

China, Russia Resubmit Proposal to Get Web Control

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A proposal that would potentially give countries sovereignty over Internet addresses has been resubmitted to the UN agency for telecommunications by a coalition including China and Russia, a day after the original plan was scrapped.

An amendment of the draft says that member states should have the right to manage all naming, numbering, addressing and identification resources used for international telecommunications services within their territories, according to statements by different delegations in the plenary of the World Conference on International Telecommunications in Dubai.

The proposal faces opposition from countries such as Germany, the U.S., the Czech Republic, Sweden, Australia, Canada and U.K., which all had called for it to be struck off since they've agreed not to talk about regulating the Internet at the conference. The eight-country group pushing for more sovereign control over web addresses includes Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, China and Russia.

The gathering is organized by the International Telecommunication Union, a United Nations agency, and aims to update the International Telecommunication Regulations Treaty as the previous conference took place in 1988 when the Internet was not widely used and many phone operators were still state monopolies.

The Saudi-Arabian delegation said in a statement during the plenary that the regulations wouldn't affect the Internet and were meant to regulate new networks.

"It's unacceptable that one party to the conference gets everything they want and everybody else must make concessions," the delegation said.

U.S. Opposition

The U.S. White House said yesterday it would reject any measure that would move more control of the Internet to the International Telecommunication Union. The U.S. delegation characterized the new proposal as an attempt to "derail" the discussion.

“The U.S. Delegation notes with concern that several delegations at this conference continue to attempt to introduce Internet-related proposals that are outside the scope” of the conference, Terry Kramer, the head of the U.S. delegation, said in a statement. “The US will continue to engage in good-faith discussions with other delegations, despite these attempts to derail the focus of conference negotiations.”

Extending Jurisdiction

U.S. companies including AT&T Inc., Verizon Communications Inc. (VZ), Google Inc. (GOOG), Microsoft Corp. (MSFT) and News Corp. have joined forces to oppose efforts by China, Russia and other countries to extend ITU jurisdiction to Internet matters, David Gross, an attorney with the law firm Wiley Rein in Washington who is leading the effort, said in an interview in May.

Web addresses are currently controlled by two non- governmental organizations, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers and the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority.

The ITU has said that it will not use the WCIT to increase its own authority over the Internet.

The new proposal has not yet been presented to the conference, which is nearing the end of its two-week discussion. The WCIT is scheduled to begin reviewing the final draft of the text today and tomorrow.

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