Google enters debate on UN Internet control

November 21 2012

This 2011 screen image shows the Google logo in Washington, DC. Google has jumped into the debate over a UN telecom gathering set to review regulations affecting the Internet, claiming it is "the wrong place" to make decisions about the future of the Web.

Google has jumped into the debate over a UN telecom gathering set to review regulations affecting the Internet, claiming it is "the wrong place" to make decisions about the future of the Web.

In a posting on its "take action" blog this week, Google said the December gathering of the UN's International Telecommunications

Union comes amid "a growing backlash on Internet freedom."

The ITU's World Conference on International Communications opening next month in Dubai will update global telecom rules for the first time since 1988, and some countries see this as an opportunity to set up new rules for the Internet.

US officials and lawmakers, along with a number of Internet activists, have expressed concern that proposals from China, Russia and other nations could threaten the open model of the Internet by giving the UN agency a greater role.

Google's statement said "the ITU is the wrong place to make decisions about the future of the Internet" because "only governments have a voice at the ITU," including some "that do not support a free and open Internet."

"The ITU is also secretive," Google said. "The treaty conference and proposals are confidential."

Google said some proposed treaty changes "could increase censorship and threaten innovation" and others "would require services like YouTube, Facebook, and Skype to pay new tolls in order to reach people across borders. This could limit access to information—particularly in emerging markets."

Google's comments backed the US position, which is that the non-government "multi-stakeholder" system of the Internet should remain in place.

"Governments alone should not determine the future of the Internet," the Google blog said. The billions of people around the globe that use the Internet, and the experts that build and maintain it, should be included.

The Google response comes a week after Russia submitted its proposal to the ITU, provoking strong reactions from some online activists.

Larry Downes, an analyst with the Bell Mason Group consultancy who follows technology issues, said the Russian proposal "makes explicit" Moscow's desire to bring the Internet under greater control of the UN agency and diminish the role of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, which manages the Internet address system.

"The Russian federation's proposal... would in specific substantially if not completely change the role of ICANN in overseeing domain names and IP addresses," Downes said in a blog post.

"Of course the Russian Federation, along with other repressive governments, uses every opportunity to gain control over the free flow of information, and sees the Internet as it's most formidable enemy."

(c) 2012 AFP

Citation: Google enters debate on UN Internet control (2012, November 21) retrieved 9 May 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2012-11-google-debate-internet.html