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| **Open consultation of the Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues Virtual meeting, 20 September 2021** |  |
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VIRTUAL MEETING-PHYSICAL OPEN CONSULTATION OF THE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES (CWG-INTERNET)

**Brief Summary of the Online Open Consultation and Virtual Meeting - Physical Open Consultation
(February 2021 – September 2021)**

**1. Introduction**

The 2016 Council instructed the CWG-Internet to produce a brief summary of the Open Online Consultation and Physical Open Consultation Meetings:

a) ITU secretariat should prepare a brief draft summary of the written contributions to the online open consultation and the discussions during the physical open consultation meeting,

b) Stakeholders present at the physical open consultation meeting should agree on the brief summary,

c) Submit brief summary, without edits, to the next CWG-Internet for inclusion as an Annex to the Chairman’s report.

d) CWG-Internet should consider and discuss the open consultation brief summary.

**2.** **Online Open Consultation on "*The role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics*"**

**2.1** An Online Open Consultation was conducted from February 2021 to September 2021 on the topic of "*The role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics*". During this consultation, 17 responses were received from a variety of stakeholders and regions (5 Government, 1 Private Sector entity, 10 Civil Society representatives, and 1 International Organization). The responses provided rich inputs, sharing different views. The meeting appreciated and thanked all stakeholders who responded to the online consultations.

**2.2** A compilation of the summaries received directly from the individual online submitters, including relevant comments made by participants during the meeting, can be found in the Annex of this document, as well as in the published compilation document [OPCWGINT9/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-OPCWGINT9-C-0002/en).

**3. Virtual Meeting - Open Consultation on “*The role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics*"**

**3.1** The ninth Virtual Meeting - Physical Open Consultation, on the topic of “The role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics”, took place on 20 September 2021 with over 150 registered participants and more than 75 in attendance. As the Chair of CWG-Internet, H.E. Majed AlMazyed, was unable to join this meeting, the Vice-Chair, Mr. Cesar Martinez, chaired this Virtual Meeting – Physical Open Consultation.

**3.2** The Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. She thanked them for their continued support of the work of the CWG-Internet and highlighted the timeliness and relevance of the topic of this consultation.

**3.3** The Chair of the meeting, Mr. Cesar Martinez, presented the draft Agenda of the meeting. He also informed the participants that the CWG-Internet online consultation repository has been updated to reflect all the consultations carried out by the CWG-Internet since 2013 and it has also been integrated with the WSIS Stocktaking database.

**3.4** Compilation document [OPCWGINT9/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-OPCWGINT9-C-0002/en) was then presented to the meeting and various stakeholders took the floor to present their submitted views.

**4. Summary of Discussions during the Virtual Meeting - Physical Open Consultation**

**4.1** Stakeholders present at the meeting agreed on the brief summary of the ninth Virtual Meeting - Physical Open Consultation of CWG-Internet, as included below:

**4.2** Participants highlighted the vital role that the Internet has played during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in keeping society and economy connected and functioning, including across sectors as critical as health and education. There has been a sharp increase in the use of the Internet with greater reliance than ever before on digital connectivity for vital services, economic activity, and information. However, despite this progress, the pandemic has also exposed the impact of unequal Internet access and the gaps that persist due to factors such as affordability, connectivity, trust and skills.

**4.3** It is crucial that these barriers to Internet access be removed in order to connect the unconnected and allow everyone everywhere to benefit from the digital ecosystem, particularly when needed to access critical services during pandemics and other crises. This includes bridging the digital divide, particularly as it relates to marginalized populations such as women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous communities, and communities in rural, remote, un-served and under-served areas, as well as between developed and developing countries.

**4.4** Promoting a rights based multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance, developing public policies in an open manner and fostering an enabling environment that ensure citizens can engage safely and confidently with online services, building capacity among governments and populations to use and deploy digital solutions, and investing in infrastructure and innovation are some of the steps suggested by participants. Expanding internet accessibility, affordability, security and user trust, digital skills and capacity development, investment, and infrastructure will therefore be key to ensure that ICT plays a role in shaping a sustainable recovery from the pandemic and future crisis, and for advancing sustainable development.

**4.5** Some of the other steps suggested by stakeholders in this regard are as follows:

a. All stakeholders should continue working together to mitigate the risks of Internet shutdowns and to combat disinformation campaigns

b. Fostering community networks to reduce digital divides while taking into consideration national and international policies in this regard, including by gathering representative and gender-disaggregated data on the gender digital divide

c. Facilitating the adoption of international standards to ensure interoperability and resilience of networks

d. International cooperation and sharing of best practices, including examples of how stakeholders can mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics such as facilitating better collaboration with the private sector, SMEs and civil society were highlighted

e. All stakeholders should continue working together to mitigate the impacts of ICT on the environment

**4.6** The meeting invited CWG-Internet to have a substantive discussion on the outputs of the open consultation. Some stakeholders also invited CWG-Internet to consider opening its participation to non-state actors.

