Resolution on the forthcoming World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12) of the International Telecommunication Union, and the possible expansion of the scope of international telecommunication regulations

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the forthcoming World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12) of the International Telecommunication Union, and the possible expansion of the scope of international telecommunication regulations, in response the Commission Communication on the subject. The resolution was tabled by the EPPE, S&D, ALDE, and Greens/EFA groups. Members recall that the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs), to which 27 Member States of the European Union are signatories, were adopted by the World Administrative Telegraphy and Telephone Conference in Melbourne in 1988 and have not been revised since. This resolution responds to the call by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for a meeting in Dubai from 3 to 14 December 2012, named the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT), to agree to a new text for these ITRs.

Parliament begins by stating that **it does not believe that the ITU, or indeed any other single, centralised international institution, is the appropriate body to assert regulatory authority over either internet governance or internet traffic flows**. It regrets the lack of transparency and inclusiveness surrounding the negotiations for WCIT 12, given that the outcomes of this meeting could substantially affect the public interest.

Members call on the Council and the Commission to ensure that any changes to the International Telecommunication Regulations are **compatible with the EU *acquis*** and further the Union's objective of advancing the internet as a truly public place, where human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly freedom of expression and assembly, are respected and the observance of free market principles, net neutrality and entrepreneurship are ensured. Internet governance and related regulatory issues should continue to be defined at a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder level.

Parliament wants the Commission to coordinate the negotiation of the revision of the ITRs on behalf of the EU, on the basis of inclusively gathered input from multiple stakeholders, through a strategy that primarily aims at ensuring and preserving the openness of the internet, and at protecting the rights and freedoms of internet users online.

Members are concerned that **some of the ITR reform proposals would negatively impact the internet**, its architecture, operations, content and security, business relations and governance, as well as the free flow of information online, and draw attention to the consequences of some of the proposals presented:

- the ITU itself could become the ruling power over aspects of the internet, which could end the present bottom-up, multi-stakeholder model. If adopted, these proposals could seriously affect the development of, and access to, online services for end users, as well as the digital economy as a whole;

- the establishment of new profit mechanisms could seriously threaten the open and competitive nature of the internet, driving up prices, hampering innovation and limiting access. Parliament recalls that the internet should remain free and open.

Parliament **opposes any proposals that would extend the scope** to areas such as the internet, including domain name space, IP address allocation, the routing of internet-based traffic and content-related issues. Accordingly, it calls on Member States to prevent any changes to the International Telecommunication Regulations which would be **harmful to the openness of the internet**, net neutrality, the end-to-end principle, universal service obligations, and the participatory governance entrusted to multiple actors such as governments, supranational institutions, non-governmental organisations, large and small businesses, the technological community and internet users and consumers at large. Members state that ITU recommendations must be non-binding documents that promote best practices.