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INCITS Statement on the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT)

In December 2012, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will convene an important meeting--the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT)—to renegotiate the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs). This international treaty currently applies only to international telecommunications services; the WCIT will reexamine that treaty.

INCITS is concerned by proposals to expand the role of the ITU in the areas of standards for information and communications technology (ICT), and in particular, proposals to the treaty that would make ITU-T Recommendations mandatory. Although ITU-T Recommendations are adopted by some countries in national regulations, today their use is voluntary. Making Recommendations part of the treaty, and therefore mandatory, will substantially change the nature of those Recommendations and have unintended, negative consequences.

Mandating ITU-T Recommendations would significantly disrupt the highly successful global standardization ecosystem. The ICT sector has flourished, in part, because of the voluntary, consensus standards system supported by INCITS and many other standards setting organizations around the world. Governments, industry and other standards users are able to select the best standard for a particular need and, as new technology standards become available, they can revise their choices. This flexible system fosters innovation and growth of the ICT sector that powers the global economy. A change in the voluntary nature of ITU-T Recommendations would undermine these important benefits.

ITU-T Recommendations must remain voluntary; INCITS calls on participants in the WCIT to affirm their commitment to voluntary, consensus based standards.

About INCITS: INCITS is a leading developer of standards in the ICT sector in the United States, encompassing storage, processing, transfer, display, management, organization and retrieval of information. INCITS serves as ANSI's Technical Advisory Group for ISO/IEC Joint Technology Committee 1 which is responsible for international standardization in the field of information technology.