**5. Closing**

**5.1** In closing, the Chair of the meeting thanked all stakeholders who sent submissions and participated in the open consultation discussions, and encouraged the CWG-Internet to consider the received responses and the fruitful discussions of this meeting. He also expressed his thanks to the Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau present for her presence and support and the Secretariat for their efficient assistance during the meeting.

**5.2** The participants thanked the Chairman and Secretariat for their effective organisation and management of the online consultation and of the physical meeting.

***Annex: 1***

ANNEX

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|  | Date | Submitter(Contributions hyperlinked) | Response |
|  | March 8, 2021 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=7)  | It is clear that, in the face of restrictions on movement and physical meetings imposed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, ICTs in general, and the Internet in particular, have greatly facilitated the continuation of work in many areas, allowed teaching and learning to continue – albeit with shortcomings, and allowed people to communicate personally even when they could not meet physically. It is also clear that improvements are needed in the use of ICTs in general, and the Internet in particular. Many countries have been hampered in their efforts to combat the pandemic by the use of social media to propagate incorrect information and conspiracy theories (so-called “fake news”). In our view, censorship is not a solution, the solution involves better, and greater, use by governments of modern media, which includes the Internet. Further, the pandemic has highlighted the value of data and the importance of ensuring and equitable distribution of the value-added of data, including in particular medical data. We offer the following proposals for ITU’s role in improving the role of ICTs in case of possible future pandemics: (a) IETF, ISOC, ITU, UNCITRAL, and UNCTAD should be mandated to study the issue of externalities arising from lack of security, which has technical, economic, and legal aspects. In particular, UNCITRAL should be mandated to develop a model law on the matter. (b) Countries should agree to negotiate new treaty provisions as suggested below. (c) ITU should collaborate with ILO and IBE (International Bureau of Education) to develop guidelines on teleworking and remote learning; (d) ITU-T should be mandated to develop a standard videoconferencing user interface; (e) ITU should collaborate with WHO and other relevant agencies to develop guidelines on the appropriate balancing of data privacy and use of ICTs – including in particular the Internet – for tracking, tracing, and other pandemic-reduction measures; (f) ITU should be mandated to discuss which aspects of the Internet should be operated as public infrastructures; (g) Our contribution to 2017 Open Consultation of CWG-Internet suggests actions by ITU to address the fact that the Internet has changed from a largely democratic network of autonomous nodes to a distributed feudal structure, which centralises flows of data into a few hands, thus resulting in digital colonialism; (h) ITU should consider adopting guidelines on the designation of important ICT platforms as public utilities, on platform interoperability, and on limitations to mass surveillance (whether government or private). (i) ITU and WHO should be mandated, in collaboration with other relevant agencies, to develop model strategies to orient data and AI systems to be pandemics-ready, and to develop model national policies regarding the use of data and AI to deal with pandemics. The body of the contribution develops and justifies the above proposals. It also notes that the pandemic was facilitated, and its severity was initially exacerbated, by the extensive physical travel resulting from globalization. Globalization was largely facilitated by ICTs, including in particular the Internet, in order to increase efficiency. But efficiency does not equal effectiveness, much less resiliency. While the Internet itself proved to be resilient during the pandemic, the global supply chains built on the Internet turned out not to be resilient. There is a need to reduce the reliance on global supply chains in order to increase resilience; this might result in a reduction of international Internet traffic. Finally, the contribution argues that it is imperative to stop any attempts to negotiate e-commerce agreements, which will creating binding rules for the Internet, in the WTO and other trade negotiations, because those bodies are not multistakeholder and, more importantly, the proposed rules would have very negative effects for both developing countries and most citizens of developed countries, because they are intended to limit the ability of governments to take actions, whereas one of the lessons of the pandemic is that there is no substitute for government intervention at the national level in times of crisis, in particular because of externalities. |
|  | August 18, 2021 | [IGF recognized Dynamic Coalition on Data Driven Health Technologies](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=8) | A Quality Internet is critical for times of crisis, for risk monitoring and prediction of events for public health et al. Quality internet is key to providing success for telemedicine for All in a timely, purposeful and relevant manner. Quality in all its forms from access to data and sharing, to purposeful devices, including wearables, to supply chain logistics management with smart contracts and blockchain. AI, MI, Quantum for medical research and patient privacy, to security and privacy in a fair and inclusive manner that reduces the Digital Health Gap is going to be key for future economic sustainability and resiliency. For citizen health as well as for other economic activities, such as agriculture, business, education, safety, public engagement and policy making, climate change togetherness, crisis management for poverty and food, as well as for fair dispute resolution, maintenance of statistics, for good economic analysis (Reference: Efficient Market Hypothesis / trend to perfect Information) and overall good governance measures. |
