

Russia Resubmits Internet Control Proposal

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A [Russia](#)-led coalition resubmitted a previously shelved proposal at this week's International Telecommunications Union conference in Dubai that calls for sweeping new governmental powers over the Internet.

The revised submission, now co-signed by Russia, [China](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), Algeria, Sudan, Bahrain, [Iraq](#) and the UAE, says countries should be able to block some Internet locations and take control of address allocation. The proposal also wants to allow states to track and direct Internet traffic and provides a definition of spam so broad it could potentially apply to almost any e-mailed message, which opponents warn could be used to curb online freedom of expression.

But this proposal has yet to be debated in the public sessions, and its recommendations may have little chance of being approved

As a 12-day conference of the ITU drew near its Friday closing, the chairman of the gathering in Dubai circulated a draft that sidelined proposals from [Russia](#), [China](#) and other countries that have been seeking the right to know where each piece of Internet traffic comes from.

"The United States believes it is the basis for any further progress toward reaching an agreement at this conference," said U.S. Ambassador Terry Kramer, who had led Western opposition to the earlier proposals.

The new draft was greeted positively by a broad swath of delegates to the conference and came as a surprise to many who had been frustrated by the deadlock gripping the event over the weekend.

Hamaoun TourO, ITU secretary-general, said he had hosted discussions between the opposing parties, and weary delegates seemed eager to resolve their differences as talks drag into the early hours each night.

A majority of the more than 150 countries represented at the conference had been willing to officially extend the mission of the [United Nations](#) agency to the Internet, while the Americans, most Europeans and some other advanced economies wanted to limit the ITU to oversight of international phone calls and other means of communication.

The issue is coming to a head now because the ITU is revamping its treaty for the first time since 1988, before the World Wide Web took shape and became an economic, cultural and political force usually free from international oversight.

The compromise-in-progress would move most Internet elements from the treaty itself to a separate, U.N.-style "resolution" that is not binding on the countries, delegates said.

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