

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION STANDARDIZATION
ASSEMBLY
New Delhi, 15-24 October 2024

Resolution 52 – Countering and combating spam

FOREWORD

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency in the field of telecommunications, and information and communication technologies (ICTs). The ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) is a permanent organ of ITU. ITU-T is responsible for studying technical, operating and tariff questions and issuing Recommendations on them with a view to standardizing telecommunications on a worldwide basis.

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), which meets every four years, establishes the topics for study by the ITU-T study groups which, in turn, produce Recommendations on these topics.

The approval of ITU-T Recommendations is covered by the procedure laid down in WTSA Resolution 1.

In some areas of information technology which fall within ITU-T's purview, the necessary standards are prepared on a collaborative basis with ISO and IEC.

RESOLUTION 52 (Rev. New Delhi, 2024)

Countering and combating spam

*(Florianópolis, 2004; Johannesburg, 2008; Dubai, 2012;
Hammamet, 2016; New Delhi, 2024)*

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (New Delhi, 2024),

recalling

- a) relevant provisions of the basic instruments of ITU;
- b) that the Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) states in § 37 that "Spam is a significant and growing problem for users, networks and the Internet as a whole. Spam and cybersecurity should be dealt with at appropriate national and international levels";
- c) that the WSIS Plan of Action states in § 12 that "Confidence and security are among the main pillars of the information society", and calls for "appropriate action on spam at national and international levels";
- d) the relevant parts of Resolutions 130 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) and 174 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference;
- e) the report of the chair of the two ITU WSIS thematic meetings on countering and combating spam, which advocated for a comprehensive approach to combating spam, namely:
 - i) strong legislation
 - ii) the development of technical measures
 - iii) the establishment of industry partnerships to accelerate the studies
 - iv) education
 - v) international cooperation;
- f) the relevant parts of Resolution 45 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference;
- g) Decision 630 of the ITU Council, adopted at its 2023 session, on informational resources to help Member States build their cybersecurity and cyber-resilience capacity,

recognizing

- a) that spammers are increasingly exploiting the cross-border nature of the Internet and communications;
- b) that the absence of a simple remedy to combat spam underscores the need for a multifaceted, collaborative approach alongside cooperation among public and private entities;
- c) that international cooperation is essential for developing a comprehensive and impactful strategy against spam;

- d) that spam is used for both commercial and non-commercial purposes;
- e) that the rapid growth of telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) has provided users with new and advanced messaging solutions and introduced new challenges for combating spam,

considering

- a) that exchanging e-mails, texts, multimedia messaging and other telecommunications over the Internet has become one of the main means of communication between people around the world;
- b) that there are currently a variety of definitions for the term "spam" and the scope of spam has been greatly expanded with the development of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;
- c) that the meaning of the word "spam" can vary and evolve as telecommunications/ICTs develop, providing novel opportunities for misuse of electronic communications;
- d) that spam has become a widespread problem causing potential loss of revenue to Internet service providers, telecommunication operators, mobile telecommunication operators and business users;
- e) that countering spam by technical means burdens affected entities, including network operators and service providers, as well as users who unwillingly receive such spam, with significant investments in networks, facilities, terminal equipment and applications;
- f) that all stakeholders – including governments, regulators, network operators, Internet service providers and online service providers, the Internet technical community, business and consumer advocacy groups, antispam coalitions and working groups, civil society and computer incident response teams – have a role to play in the effective reduction of spam;
- g) that spam may be used for malicious activity creating problems for telecommunication/ICT network security for organizations and individuals and may result in significant financial implications;
- h) that spamming is used for criminal, fraudulent or deceptive activities;
- i) that spam is a global problem, with different characteristics in different regions, which affects many stakeholders and, therefore, requires collaborative work and international cooperation to address it and find solutions;
- j) that addressing the issue of spam is a matter of urgency;
- k) that many countries, in particular developing countries¹, need help when it comes to countering spam;