|  | August 18, 2021 | [UK Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=9)  | The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges to the social, economic and physical wellbeing of societies across the globe. During this time of crisis, the Internet has played an undeniably crucial role in mitigating these effects. It has enabled citizens to continue to work, trade, shop, communicate and learn, kept families and friends connected, and accelerated public health responses through online technologies such as contact tracing apps, Covid-19 testing and vaccine booking systems. However, despite extraordinary progress, the pandemic has simultaneously exposed the impact of unequal Internet access across the globe and the realities of digital exclusion. In order to protect society against possible future pandemics, it is vital that we connect the unconnected, build digital skills and learn from this experience to fortify our public health and pandemic response systems for the years to come.**Comment from APIG**: We fully agree with the statement made in paragraph 4: "Covid has starkly exposed the impact of unequal Internet access across the globe and the realities of digital exclusion, as well as the risks posed by Internet shutdowns. ... It is therefore becoming increasingly urgent that we accelerate the provision of affordable Internet access and build digital skills in order to ensure no one is left behind."In this respect, see our contribution to February-December 2020 open consultation, at: <http://www.apig.ch/CWG-Internet%202020.pdf> |
|  | August 19, 2021 | [The Government of Australia](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=10)   | The Australian Government recognises that the Internet plays an important role in connecting our populations, stimulating the economy through digital business, and providing opportunities for social inclusion and advancement. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of connecting our populations, as the pandemic has further increased our reliance on digital connectivity for vital services, economic activity, and information. With this in mind, it is vital that work related to Internet-related public policy issues focuses on expanding Internet accessibility, so people can stay connected to their family, friends, colleagues and the broader community, and may participate in and benefit from the associated social and economic benefits. Promoting the multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance and public policies that ensure citizens can engage safely and confidently with online services, such as video conferencing and social media apps, are crucial to facilitating this connection. This will play an important role in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and any future pandemics.**Comment from APIG**: We fully agree it is vital that work related to Internet-related public policy issues address expanding Internet accessibility; and benefits; ensuring safe and secure use of online services.With respect to expanding accessibility, see our comment above regarding submission no. 3.With respect to security, it is time to recognize that market failures (externalities and information asymmetries) are such that adequate cybersecurity cannot be achieved by relying on market mechanisms, see section 1.4 of our contribution to the October 2019-January 2020 Open Consultation, at: <http://www.apig.ch/CWG-Internet%202019.pdf> |
|  | August 19, 2021 | [U.S. Council for International Business](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=11) | The U.S. Council for International Business (USCIB) is pleased to take part in this public consultation. Telecommunication/ICTs have fostered a vibrant Internet and driven rapid response, connectivity, social interactions and economic continuity in face of the Covid-19 pandemic. These Internet-enabling technologies, in turn, will be increasingly important in shaping a sustainable recovery from the crisis. Looking ahead, global policy makers should prioritize telecommunication/ICT innovation and public-private partnerships toward that end and support a multistakeholder governance approach that best ensures a stable, resilient, secure, and interoperable Internet. We elaborate on these and other policy elements foundational to greater economic resilience and preparedness as well as societal well-being. Importance of multistakeholder engagement on telecommunications/ICT policy issues – USCIB believes that the multistakeholder model for Internet governance continues to be the best method to enable whole-of-society/whole-of-government consideration of Internet policy issues that is grounded in democratic values and the principles of transparency, accountability, and consensus. Given the rapid pace of technological change, governments need the perspectives provided by business, the technical community, and civil society to better understand what policies are commercially viable, technically feasible, and offer adequate user protections. The inputs of all stakeholders produce a flexible policy environment critical to empowering the rapidly evolving digital economy. Importantly, such stakeholder inclusion can lower the risk of unintended consequences and increase legitimacy and adoption of policies. Top-down government-imposed policies and regulations often cannot keep pace with technological breakthroughs and can serve as a drag on development, investment, and innovation. The turbulent economic and political backdrop caused by the COVID-19 pandemic makes such multistakeholder participation even more important to ensure that Internet policy remains grounded in sound commercial and technical expertise. We appreciate that this public consultation, in effect, recognizes that multistakeholder dialogue best ensures telecommunication/ICT-related policy outcomes that are practicable and key to a well-functioning Internet. Investment in Innovation – We need to create an enabling environment for private investments in broadband infrastructure and technology solutions that will drive global connectivity. The ITU should promote the consideration of the totality of the policies – R&D incentives, direct government support, public-private partnerships -- that would foster new uses of cutting-edge technologies so they are more affordable and easily deployed in developing countries lagging in connectivity. This will have the collateral benefit of aiding pandemic recovery. Financing and Affordability – The financial conditions of citizens throughout the world as well as the market realities that can undermine private sector investments to connect under-served communities certainly challenge our efforts to deliver the full benefits of broadband networks – including