Internet Society's contribution to the Regional Preparatory Meeting (RPM) for the Americas Region for the 2014 ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-2014)

Introduction
The Internet Society (ISOC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of all people throughout the world. Since 1992, ISOC has served as a global clearinghouse for technically sound, unbiased information about the Internet, as an educator, and as a focal point for a broad based community of interest engaged in Internet-related initiatives around the world. It provides the organizational home for the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), Internet Architecture Board (IAB), and the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF).

As a Sector Member of the ITU Telecommunication Standards and Telecommunication Development Sectors, ISOC respectfully submits this contribution to the Regional Preparatory Meeting (RPM) for the Americas Region for the 2014 ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-2014). While the Internet Society is a global organization, we also have strong regional presence in Latin America and the Caribbean through our Regional office in Montevideo, Uruguay and thus, believe we bring a unique perspective on a positive way forward for the ITU-D in the Americas. Our contribution aims to provide ISOC’s perspective on the progress the Americas region has made in advancing connectivity since the last WTDC in 2010 and to highlight challenges where more work may be needed. In short, the ITU-D has important work to do in order to assist developing countries to bridge the digital divide and bring much-needed infrastructure to all parts of the globe. To be successful in this mission and to work within limited resources, the ITU-D must work collaboratively and in partnership with other stakeholders in the region.

It has been our experience that cooperation, collaboration and partnership are the cornerstones for effective and sustainable development strategies at the global, regional and local levels and we are hopeful that these elements will form the basis for ITU-D’s activities for the coming period.

Regional Considerations
Since 2010, the Americas region has made tremendous progress toward meeting the collective objectives set out at the Santa Marta Regional Preparatory Meeting prior to the 2010 WTDC. According to the ITU’s 2013 ICT Facts and Figures, 61% of households in the Americas region are online and mobile broadband has reached 48% penetration in the region. According to the telecom market research firm, TeleGeography, local access to bandwidth is on the rise in the region and has actually overtaken the growth of new subscribers since 2006. From our own experience, traffic exchange is improving with the introduction of 23 Internet exchange points.

2 www.telegeography.com
(IXPs) in the region since 2008. Local traffic exchanged in major IXPs in the region has been growing exponentially since 2008. In fact, the IXP in São Paulo reached 140Gbps in 2013\(^3\). This growth of IXPs in the region is setting the stage for higher local capacity, lower costs, lower latency, and increased local content. For example, major cities in the region such as Buenos Aires, Bogotá, and Santiago de Chile have more than 10Gbs of local traffic exchanged in their IXPs. Clearly, the region is well placed to make critical progress over the coming four-year period to expand connectivity, and disperse the benefits of communications to more people.

While there are many positive signs within the Americas, the data also shows that we all still have important work to do together to meet our collective objectives. Though bandwidth is growing in the Americas, much of the traffic continues to be carried on US routes (usually to/from Miami). Intra-regional traffic exchange remains low, creating particular challenges for countries not connected to undersea cables, particularly landlocked countries. There are also risks associated with concentrating regional traffic on fewer routes, particularly in times of natural disasters. The low rate of intra-regional traffic exchange highlights a critical need for greater cross-border cooperation among countries in the Americas, and the importance of accelerating the pace of interconnection projects and agreements in the region. The high concentration of connectivity in capital cities and higher prices in secondary cities and rural areas throughout the region point to a continued need to improve domestic connectivity.

From the Internet Society’s perspective, we see great opportunity for the Americas to play a leading role on the global stage in terms of development and we stand ready to do our part. The Internet Society has a deep commitment to ensuring that all people have the opportunity to benefit from the Internet and our activities in the region are undertaken with this overall purpose in mind. In particular, we are especially proud of our efforts in the following areas:

- Improving cooperation among Internet Service providers;
- Promoting the creation of IXPs;
- Encouraging governments to discuss and understand technical issues;
- Training and supporting capacity building projects;
- Working with Universities, NRENs, and academic institutions to involve students in advanced technical Internet topics;
- Providing support to improve critical infrastructure by cooperating with relevant regional organizations such as LACNIC (Regional Internet Registry for Latin America and the Caribbean), LACTLD (The ccTLD association for the LAC region), LAC-IX (the regional IXP association);
- And Providing technical workshops and online training for regulators, governments, IXPs, ccTLDs, and Universities.

