



# Submission of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA)

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## Abstract

WITSA represents the global ICT industry sector. In 2014, the ICT sector is the Internet, and the Internet is the ICT sector. The Internet also supports substantial and growing trade in information goods and services as well as providing the basis for commerce and communications in the twenty first century. The Internet is now central to the global economy. This must be acknowledged in all NETmundial discussions.

Because of the central, global economic role of the Internet and its interdependence with the ICT sector, ensuring and maintaining the functionality, security and stability of the Internet, and continuing to enable its interoperability and standardization are critical and mandatory to any discussions about change. These should be the guiding principles of Internet governance, and centrally underline any roadmap for the further development of the Internet governance ecosystem.

WITSA shares concerns about unauthorized access to data. National action and cross-jurisdictional cooperation may be necessary to protect privacy, build transparent legal frameworks covering access to data, and strengthen the rule of law to investigate and enforce penalties for violations, maintaining trust and confidence. Care must be exercised to ensure these do not undermine fundamental Internet capabilities, which equally affect trust and confidence.

## About WITSA

Founded in 1978, the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) is a leading consortium of ICT industry association members from over 80 countries/economies around the world. (<http://ow.ly/tUV8n>) WITSA's members represent more than 90 per cent of the world ICT market. WITSA and its members are active participants in key Internet governance forums including the ICANN, WSIS and the IGF. ICT sector representatives play key roles in all key technical taskforces.

WITSA strongly supports an open, accessible and neutral Internet governed via effective, transparent multistakeholder oversight. (<http://ow.ly/u2U9K>) National/regional data localization and Internet regulation proposals will impede economic growth, trade and development (<http://ow.ly/tV01N>). Unauthorized access to data is a serious concern: WITSA urges protection of privacy and transparent legal frameworks to regulate access to data, thus maintaining trust and confidence. (<http://ow.ly/tUZQv>)

## **Stakeholder Context**

The Internet is a product of information and communications technology and services. Each step of its development and growth – each innovation, new capability, and enhancement of function, speed and capability – is intrinsically linked to information technologies and services developed, and deployed globally. The ICT industry sector is a key stakeholder in the development and governance of the Internet, which in turn depends on the continuous advances generated by the ICT sector; the relationship is thus a “virtuous circle”, and must remain so if the functional effectiveness and efficiency of the Internet are to continue to evolve.

This “virtuous circle” statement positions WITSA’s NETmundial contribution: governance arrangements for the Internet are *de facto* governance arrangements for many activities in the ICT sector; in considering any changes in governance arrangements, great care must be exercised to ensure strong incentives remain to ensure the ICT sector continues to innovate and flourish, in turn driving the digitization of economic, social and cultural activity to the benefit of all people. Internet governance arrangements directly affect trade in information goods and services; in the twenty first century, this trade affects significantly the economies of all nations. Therefore, enhancement of governance arrangements demands a comprehensive understanding of their extensive direct and indirect impact.

## **Internet Governance Principles**

WITSA supports the *Principles for the Governance and Use of the Internet*, set out by CGI.br (<http://ow.ly/uc7GL>). However, given the context above, WITSA ranks *Functionality, security and stability*, and *Standardization and interoperability* as primary, foundation Principles to be considered within an open, transparent Multistakeholder Governance framework. These are central to the ubiquitous nature of the Internet, its accessibility, and provide the basis for Internet innovation, growth and development. It is WITSA’s submission that the other Principles set out by CGI.br rely on these critical, foundation principles.

WITSA therefore urges great caution in disturbing or changing governance arrangements, to avoid any actions that weaken functionality, security and stability, or reduce standardization and interoperability.

## **Roadmap for the Further Evolution of the Internet Governance Ecosystem**

WITSA acknowledges that the evolution and growth of the Internet itself requires the evolution of Internet governance. This must not undermine the foundation Principles above. Nor should there be confusion of cause, effect, and remedy: there is widespread concern regarding unauthorized access to data, which many participants may see as the underlying rationale for the NETmundial meeting; whereas these events actually reflect weaknesses and failures of the rule of law within national jurisdictions. WITSA urges national governments to address these, and work together on the cross-jurisdictional issues. (<http://ow.ly/tUZQv>)

WITSA supports the Multistakeholder model as the best mechanism to enable issues to be identified, and to build consensus solutions. There is merit in suggestions to decentralize some of these activities in order to enhance participation, cooperation and build capacity across all nations.

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Similarly, there is merit in the idea of globalizing Internet resources including IANA, as ICANN has recently proposed. This must be considered within Multistakeholder frameworks, with transparent processes and open discussion promoted equally within all ICANN constituencies. ICANN must remain accountable to all its stakeholders during this process, which should not be politicized; WITSA urges all stakeholders including governments to exercise restraint, and to facilitate balanced discussions that lead to consensus.

WITSA's comments supporting decentralization and globalization above do not represent any support for recent proposals suggesting unilateral or regional data localization. It is WITSA's view such proposals are fundamentally inappropriate remedies to the problem of unauthorized data access. If implemented, these would undermine the very basis for the Internet, and impose significant global economic and social costs and effects.

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