pandemic mitigation. The ITU should encourage government policies to address the broadband gap, which recognize that government policies that enable private investment combined with subsidization may be necessary for industry to bring broadband to less densely populated areas and low-income customers. Such support will enable greater access to Internet-enabled services, be they educational, healthcare-related, commercial, or e-government services. Promote public-private partnerships and an integrated telecommunication/ICT policy approach -- As evidenced by COVID-19, telecommunications/ICTs and issues relating to connectivity are cross-cutting. Business-led innovation is driving solutions and supporting economic and social continuity across disciplines such as health, employment, education, manufacturing, and supply chains. Public-private partnerships reinforce the development and deployment of telecommunication/ICTs technology benefits. The ITU should formally recognize and promote such voluntary collaborations as integral to COVID recovery. Regulatory approaches should support innovation -- The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the potential of telecommunicatons/ICTs and the Internet to sustain economic and social activity, which reinforces the urgency to advance the uptake of Internet-related innovations. Importantly, regulatory frameworks and processes should foster the development and use of telecommuncations/ICT-related technologies and infrastructure as foundational to recovery from the pandemic – not hamper these efforts via burdensome, top-down approaches. Digital Inclusion – Addressing technology skills gaps, online safety, the gender technology divide, and other challenges will be necessary to fully realize the benefits of broadband connectivity and Internet access. In particular, the ITU-D could be a productive body through which ITU members can help implement and grow technology literacy programs that empower under-resourced populations to develop and capitalize on critical ICT skills. Successful inclusion programs will incorporate and leverage capacity-building investments in local communities, particularly in education, health care, and other social services. The ITU should support such programs that lead to telecommunication/ICT skills development and proven outcomes for previously excluded populations.**Comment from APIG**: We agree "that government policies that enable private investment combined with subsidization may be necessary for industry to bring broadband to less densely populated areas and low-income customers." |
|  | August 20, 2021 | [Article 19](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=12) | The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that Internet-related public policy development that focuses on closing the digital divide remains a pressing issue that must be meaningfully addressed by Member States, as the state of Internet connectivity fundamentally impacts access to information that is critical during public health emergencies. However, we recognize two major problems in current policy approaches that must be addressed. First, many of the Internet-related emergency measures taken by Member States in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the allocation of additional spectrum to large telecommunication companies, have fallen short of addressing the root causes of the digital divide, and may even further entrench them. Second, while the COVID-19 pandemic has placed the issue of the digital divide back to the fore in the ITU and other multilateral spaces, several Member States have approached connectivity discussions by raising cybersecurity issues in ways that detract from the matter of increasing access to vital and relevant information. We set out these issues in this contribution and provide recommendations to Member States. Specifically, we recommend that Member States should commit to focusing the ITU’s work on universal connectivity, in line with its mandate, that emergency Internet-related policy measures should be designed to take into consideration a broader ecosystem of Internet service providers, and that national cybersecurity responses should be designed in line with international human rights standards.**Comment from APIG**: We agree that "Under international human rights law, freedom of expression may be subject to certain restrictions, including public health grounds; however, any such measures must be subject to principles of legality, proportionality, necessity and non-discrimination."In this respect, see:<http://justnetcoalition.org/2014/on_UN_HCHR_privacy_report.pdf> We also agree that promoting education and media literacy are effective methods for combating the spread of misinformation. |
|  | August 20, 2021 | [Information and Communication Technologies Authority-BTK](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=13), Republic of Turkey | While the 21st century was advancing as the age of information, COVID-19 pandemic has emerged and proved that, as perhaps nothing else could have, the vital importance of internet connectivity and digital services. Studies show that, attacks have made a significant target shift from individuals and small businesses to large corporations, governments and critical infrastructures during the pandemic. Individuals, companies, critical infrastructures and states encounter serious problems because of growing cyber threats that are getting more and more diversified every day. Preventive measures and cooperation in national and international level, especially among national cyber incidents response teams (CERTs) play a crucial role in minimizing the effects of pandemic related cyber threats and attacks. |
