UN body opens debate on Internet future to public

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(AP) — The U.N. telecoms agency has invited the world's more than 2 billion Internet users to join a debate about the future of the Internet.

The Geneva-based International Telecommunications Union's announcement Wednesday follows criticism from civil society groups who say preparations for an upcoming global conference have been shrouded in secrecy.

The World Conference on International Telecommunications takes place Dec. 3-14 in the United Arab Emirates city of Dubai.

Diplomats have for months been holding closed-doors discussions about proposals that include enhanced government surveillance and changing the way Internet traffic is billed.

Industry groups have warned that some of the proposals could jeopardize the smooth running of the Internet.

Activists, meanwhile, say greater government control of the Internet could endanger free speech online.

 More information: ITU website for public debate: www.itu.int/en/wcit-12/Pages/public.aspx

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