

Civil Society Statement to the e-G8 and G8

The signatories of this statement are representatives of civil society from around the world working towards the promotion of Internet freedom, digital rights, and open communication.

We understand that the French Presidency of the G8 is holding a G8 internet meeting -- the "e-G8 Forum" -- immediately before the G8 Summit in Deauville, with a view to shaping the agenda of the G8 Summit regarding key global internet policy issues. This meeting is significant in that this is the first year that the internet's role in society and the economy is explicitly on the G8 agenda.

As key world leaders, your policies have a major influence on internet policy globally. Regrettably, certain policies being implemented in the most developed economies are undermining the open and neutral internet -- the very qualities that represent the essence of its democratic and economic potential. We believe that G8 Member States should use the e-G8 meeting as an opportunity to publicly commit to expanding internet access for all, combating digital censorship and surveillance, limiting online intermediary liability, and upholding principles of net neutrality.

Internet Access for All

We are particularly concerned about the increasing trend of nations cutting off citizens' access to the Internet and mobile networks in times of crisis, as Egypt, Libya, Iran, China, Nepal, and Burma have all done. In many if not all of these countries, we see how important access to the Internet is as a gateway to a plethora of others civil, political, and fundamental human rights.

Many G8 countries are actively pursuing policies that would similarly seek to restrict and control access; these policies legitimize actions of repressive regimes and threaten the core of the internet economy. As many nations endeavor to improve basic and universal access, the increase of restrictive policies in both the developed and developing world is a regressive and deeply worrying trend.

Freedom from Online Censorship & Surveillance

Simultaneously, repressive regimes are harnessing the internet's power for their own purposes, often with the help of multinational corporations based in G8 countries. We urge you to end the sale of these technologies both at home and abroad, and put an end to these gross invasions of user privacy and security.

Online Intermediary Liability and Intellectual Property

To defend freedom of speech online it is critical that we resist mounting pressure from the entertainment industry and other sectors to impose greater intermediary liability on online service providers for the actions of their users through instruments like HADOPI and ACTA.

In this regard, we urge you to follow the example of the Brazilian government's Principles for the Governance and Use of the Internet, specifically #7 which reads: "*All action taken against illicit activity on the network must be aimed at those directly responsible for such activities, and not at the means of access and transport, always upholding the fundamental principles of freedom, privacy and the respect for human rights.*"¹

Net Neutrality

We further call on you to commit your nations to protecting net neutrality -- the principle that all web traffic should be treated on an equitable basis no matter where it originated or the type of data being transmitted.

These are some of the key Internet governance issues which we feel merit and require the attention of the G8. We also draw your attention to two comprehensive declarations of principles we believe should guide nation states in Internet governance:

- The *10 Internet Rights and Principles* developed under the aegis of the Internet Rights and Principles Coalition².
- Assembly Declaration of the right of Communication, written at the World Social Forum 2011.³

We would also like to highlight our concerns regarding the planning of the e-G8. We join our voices to the Internet Governance Caucus⁴ which expresses our collective concern about the lack of representation of civil society at the e-G8 and G8 meetings this year.

Contrary to current best practices in policymaking, the invite list has been limited primarily to representatives of government and corporate leaders, who already enjoy disproportionately large influence over Internet regulation. Specifically, we are deeply concerned that corporate interests will dominate discussions at the e-G8 and G8 summits; issues like strict intellectual property enforcement and increasing online intermediary liability seem likely to take primacy over citizen-centered policies like net neutrality, Free Software, and combating online censorship.

¹The full document of which is available at:

<http://www.cgi.br/english/regulations/resolution2009-003.htm>

²The English version is available here: <http://internetrighsandprinciples.org/node/397> and in French here: <http://internetrighsandprinciples.org/node/400>

³<http://fsm2011.org/en/the-right-to-inform-and-be-informed>

⁴<http://www.igcaucus.org/open-letter-president-sarkozy-eg8-meeting-plan>

As corporations pay \$100,000 for seats at the e-G8 table, few representatives of civil society are present to advocate for the priorities of citizen-users of the world. We are at a critical point in the history of the Internet and the struggle for human rights. As the elected leadership of some of the world's most powerful nations, we urge you to act now to uphold and defend the principles of digital rights and internet freedom, not just for your citizens, but for people all over the world.

Signed,

Access - www.accessnow.org

Association for Progressive Communications (APC) - www.apc.org

Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financière et l'Aide aux Citoyens (ATTAC) - www.attac.org

Digital Democracy - www.digital-democracy.org

Digitale Gesellschaft - <http://digitalegesellschaft.de>

European Digital Rights (EDRi) - www.edri.org

Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) - www.eff.org

The Guardian Project - www.guardianproject.info

Internet Rights & Principles Coalition - www.internetrightsandprinciples.org

The Julia Group/Juliagruppen - www.juliagruppen.se

La Quadrature du Net (LQDN) - www.laquadrature.net

May First/People Link - www.mayfirst.org

MobileActive - www.mobileactive.org

Movements.org - www.movements.org

Open Rights Group (ORG) - www.openrightsgroup.org

Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) - www.rsf.org

WITNESS - www.witness.org

VECAM - www.vecam.org