|  | August 20, 2021 | [Access Now](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=14) | This submission raises three main points to address the role of the internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics. First, the ITU must prioritize expanding meaningful access to the internet because — as amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic — meaningful access is essential for participation in daily life and exercising human rights. During the COVID-19 pandemic and other potential crises, people need access to the internet to find out how to protect themselves and others, access telehealth services, communicate with their loved ones, and work and learn remotely, among many other things that contribute to social, political, cultural, and economic development and the realisation of human rights, including access to health and education. It is therefore imperative that Member States’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic and possible future pandemics immediately removes, and does not impose, barriers to internet connectivity. Second, emergency measures recommended by the ITU, and implemented by Member States, must take other internet service providers (ISPs), including community networks (CNs), into consideration, or digital divides will increase worldwide. Third, while the issue of cybersecurity has amplified amid the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding ITU discussions and its mandate into other aspects of telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as cybersecurity, is not appropriate. The ITU has a clear and narrow mission and objective: to facilitate the interoperability of telecommunications infrastructure. The ITU should therefore not seek to duplicate work at a time when more is needed of the ITU in its core mandate. The scope of the ITU’s work should therefore remain restricted to its highly particularized capacity and expertise.**Comment from APIG**: We agree that "ITU should prioritize expanding meaningful access to the internet". In this respect, see our comment above regarding submission no. 3.We also agree that "Limiting or shutting off access to the internet has obvious problems." In this respect, see our comment above regarding submission no. 6.However, we disagree that "The ITU has a clear and narrow mission and objective: to facilitate the interoperability of telecommunications infrastructure." On the contrary, the ITU has a broad mandate, defined by the Member States.As stated in Art. 1.1(a) of the ITU Constitution, the purposes of the ITU include "to maintain and extend international cooperation among all its Member States for the improvement and rational use of telecommunications of all kinds." The term "telecommunications" is defined in the Annex of the Constitution as "Any transmission, emission or reception of signs, signals, writing, images and sounds or intelligence of any nature by wire, radio, optical or other electromagnetic systems." This definition manifestly includes much of what is referred to as "the Internet".On this basis, Member States have agreed on numerous work items in ITU that go well beyond merely facilitating the interoperability of telecommunications infrastructure. For example, there in an ITU-T Study Group devoted to security issues. And it was agreed at WSIS (see the Annex of the Tunis Agenda) that ITU was a possible facilitator/moderator for "Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs" and for ICT applications such as e-health.**Comment from Article 19**: We support the statements from Access Now, APC/Derechos Digitales and ISOC regarding the relevance of a multistakeholder format, so decisions taken to face cyber threats respect fundamental human rights including privacy and access to information, ensuring that policies do not widen the margins for criminalization, monitoring, and restrictions to freedom of expression and access to information in such a critical moment. We also support the statements made by Australia, the UK and the US and agree that connectivity is a key element in the next ITU efforts to mitigate the pandemic. |
|  | August 20, 2021 | [Digital Empowerment Foundation](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=15) | Due to Covid-19, the traffic of internet exchanges have increased manifold. But in actuality, the average internet and download speed has gone down by at least 12 percent. The average delay between packets when data is going from one server to other has gone up three to four times, similarly the packet loss increased by two to three times. There has been centralization of overall DNS traffic and most of this is happening through one source such as Google which makes it tough for future in Indian context. The good news for internet is that it is working well but the bad news still is the access, adoption and affordability. Access is really bad just 100 kilometers out of metropolitan cities. The internet is basically for cities. Most of services are online and have digital payment but it is not possible in rural areas with the current speed. Access to real computing is a challenge. With Covid-19, access and affordability emerged as key challenge as beyond messaging, or little browsing many were devoid of the power of internet for learning. The biggest challenge post pandemic is the fear of pandemic exploited by the cyber criminals in terms of fraud, inauthentic information regarding the oxygen cylinders, vaccination, etc. Problems of personal data being not safe has increased tremendously. In the pandemic one of the major challenges when shutdowns or lockdown were announced was since the networks are inherently designed according to consumption, mostly for central business district, this did not really cater to the kind of traffic that moved to residential from central business district. Spectrum management has emerged as an issue. When the consumption increased, there was need for more spectrum and spectrum was lying idle yet the government could not provide the resources. For the last mile challenge, role of Municipal Corporations and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) is important. Other sector like health and education should ask for spectrum as well since it is for their benefit as well to reach out to service seekers and takers. The new users have been pushed to internet are not aware of internet appropriate social behavior. One of the issues that has seen increased in rise is misinformation that maybe related to Covid. The misinformation that led to exodus of migrants. There has been hate speech against minority and children are being attacked in cybercrime. There has been rise in surveillance where rights of people are under threat even though social good is involved in it. There are internet shutdowns even though internet is lifeline. There is an increase in gender digital divide especially in education. There is lot of gender related harassment online which is making women apprehensive of using the internet. One of the important things is how to build capacity of the people so that can navigate the internet. For example, senior citizens have no knowledge of how to use Covid-19 service platforms online like COWIN in India. The challenges that have emerged out is one of not getting access to use internet resources and other