

## PrepCom2

### Speech on Internet Governance Houlin Zhao

**[Thursday, 24 February 2005 – 12:15]**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Houlin Zhao. I am the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, which is the Secretariat for the ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Sector. It is my pleasure to make some comments on behalf of the ITU with regard to Internet governance.

As a first comment, the ITU welcomes the efforts of the WSIS Preparatory Committee process for its significant work, particularly in addressing the very important and complex topic of Internet governance. We appreciate the efforts of the Working Group on Internet Governance as well as the efforts of the WGIG Chairman and Secretariat. The ITU would like to also note that we have been pleased to contribute to the WGIG's work and look forward to continuing to do so in the future.

Internet Protocol or IP-based networks and services (popularly known as "the Internet") have today become a large-scale publicly available and commercial infrastructure. ITU would agree with the written contribution to WGIG made last week by the government of Norway in which it notes that the Internet has now become an integrated and vital part of the basic infrastructure in most nations and also part of a new global public infrastructure. In other words, the Internet can no longer be considered an academic trial or an educational network: it is the backbone of our new globalized economy and a basic platform for many public and government services. It goes without saying that for such an important platform, we need and require multilateral and transparent cooperation.

There is a widespread myth that the ITU had little to do with the Internet's success. This couldn't be further from the truth. Work done at the ITU through its membership has been vital and essential to the successful development of the Internet and its growth as a global phenomenon. It is many of our technical standards that have created the underlying platform for the Internet. And we haven't rested on our laurels: new ITU standards continue to enhance the average Internet users' experience. For example, new ITU broadband standards released over the last five years have brought high speed Internet access to more than 100 million new users. I could cite numerous other ITU Internet-related standards but our contribution to the "Birth of Broadband" is one that we are particularly proud of.

And we will not stop there. We are also proud that ITU has been widely called upon by industry, both service providers and equipment manufacturers, to develop the new standards that will form the basis of the ongoing convergence of the Internet with telephone, mobile and broadcast networks, otherwise known as Next Generation Networks or NGN.

Aside from this technical work, ITU has also played an increasing policy role. This began during the 1980's with our special User and Legal Symposia and these activities have continued to grow throughout the 1990's and in this decade. In the recent past, there have been ITU events on topics ranging from IP telephony to cybersecurity to internationalized and country code domain names domains to spam and Internet governance. Another example particularly worth citing is the ITU's Global Symposium for Regulators, organized by our development sector, which has the goal of fostering the international exchange of government perspectives on policy and regulatory frameworks. For example, at the recent fifth annual Global Symposium for Regulators, held in December 2004 in Geneva, a report was issued on "Best Practice Guidelines for the Promotion of Low-Cost Broadband and Internet Connectivity". This is yet another example of how we are not

only engaging the international community on important technical issues but also increasingly regulatory and policy considerations.

During the debates on Internet governance, many issues and questions have been raised that touch upon oversight of Internet resources, national sovereignty, cybersecurity, Internet stability, privacy, the nature of international coordination, intellectual property rights (IPR), spam, who has responsibility for what, etc. These debates reflect a changed reality where Internet governance cannot be considered to be limited to technical issues. Complicating this is the fact that all policy makers and regulators - both new and old – from both developed and developing countries – are struggling to address the new reality resulting from the convergence of the information and communication (ICT) sectors. There is a growing realization that national communications networks and infrastructure, though the use of ICTs, are much more than a mere platform for telephony – it is now the fundamental underpinning layer of networked economies and information societies.

There was unanimous agreement in WSIS, as per the two output documents from the first phase, that governments should play an appropriate role in Internet governance, at international and national levels. ITU believes that, although some governments have tried to strengthen their engagement in Internet governance, many are still unsatisfied with the status quo and there is an emerging consensus that there is a need to improve the current Internet international coordination arrangements. In this regard, considering that the Internet has now become critical to our national security and economic well-being, a broader range of policy issues must be taken into consideration in addition to technical issues.

As a specialized agency of the UN dealing with telecommunications and therefore more broadly, ICT issues, ITU is extremely well positioned and willing to work with others to consider the many technical and policy aspects of Internet governance issues. We are very aware of the need to continuously adapt to changing circumstances – something we have had to do numerous times since the ITU's founding in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union. The issue is more complex than a debate over which entity should have prime responsibility for the Internet. We must look beyond "binary solutions" and find a new "third way" of collaboration where governments cooperate on the broad national and international policy frameworks for Internet governance yet allow the private sector to continue its activities where it excels in technical, business or operational expertise.

To conclude, the ITU wishes success to the WGIG and WSIS in its consideration of Internet governance issues and we can assure you that we stand ready to contribute effectively wherever we can.

Thank you for your kind attention.