

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Securing U.S. Leadership of Communications Technology”

March 18, 2026

Today this Subcommittee continues its important oversight of our communications networks by ensuring that our country and communications companies are actively participating on the global stage to shape the international policies that will develop the next generation of innovative technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI).

These global policies are decided through a United Nation’s agency called the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). This agency has done tremendous work in its 160-year-old history to ensure seamless connectivity across the world and to help connect those who are unconnected. Our ability to easily call friends and family living abroad, to use the same phone when we travel across borders, or to rely on satellite broadband in even the most remote locations is all thanks to the work of the ITU.

Given the ITU’s role in shaping global communications policy, it is critical that the United States – as one of the 194 Member States – must continue to actively engage with this body. The ITU’s current Secretary-General, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, is a very qualified American with a distinguished career at the ITU. She is up for re-election later this year, and we must strongly support her candidacy.

Also, the ITU will hold the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-27) next year. During this conference, the ITU Member States will make several decisions impacting both the wireless and satellite industries. Given this, both the elections and WRC-27 are critically important – as they collectively will establish the ITU’s leadership for the next four years and set policies that will either help or hamper America’s standing in the global communications marketplace.

Unfortunately, in recent years, we have seen our foreign adversaries try to use bodies like the ITU to sideline the United States and our allies by shaping global communication policy decisions to benefit their countries and their companies, like Huawei. And I suspect we will see similar behavior during the ITU’s elections later this year and at WRC-27 next year.

That’s why Chairman Guthrie and I sent a letter last week to the President asking for a briefing on the Administration’s efforts to prepare for these upcoming engagements. The United States must have an agenda heading into these forums that is unified and aligned with our priorities so that we can secure our country’s dominance in information and communications technology for decades to come. Among other things, this agenda must enthusiastically support the reelection of the Secretary-General Bogdan-Martin, as well as all the other Americans running for ITU leadership positions. It matters who is in charge.

And as history has shown us, early adopters and developers of technology define the marketplace, drive innovation, and reap economic benefits, and so we must continue to lead.

But for the United States to be successful, we have to maintain strong ties with our allies and that's something I'm very concerned about right now, especially with Trump's war in Iran. These ties are important because each country at the ITU retains one vote, and we will not be able to enact our agenda unless we work with other countries and gain their support. Therefore, the head of our delegation must exhibit strong diplomatic skills and identify our top objectives while also understanding where we can compromise. We know our country will not be immune at the ITU from its larger foreign policy decisions, so we will need to be strategic to successfully achieve our policy priorities.

Finally, I appreciate how challenging it will be for government and industry representatives to attend WRC-27 given the conference's location in Shanghai, China. Sadly, this is another indication of just how much our adversaries want to control the agenda in this global arena. Therefore, it will be imperative for the United States to negotiate strong protections for itself and our allies through the Host Country Agreement with China. Among other things, we must ensure that there are strong safety protections in place so that we can have robust participation from government officials and private sector delegates.

The decisions made at WRC-27 will help shape the next decade or more of technology policy. So we must take our seat at the table and make sure we have a lot of people behind us.

I look forward to today's hearing and I yield back the balance of my time.