is not finding compatible devices. Documenting these areas are so critical to prepare for now and future.There has been increase in traffic and this has been demanding for network providers. The challenge in country like India has been how to handle the increasing internet. There is strong need to set up internet exchange points outside main cities. These are critical because they make the traffic move efficient. Similarly the data centers are also around the main cities. There should be better distribution of data center needed which will create win win situation for everyone. One part of access people don’t seem to realize is shutdowns. India is by far one of the countries with the most shutdowns, even the national capital had shutdown. There are various reasons cited for this. It has impacted economy, education and health. One of the simplest measure is to just send a text that will inform people that internet will be shut from this time to that. A simple measure like can go long way. The people just need transparency and accountability with due processes being followed in these things. Nobody is asking for government to not have shutdown powers. Regionalising Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are the way forward to go. One of the important things is interoperability of IoTs devices if one wants to use IoTs for post pandemic recovery. In the post pandemic world there is a possibility to use AI for people’s benefits. Here, one suggestion is to work on standardization of IoTs. A global standard will work out for anyone. If countries are looking for large scale AI deployment then AI explainability is where one need to focus. Technical standard is one of the main things along with IoT interoperability standards which will minimize the divide that has been created. Pandemic forced people too indoors while much of the network is designed for mobility, to be outdoor. The in-building coverage has been a challenge for telecoms for a long time. The problem is even there is fiber in every room, the coverage is not there. Same thing can be applied to school or hospitals. This cannot be solved unless all state regulators allow this. It is not different from getting water or electricity. It is an essential service. The learning of pandemic is that digital connectivity is an essential service and a fundamental right. In the near future the important part for India is to facilitate fixed wireless access. And there is need to have ‘fiber in the air’ and not digging up the central business districts. So there needs efficient policy and regulatory requirements to facilitate this. 5G has the ability to enhance India’s use of its resources which often goes to waste because of a faulty system. A country like India will be heavily dependent on wireless networks unless the country is ready to heavily invest in optical fiber. The most important thing to remember about localizing the data is that everything is moving to the cloud. In the post pandemic world, cloud will be the way to deliver the services. There is no need to link data residency with governance and best practices of data privacy. What is needed is data regulation laws and capability building at the level of organization that are managing these assets. Gender digital divide is increasing and it is more apparent in case of women with disabilities during Covid. Gender disinformation is growing. This creates a trust deficit for women and they do not feel safe online and hesitate before posting something personal. Data is foundational to our interaction on the internet. In last couple of years, data has been developed and controlled by few large corporations in the world. There has to be oversight and this does not imply regulations only. It is about how public and citizens data is not being misused or in any way being used against their interests. There has to be public oversight on them. Digital service providers need to be involved. It has to be self-regulation. Public data has to be kept private and safe. Covid withstanding or not, internet governance issues both are national and international level are common, priority may differ. The issue is to keep internet open and free. Internet shutdown is an issue. The biggest issue is multi-lingual internet. Globally 30 to 40 percent people cannot access internet because of language. There are issues on Child Sexual Abuse Material. India’s cyber security framework has not worked well when it was needed. It is need to be looked at in terms of regulation and investment that these breaches are dealt in time. Ensuring compliance is an issue. More and more Indians in urban sector looking at privacy as a desired thing. This should be for everyone. **Further comments received from DEF**:1. Addressing the rising cost of accessing the internet is inherent to internet inclusion as a fundamental necessity. 2. Circular economy of internet devices and economy holds critical role and importance to drive a sustainable alternative digital environment especially in Global south.3. Internet Access and reach is equally determined by access to sustainable electricity supply and networks. 4. Building and sustaining Internet resilience at local government levels critical to sustain communities in response, recovery during pandemics.5. Documenting all internet practices and Covid-19 innovations could give key lessons in preparing strategies and standards to deal with pandemics now and later.6. The reluctance to alternative networking solutions like community networks must be looked into to address internet poverty and darkness in unreached regions. Despite government provisions, there is a lack of push to execute such policy programmes and use the available public spectrums. 7. Gender based Internet public policy designs, frameworks could address half of the problems of women globally. 8. Internet public policies can be more sensitive to life under water and life on earth and reducing the carbon footprints (greening the internet) 9. With increasing digital services online and Covid-19 applications online the challenge to be addressed is 'Digital Capabilities and Access' for the 'Lower Social and Income Groups' (LSIGs), especially in the global south to participate effectively and meaningfully in the digital networks and platforms including e-participation in Internet PP frameworks.  10. ITU and partners looking at the increasing global internet outages impacting services, access and networks and businesses. How to prepare against such outages especially in pandemic lockdown situations. |
