

US says will oppose major revisions of global telecom rules

October 8 2012



Pedestrians walk past a computer and its reflection showing the login page for Facebook in traditional Chinese characters in Hong Kong on May 14, 2012. The United States will oppose any major revision to 24-year-old global telecommunications regulations at an international conference in December, the head of the US delegation said Monday, insisting the Internet must remain free and open.

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"We need to avoid suffocating ... the Internet space through well-meaning but overly-proscriptive proposals that would seek to control content or seek to mandate routing and payment practices," said Terry

Kramer, the special envoy named for World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) in Dubai at the end of the year.

Speaking to reporters in Geneva, Kramer said Washington was eager to cooperate with other nations to reach a consensus on alterations to global regulations set up by the UN's [International Telecommunication Union](#) (ITU) in 1988, but stressed that only minimal changes would be acceptable.

Kramer reiterated Washington's opposition to proposals from a number of countries to expand the ITU's authority to regulate the Internet, insisting, for instance, that his country did not want [cyber security](#) to fall under the UN agency's mandate.

While acknowledging a sharp hike in hacking and cyber crimes, with around 67,000 so-called malware attacks reported around the world every day, the US ambassador insisted that ITU regulations were "not an appropriate or useful venue to address cyber security."

"There are a lot of [cyber threats](#) but the nature of [cyber issues](#) requires agility, it requires a technical expertise, and it requires a distributed effort, so we are very sensitive about any one organisation taking on the sole role of solving cyber threats," he explained.

Kramer also said that Washington strongly disagreed with a proposal from the European Telecommunications Network Operators (ETNO) calling for network operators to be able to charge for sending content on to Internet users.

"Making content generation more costly and uneconomical will likely lead many [content providers](#) and non-profits to restrict or charge for downloads, even leading to black-outs in less developed countries," he said, urging nations "not to kill the content golden goose."

Kramer also said that the US strongly opposed proposals from some "non-democratic nations" for the tracking and monitoring of data routing, which he cautioned "makes it very easy for nations to monitor traffic," including content and customer information.

The ITU regulations in place for nearly a quarter of a decade "have been a huge success," Kramer said, insisting this was because they addressed only "high-level principals" in a non-proscriptive manner.

If few or no changes were made to them during the December meeting, he said, "I think it would not be a terrible outcome at all."

The Internet today, he stressed, "is a very vibrant and dynamic place ... Anything that seeks to put structure and control and limitations around that is a very worrisome philosophical trend for us."

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Citation: US says will oppose major revisions of global telecom rules (2012, October 8) retrieved 27 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-oppose-major-global-telecom.html>

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