

The USITUA is working to improve coordination and cooperation between the private sector and the U.S. Government to enhance U.S. effectiveness in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).



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January 16, 2009

Via Electronic Mail

President-Elect Barack H. Obama
c/o Blair Levin
Obama-Biden Transition Team
Technology Policy Group
900 17th Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006

Dear President-Elect Obama:

On behalf of the United States ITU Association (USITUA), we are writing to share our views with you on the importance of effective U.S. engagement with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)¹, a specialized agency of the United Nations, which has an impact on U.S. economic growth and prosperity, technology leadership and job creation for the U.S. information and communications technology (ICT) industry. The ITU and related multi-lateral policy fora, particularly the InterAmerican Telecommunications Commission (CITEL), which is the regional (intergovernmental) telecom forum within the Organization of American States (OAS), are critical organizations for the United States. The output of these organizations results directly in the promotion of U.S. technologies, the growth of the U.S. telecommunications and high-technology industry, and the international promulgation of U.S. principles of openness, fair trade and the rule of law.

The USITUA, an open U.S. industry forum on ITU policy matters, comprises leading firms and experts from the U.S. ICT industry. It provides industry views and support to the U.S. government and promotes U.S. success in its ITU engagement. Our members believe that for the U.S. ICT industry to be successful, it is imperative that the United States government, in close collaboration with that industry, continues to play a strong leadership role in this important international ITU policy arena. It is particularly important to ensure that the ITU effectively addresses its traditional mandate to support efficient use of the radio spectrum, expansion of reliable and secure telecommunications infrastructure, economic development and technological innovation and that it not be drawn into areas outside its mandate.

USITUA's members also recognize and are extremely appreciative of the extraordinary and highly professional staff of the U.S. government agencies responsible for promoting U.S. communications and information policy. We strongly encourage your administration to recognize the work that those agencies perform with regard to the ITU as critical to the recovery of the U.S. economy. Toward that end, we encourage you to provide those agencies with the resources they need to address an ever-expanding portfolio that includes, among others, global use of the radio spectrum, cybersecurity, use of ICTs for climate change (energy conservation) and disaster recovery, and

United States ITU Association
2300 N Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037-1128
ph. 202.663.8761 • fax 202.663.8007
www.usitua.org

Internet public policy. In order to ensure effective promotion of U.S. goals in these areas, it is imperative that the United States government agencies have adequate resources, including adequate staffing, funding for travel and the like, to play a leading role at the ITU and the relevant regional organizations, such as CITELE, that feed into the ITU process. Additionally, we encourage that your administration work actively within the OAS to ensure that CITELE, which is struggling with budgetary issues that threaten its effectiveness, has the resources it needs to be an effective vehicle for the promotion of the collective interests of the Americas region, which naturally includes support for U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere and globally. It would be unwise to allow this vital organization's capacity to diminish in light of the relatively small sum required to sustain its operations.

Furthermore, the USITUA believes that is imperative that the United States engage at all levels in the variety of intergovernmental fora where communications and information policy is addressed, and that this requires a robust U.S. preparatory process comprising Federal Agencies, U.S.-based industry members and all other interested U.S. stakeholders.

Lastly, the ITU itself needs to maintain its focus on its traditional, mandated areas of expertise. That focus should not be diluted by attempts to deal with issues outside that mandate, attempts which undermine the essential role the ITU plays without concomitant benefit elsewhere. The private sector, in particular, believes that historic US policy on this matter has contributed to the great growth of telecommunications around the world and should be restated and reinforced.

We look forward to discussing these issues further.

Sincerely,



Audrey L. Allison
Chair

¹ The ITU is the pre-eminent global policy-making body for telecommunications that establishes treaty-level instruments, internationally-recognized standards, and important recommendations and reports that underlie the stable, worldwide communications systems. The ITU's mandate spans 3 core sectors: **radiocommunication**, **standardization** and **development**.