|  | August 21, 2021 | [Pollicy](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=16) | In answering the question about the role of the Internet and international internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and future pandemics, we must first look to the original purpose of the internet itself: communication. Communication, simply put, refers to the sending and receipt of information verbally, through a written medium, visual cues or otherwise. We could therefore simply say that the internet is a network of computers which facilitates communication across the globe. The role of the Internet and international internet-related policy is therefore based primarily on how communication networks (facilitated by them) can minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. |
|  | August 21, 2021 | [Dynamic Coalition Data Driven Health Technologies](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=17) | On behalf of our UN IGF recognized Dynamic Coalition on Data Driven Health Technologies I please suggest the following from our recent DC discussions: 1) Countries and organizations which have sophisticated and well funded research capabilities, please share openly your reports or abstracts with the public and the international media for knowledge sharing at speed. Perhaps a medical media hub 2) Jurisdictions that have excellent online health care resources for the public, please consider translating them in to other regional languages and the UN languages on an associated online portal that can be accessed by developing country citizens. 3) All technology systems must be future prepared and resilient and hence incorporating the UN Sendai framework for disaster risk management in to technology policy making is critical. |
|  | August 21, 2021 | [Amali](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=18) de Silva Mitchell | Quantum Internet and quantum technologies have many opportunities within health care, such as for fast drug development, data protections and so forth. Quantum has the opportunity to be the leading technology for health care for good. There is a need for international collaboration for the speedy development of drugs to meet the demands of crisis situations, such as the Covid 19 pandemic. As such, an international body, to coordinate quantum technology for healthcare, is a must. This body should be established soon, so that it can also start to develop the base principles for the Governance of the International Quantum Internet and especially with respect to data sharing and collaboration, and also how it associates with the curent internet. Ethics for Quantum Technologies and the Quantum Internet and its interaction with Artificial Intelligence and other technologies, is an area that must be developed from an international multi-stakeholder perspective. A special focus on how developing countries can also participate in this new technology should be established. |
|  | August 24, 2021 | [Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and Derechos Digitales](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=19) | The COVID-19 crisis has underscored how access to the internet is essential for human rights such as the right to work, health and access to education.1 Internet access also has proven critical to ensure political participation, freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly during the health crisis, whether for demanding state accountability and transparency in the handling of the pandemic, or to continue addressing persistent social and political issues in different countries. The current pandemic calls for renewed commitments to digital inclusion, both at the national and international levels, and ITU expertise in this field is key to achieve such a goal. We encourage the ITU to continue to focus on its core mandate of “Connecting all the World”. In the context of the pandemic, community networks and other non-commercial business models for providing connectivity have contributed to providing effective responses to increased connectivity demands, including public health-related ones. However, enabling policies and regulations to unleash the potential of community networks and other small network operators to deliver meaningful internet access everywhere are still scarce. We call upon states to recognise the value and impact of community networks in digital inclusion. Internet-related public policy must acknowledge and address the persistent inequalities in internet access that people facing multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion and discrimination face. In particular, we focus in this submission on the exacerbated gender digital inequalities. Environmental justice and sustainability also need to be recognised as essential components of internet-related public policies that aim to achieve universal digital inclusion and to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics. Finally, ensuring connectivity and meaningful ways of remote interaction for participating in internet-related public policy and governance discussions is also essential in order to ensure that the strategies and policies adopted reflect and cover a variety of situations across different regions. Hence, this submission calls for internet-related policy making that is democratic, multistakeholder, grounded in international human rights standards, people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented.**Comment from APIG**: We agree that "the internet needs to be protected as a global public resource, and human rights must be upheld online and offline".In this respect, see our comment above regarding submission no. 6.See also:<https://justnetcoalition.org/delhi-declaration> <https://justnetcoalition.org/digital-justice-manifesto> <https://itforchange.net/digital-new-deal/2020/10/30/a-new-convention-for-data-and-cyberspace/> **Comment from Article 19**: We support the statements from Access Now, APC/Derechos Digitales and ISOC regarding the relevance of a multistakeholder format, so decisions taken to face cyber threats respect fundamental human rights including privacy and access to information, ensuring that policies do not widen the margins for criminalization, monitoring, and restrictions to freedom of expression and access to information in such a critical moment. We also support the statements made by Australia, the UK and the US and agree that connectivity is a key element in the next ITU efforts to mitigate the pandemic. |