¹ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

l) that relevant Recommendations of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) and relevant information from other international bodies are available which could provide guidance for future development in this area, in particular with regard to lessons learned;

m) that technical measures to counter spam represent one of the elements of the approach mentioned in *recalling e)* above;

n) that a risk-based approach incorporating a combination of technological and process-based approaches can assist in effectively countering spam;

o) that capacity building to counter spam, including awareness raising and training in countries, should be taken into account in collaboration with the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D),

noting

a) the important technical work carried out to date in ITU-T Study Group 17 and under ITU-D Study Question 3/2 on securing information and communication networks;

b) that new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs have been leveraged to fuel the proliferation of spam operations, resulting in the development of novel spamming techniques,

resolves to instruct Study Group 17 of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector

1 to continue to support work related to countering spam, such as e-mail, text and multimedia messaging and other telecommunications over the Internet, in order to address existing and future threats within the remit and expertise of ITU-T, as appropriate, including but not limited to:

i) updating definitions to reflect emerging forms of spam, such as short-message service (SMS) and voice call spam and spam facilitated by new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs;

ii) clarifying terminology related to spamming activities and countermeasures to ensure consistency and clarity in interpretation;

2 to report regularly to the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group on progress under this resolution;

3 to enhance research on the application of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs in countering spam;

4 to collaborate with ITU-D and with the relevant organizations, including other relevant standards organizations and development partners, in order to continue developing, as a matter of urgency, technical ITU-T Recommendations with a view to awareness raising, sharing best practices, policy dialogue and providing technical training through workshops, in partnership with beneficiary Member States and other stakeholders, such as network operators, Internet service providers and online service providers, the Internet technical community, business associations and civil society;

5 to consider risk-based approaches in relevant ITU-T Recommendations, supplements and technical reports aimed at countering spam, incorporating a combination of technological and process-based approaches;

6 to support ITU-D Study Group 2 on countering and combating spam in its work providing technical training sessions and workshop activities in different regions related to spam policy, regulatory and economic issues and their impact for the benefit of regulators and telecommunication operators;

7 to continue to update a study – including by sending a questionnaire to the ITU membership – indicating the volume, types (e.g. e-mail spam, SMS spam and spam in Internet Protocol-based multimedia applications) and features (e.g. different major routes and sources) of spam traffic, in order to help Member States and relevant operating agencies identify routes, sources and volumes of spam and estimate the amount of investment required in facilities and other technical means to counter and combat such spam, taking into account work that has already been carried out and the threat landscape for spam;

8 to continue its work on developing ITU-T Recommendations, supplements, technical reports and other related publications,

instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau

1 to provide all necessary assistance with a view to expediting such efforts, working collaboratively with relevant parties to combat spam with a view to identifying opportunities, raising awareness for such activities and identifying possible collaboration, as appropriate;

2 to work with Member States at national, regional and international levels of cooperation to implement global initiatives countering and combating spam that include coordination with government/industry partnerships, outreach to civil society and consumers and provision of tools and resources, as appropriate;

3 to contribute to the development of an informational resource platform, based on the provisions of Council Decision 630 (C23), that includes and maintains a repository of best practices and solutions for countering spam, with the aim of sharing those resources among all ITU members;

4 to support relevant ITU-T Study Group 17 activities related to countering and combating spam;

5 to continue to recognize the role played by other international organizations with expertise in this area and promote collaboration and cooperation on combating spam;

6 to continue to cooperate with the Secretary-General's initiative on cybersecurity and with the Telecommunication Development Bureau in relation to any item concerning cybersecurity under Resolution 45 (Rev. Kigali, 2022), and to ensure coordination among these different activities;

7 to contribute to the report of the Secretary-General to the Council on the implementation of this resolution,

invites Member States, Sector Members, Associates and Academia

- 1 to contribute to this work and collaboratively implement this resolution;
- 2 to continue promoting awareness among all stakeholders, including organizations and individual users, of the importance of countering and combating spam, including the implementation of basic safeguards,

further invites Member States

- 1 to participate at national, regional and international levels of cooperation on standards-related matters in countering and combating spam in telecommunications/ICTs;
- 2 to take steps to encourage adoption of appropriate and effective measures within national and legal frameworks to combat spam and its propagation;
- 3 to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to counter and combat spam;
- 4 to promote collaboration with international counterparts in addressing global spam activities and its proliferation;
- 5 to share experiences in standardization efforts on countering and combating spam.