Written by **Alex Newman** on December 5, 2012

UN Using Propaganda to Defend Proposed Internet Regime

The United Nations, its International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and a motley assortment of tyrants are [frantically working](#) to calm [growing worldwide fears over the planetary body's controversial bid to regulate the Internet and potentially even smash free speech online](#) at an ongoing treaty-writing conference in Dubai. With global opposition to the schemes exploding, however, documents show the UN is using a "public relations" strategy to disseminate taxpayer-funded propaganda attacking critics of its secretive summit [aimed at seizing control of the World Wide Web.](#)

While the ITU and a broad coalition of brutal dictatorships hoping to clamp down on online freedom claim the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) is mostly about connecting poor people to the Internet and tinkering with mundane treaties, [experts and analysts know better](#). In fact, more than 1,000 organizations from over 150 countries have spoken out against the scheming going on among UN member governments — mostly tyrants including more than a few Islamist regimes and communist autocracies — largely behind closed doors.

"So long as the ITU and other similarly intentioned organizations such as [WIPO](#) remain immune from national and even international laws, they will be able to continue to act with impunity against individuals and their interests around the world, to do the bidding of a small clique of member states that are offended or threatened by the openness and independence that the Internet in its current form fosters and encourages," said Geneva-based international attorney Edward Flaherty, a senior partner with Schwab, Flaherty & Associates who has litigated extensively against what he calls "systemically corrupt UN organizations" such as the ITU.

If the planetary agency and the alliance of dictatorial member regimes seeking control of the Internet get their way, it will not be good for the world, but there will still be hope. "Should ITU succeed, individual freedom in every country around the world will be substantially threatened," Flaherty told *The New American*. "If the latest ITU's efforts do succeed, it will be left to the entrepreneurs of the world to develop a new Internet that will overcome the restrictions that are sure to be imposed by the ITU — but I am confident they will succeed tremendously."

[Leaked documents](#) recently exposed the international bureaucrats plotting to use propaganda to counter the outrage. Despite the ITU's now-exposed public relations gimmicks, even [public documents](#) from the controversial UN agency reveal that the summit and its participants are indeed hoping to regulate the Internet. Activists are fuming.

[Among the most audacious proposals:](#) a so-called Internet "kill switch" critics say would eventually be used to destroy free speech, a global surveillance regime, online taxes and fees, regulation of social

media, an end to Internet anonymity, putting the Web under ITU jurisdiction, handing oppressive regimes the power to shut down the Internet, and much more. Unsurprisingly, authoritarian forces from China and Russia to Iran and Saudi Arabia and everywhere in between have lined up to support the schemes.

At the same time, though, public outrage all across the political spectrum is growing daily, and the ITU knows it. "Early media coverage was driven by a well-financed and well-organized campaign originating in the USA," notes a leaked ITU document, marked "confidential," outlining the agenda of a retreat hosted in September for senior managers at the UN agency. "The purpose of that campaign was to discredit the ITU and WCIT, so as to minimize the chances that the new [International Telecommunication Regulations] could affect the existing flow of funds for Internet traffic."

However, the ITU could not simply let critics sink its controversial efforts to seize more power without a fight. "The ITU Secretariat has initiated a counter-campaign, which has been fairly successful outside the US and somewhat successful even in the US," the document continued. "However, negative media coverage in the US continues, and is now starting to appear in developing countries, and the Secretariat continues its effort to counter this."

Analysts said the statements suggested ITU officials had become "paranoid" about the mounting outrage, with the leaked UN documents even citing other successful grassroots campaigns that killed previous plots to regulate the Internet. The dubious ITU retreat, though, featured top PR gurus to help the embattled UN agency hatch a plot to attack critics. The goal: ensure that the UN schemes would be approved by governments around the world in spite of the overwhelming public outcry.

After the WCIT in Dubai, according to the leaked document, the ITU propaganda plan will aim to "mitigate the risk" of an "intensive anti-ratification campaign in [wealthier Western nations not ruled by full-blown dictatorships], based on the so-called lack of openness of the WCIT process, resulting in a significant number of countries refusing to ratify the new ITRs." Judging by the language used in the confidential agenda, the UN agency is confident that its "communication campaign" will neutralize the threat to its latest power grab.

The international agency's confidence, however, might be misguided. A growing planetary coalition that spans virtually the entire political spectrum is stepping up the fight, with major companies, labor unions, civil liberties organizations, and diverse activists all clamoring to immediately shut down the schemes being advanced by the ITU and its member regimes. Some experts and analysts are now even calling for the ITU to be abolished altogether.

"We should set a significantly bolder and more audacious goal. It is time to set, as United States policy, the objective of dismantling the International Telecommunication Union," declared Andrew McLaughlin, Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer (CTO) under President Obama until 2011. "The ITU is the chosen vehicle for regimes for whom the free and open Internet is seen as an existential threat."

While the Obama administration has put up some tepid resistance to brazen anti-free speech efforts at the summit, the U.S. government delegation to WCIT is being "entirely too cautious and too timid," McLaughlin continued. "The past and future role of the ITU has traditionally been to foster corruption, monopoly, to facilitate surveillance and censorship," he added, pointing to several schemes at the summit in Dubai described as "horror shows" that would allow dictators to impose censorship or lawlessly spy on the victims of their tyranny.

Google has also been stepping up its campaign against the ITU summit, asking citizens to take action in

defense of a free and open Internet. "Several authoritarian regimes reportedly propose to ban anonymity from the web, making it easier to find and arrest dissidents," explained the search engine giant's Chief Internet Evangelist Vint Cerf, also blasting schemes that purportedly would allow governments to justify censorship or even to shut down Internet access. "Yet other proposals would require any internet content provider, small or large, to pay new tolls in order to reach people across borders."

The UN agency, of course, has been very busy spending taxpayer money to deflect the criticism. Its top officials are even engaged in a deceptive media blitz aimed at Western countries to downplay the significance and the dangers of the WCIT in Dubai. ITU boss Hamadoun Touré, for example, has been busy promoting the propaganda to anyone who will listen. In a recent opinion piece published by CNN, which recently came under fire for accepting taxpayer money to influence its "news" coverage, the UN agency's secretary general claimed that "solutions" to Internet "issues" had to be global because communications are global.

"There are 193 member countries [governments and dictatorships] of ITU, and all are free to express their views. However, no proposal to WCIT will be accepted unless it has very broad support," Touré claimed, referring to the "consensus" approach to treaty schemes used by the UN agency to adopt its agenda. "In all countries there are circumstances when authorities intercept or block communications that are viewed as criminal or dangerous."

Another ITU propaganda stunt was to have representatives of member governments and dictatorships vote "overwhelmingly" to support the UN's so-called "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" at the summit. Left unsaid by the establishment press, however, is that the declaration, mostly a half-baked list of government-issued privileges, specifically states in Article 29 that those "rights" are subject to "such limitations as are determined by law" and "may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations."

The WCIT, which began on December 3 and will go until the 14th, is being held in Dubai, a fitting place for a conference on Internet regulation. The United Arab Emirates issued a decree just last month that completely shut down the nation's final remaining outpost of free speech, which was already strictly controlled. With the new dictate, critics of the government who express their feelings online can actually be imprisoned. Supporters of Internet freedom, however, are working hard to ensure that the scandal-plagued UN and its member regimes cannot start the process of imposing similar dictatorial controls worldwide.

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