|  | August 26, 2021 | [NIIR](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=20), Russian Federation | The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the social distance and isolation regime in many countries, had a great influence on the daily lives of people and contributed to the emergence and introduction of new ICT services at the global level. "Best practice" in use of ICT solutions based on the Internet is presented in attached document. Taking into account the international nature of ITU activities, we would like to focus on the international service tracking of cross-border trips "Travel without COVID-19". Such service, as well as many other transborder COVID-Tech applications require global coordination of security issues and reliable user’ authentication. In this regard, we would like to recommend ITU to consider the possibility of acting as a Global platform and coordinator of international authentication system and the Global cyber security center, and for this purpose organize the development of international public policies related to these aspects within the Union. At the same time, it necessary to create effective international interaction mechanisms within ITU, allowing developing countries to access advanced digital solutions and technologies, technical assistance to implement them and strengthen personnel potential.**Comment from ARIN**: Thank you chairman and good day to all colleagues. ARIN thanks the Russian Federation or sharing these important and useful covid-tech services. These covid-tech services are able to function because the Internet exists. This paper draws some conclusions that we do not agree with. The Internet works, it's not perfect but it works. ARIN finds that the Internet is quite resilient, and this is due to the fact that the Internet has been and continues to be developed in a bottom up, multistakeholder fashion. ARIN notes that work is underway at the UN for Internet norms, as well as against cybercrime. As others have said, we support the focus of affordable and meaningful connectivity for all. Thank you Chairman. |
|  | September 1, 2021 | [Ministry of Transport, IT & Communications](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=21), Republic of Bulgaria | The global COVID 19 pandemic has clearly set digitalisation as a horizontal priority both in the public sector and for the business environment. It boosted the development of new e-services and digitization measures in a number of key sectors in support of the efforts to preserve the citizens’ health and help endangered businesses. Progress made prior to the pandemic has influenced how well prepared have been different parts of the world to face the challenges posed by COVID-19 and its associated disruptions to normal life, including the challenge of switching from physical’ to ‘digital’. In the current context, the provided data present a mix of findings on digital readiness and resilience that offer a new perspective on the impact and importance of connectivity to every nation’s economy. All 3 pillars of sustainable development - economic development social inclusion and environmental protection need ICTs as key catalysts. The development potential of ICT as crosscutting enablers must therefore be fully harnessed for achieving the SDGs.  |
|  | September 7, 2021 | [Internet Society](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=22) | The Internet Society (ISOC), a Sector Member of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), is pleased to submit this contribution to the ITU Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) Online open consultation on “the role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics.” The Internet Society supports and promotes the development of the Internet as a global technical infrastructure, a resource to enrich people’s lives, and a force for good in society. ISOC and its community believe that global communications create opportunities for growth, creative expression and innovation that should be available to all. Our work aligns with our goals for the Internet to be open, globally-connected, secure, and trustworthy. We seek collaboration with all who share these goals. To this end, we are committed to collaborating with partner organizations in every region of the world, each within its area of responsibility, in order to increase access to the Internet to spur economic and social development.**Comment from Article 19**: We support the statements from Access Now, APC/Derechos Digitales and ISOC regarding the relevance of a multistakeholder format, so decisions taken to face cyber threats respect fundamental human rights including privacy and access to information, ensuring that policies do not widen the margins for criminalization, monitoring, and restrictions to freedom of expression and access to information in such a critical moment. We also support the statements made by Australia, the UK and the US and agree that connectivity is a key element in the next ITU efforts to mitigate the pandemic. |
|  | September 13, 2021 | [ICANN](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-feb2021.aspx?ListItemID=24)  | This is the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers’ (ICANN) contribution in response to the ITU Council Working Group on International Internet-Related Public Policy Issues Call for Comments on the topic “The role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics. To assess the impact of the pandemic on the DNS, the ICANN organization (ICANN org) conducted tests and analyzed traffic data to measure and test the resilience built into the DNS. These measurements and studies demonstrated that the DNS has handled the increase in traffic and proved its resiliency by responding to the new challenges. |
| General Comment from the U.S:The US would like to thank ALL of stakeholders for their contributions and participation in the Open Internet Consultation. These contributions, including robust set of issues and viewpoints, from civil society, industry and governments about the robust and resilient nature of the Internet along with various issues that each focus on here continues to illustrate the importance of the multistakeholder model. And, as comments have illustrated, while there may be issues regionally or nationally, the Internet itself is interconnected and resilient and continued to adapt to increased traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. |

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