expertise participating.

Schedule

9 March 2012	Deadline for membership to submit materials considered relevant for the first draft of the Secretary-General's Report.
13 April 2012	Online posting and circulation to membership of the first draft of the Secretary-General's report (drawn up on the basis of available material).
15 May 2012	Deadline for receipt of membership comments on the first draft and additional materials for the second draft. Deadline for nominations for a balanced group of experts, to advise the Secretary-General on the further elaboration of the report and of draft opinions associated with it.
5 June 2012	First meeting of the group of experts. Preliminary second draft of the Secretary-General's report.

31 July 2012	Online posting and circulation of second draft (incorporating comments and broad outlines for possible draft opinions).
30 September 2012	Deadline for receipt of comments on second draft.
Jan-Feb 2013	Second meeting of the group of experts.
1 March 2013	Finalizing the Report of the Secretary-General, and deadline for its publication.
13 May 2013	Proposed date for Strategic Dialogue
Collocated with WSIS Forum 2013 (May 13-17, 2013)	Proposed dates for 5th WTPF on Internet-related public policy issues

Useful links

International Telecommunication Union:
http://www.itu.int/net/home/index.aspx

World Telecommunication Policy Forum:
http://www.itu.int/en/wtpf-13/Pages/default.aspx

First draft report by the Secretary General of ITU:
http://www.itu.int/en/wtpf-13/Pages/report-sg.aspx