**Regional Development and the ITU**

It has been ISOC’s experience that, in order to reach our shared goals for development and access to communications, collaboration and cooperation through partnerships are essential. Furthermore, policies and approaches that are sustainable and effective must take into account the vital expertise and focus of different stakeholders and organizations. The ITU-D has an important role to play within this complex development ecosystem. To successfully carry out its role, the ITU-D as a global organization and in collaboration with its regional offices should look increasingly to partnerships and opportunities at global, regional and local level for cooperation.

\(^3\) http://ptt.br/trafego/agregado/sp
In considering the role of the ITU-D for the next four year cycle, the Internet Society offers some specific suggestions for work that should either be commenced or work that should be continued from the last period. We offer these suggestions not as a complete list but as a starting point for further discussion as we approach the WTDC in 2014.

1. The ITU-D’s work on the Regulatory and Market Environment for telecommunications should continue. In particular, we commend the ITU’s Global Symposium for Regulators and focus on Regulatory Best Practices as a key forum for Telecoms Regulators from around the world to share information amongst each other and to learn from one another. We would note the excellent workshops that CITEL has hosted within the Americas region on key topics as an area that could be strengthened going forward. We also note the excellent workshops, capacity building and technical assistance that the Americas regional offices have supported in the past, and suggest that close collaboration with partners in the region be strengthened.

2. Emergency communications – the need for continuity of communications during times of disasters is critical within the Americas region, but also globally. We note that continuity and resiliency is best achieved through carefully planned infrastructure diversity. Having multiple connections and different routes between key points ensures that traffic can “route around” network problems – for example, nodes that are off the air because of technical, physical, or political interference. We’ve seen instances where important resources remain accessible even when a country is impacted by disaster. Even though access from local, on-the-ground points may be impossible, it can be incredibly important for people and organizations outside the affected area to be able to access and use regional web resources, etc. We think that the ITU could have an important role in this regard to help encourage network diversity and resiliency.

3. The ITU’s statistics and Indicators work continues to be highly relevant and important for countries and stakeholders to monitor progress and identify challenges. We appreciate ITU’s work in this area and support its continuation.

4. Promotion of local content, intra-regional traffic exchange, and increased access and interconnection – As highlighted above, traffic in the Americas continues to be highly concentrated in several key ways: international routes are still largely through the United States; Internet capacity remains substantially higher in North and South America than in other sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean; market power is generally concentrated among a small number of carriers; and greater capacity is found in major cities than in rural areas. These factors all point to the need for more work to be done to improve access and interconnection, including in rural and underserved areas, bring down prices, empower communities, develop greater diversity, enhance intra-regional cooperation, incentivize the creation and dissemination of local content.

5. Open Standards – In the Internet, standards that are balanced and based on consensus, openness, due process, and transparent processes are an essential part of the ecosystem. These standards are voluntarily implemented and lead to global interoperability, scalability, stability, competition, and innovation. We urge governments to learn more about the benefits of the open standards process and how they can better embrace the results of those activities. We note that a seminar was hosted by ISOC and CITEL in 2012 on this topic, sparking a broader regional discussion about how to encourage greater acceptance of open standards in the Americas.
6. Capacity Building – Development is not only about technical capacity building – human capacity development is also critical. Training the next generation of experts and enhancing institutional/governance capacity provides the basis to grow skills and foster digital inclusion for everyone, including those from disadvantaged communities and those with special needs. This is a key element of any overall development strategy and we encourage the ITU to continue its efforts in this area. Building communities of interest requires knowledge, trust and a set of common objectives. In that light, we encourage the ITU to use its capacity building program in a multistakeholder fashion – to exemplify how stakeholders can come together in pursuit of common goals.

7. Partnerships – As we noted above, cooperation and partnerships are a key element of successful policy and development strategies. As the ITU embarks on projects and programmes, we strongly encourage a partnership approach that encourages mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties involved. In some cases, the ITU may take the lead; in others, it can play an important supporting role. But by working as part of the broader ecosystem, the ITU-D is well-positioned to make an important contribution to advancing global development.

In conclusion, the Internet Society is pleased to take part in the Americas regional preparations for WTDC-2014, and in the global dialogue on development for greater connectivity. If we work together in our areas of expertise, we can all succeed together. The Americas region has made tremendous progress towards its development goals and there are big opportunities for further progress. The Internet Society stands ready to continue to contribute towards this goal at the local, regional, and global levels.

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