

**INTERNATIONAL INTERACTIVE  
TRAINING SEMINAR****STUDY PERIOD 2010-2013****English only  
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**STUDY GROUP SPECIAL G – CONTRIBUTION 18****Source:** Belarus**Title:** Opposition to taxing international communications by GTO

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**ABSTRACT**

The proposal to impose a tax on private companies that offer international telecommunication is opposed. The GTO has no authority to impose such as tax.

**Introduction**

The United Nations High Commission on Structure (UNHCS) has proposed creation of the Global Telecommunication Organization (GTO), with a new structure and working methods as compared to the ITU which it will replace. Among its suggestions is one that the global telecommunication industry, as users of GTO standards and beneficiaries of the work of GTO, should contribute to the support of this new global organization through a form of tax on all international telecommunication revenues. The UNHCS stated:

*“Since telecommunications is being or has been privatized around the world, private sector companies engaged in international telecommunications, regardless of their membership in GTO, should pay a tax which supports the GTO”*

**Discussion**

The suggestion that all private sector companies engaged in international telecommunications have an obligation to support an organization which the vast majority of them have never heard of, nor which they depend on for any aspect of their business, is clearly unacceptable. Use of GTO standards is purely voluntary, so there is no assurance that the service providers do in fact actually have any obligations to GTO. Additionally, many such organizations are based in developing countries, and such a tax would increase the costs to the users of their services, reducing the growth of an industry vital to the economic and social development of those countries. An unintended consequence of such increased costs would be to drive usage off those service provider networks onto alternative services, such as Internet-based communications channels and private networks, further limiting the potentials for growth.

It is also without any basis in international law for an intergovernmental organization such as GTO to impose a tax on companies operating within sovereign nations. The regulatory regimes in each country are subject to their national regulations, and the Member States will not transfer such authority to outside entities. The GTO has no such regulatory authority or enforcement mechanisms, making such a proposal totally unworkable and unacceptable.

**Proposal**

While the goals of the GTO are supported, attempts to impose a form of taxation on service providers to support the GTO are unreasonable, contrary to international law and are strongly opposed.