

Freedom of Expression on the Internet
Cross-regional Statement
Human Rights Council 23rd session
June 2013

Mr President,

I have the honor of addressing the Human Rights Council on behalf of...

Mr President,

The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action asserted that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. This was also at the core of the resolution 20/8 "*The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet*" adopted by consensus in this Council a year ago. Our conviction that freedom of expression and access to information promotes development in all spheres of society stands firm. With the remarkable spread, use and potential of modern communication technologies, the importance of this link cannot be overestimated. Internet, social media, and mobile phone technology have played, and should continue to play, a crucial role as instruments for participation, transparency and engagement in socio-economic, cultural and political development.

We also reiterate what was stated in the important resolution 20/8; that the same rights that people have offline such as freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information must also be protected online.

To enjoy and ensure the potential that the internet offers, we believe that there should be as little restriction as possible to the flow of information on the Internet and we repeat our call on all states to ensure strong protection of freedom of expression, privacy and other human rights online in accordance with international human rights law.

As the Internet continues to spread and its impact grows, the handling of security concerns are moving into the realm of the Internet as well. However, the state's efforts to manage security concerns may pose a challenge when it relates to the Internet.

It is of paramount importance to recall that the state has an obligation to respect, protect and promote individuals' human rights and fundamental freedoms. This applies, as laid out before, both in the physical world as well as on the Internet. We therefore wish to emphasize that when addressing any security concerns on the Internet, this must be done in a manner consistent with states' obligations under international human rights law and full respect for human rights must be maintained.

Recognizing the complexity and the diversity of the Internet, it is our belief that governments should promote and protect human rights online at the same time as taking responsibility for security concerns. We are convinced that governments can achieve this through the establishment of democratic and transparent institutions, based on the rule of law. This is not only possible, but necessary to ensure that the Internet can continue being the vibrant force which generates economic, social and cultural development.

Mr President,

We repeat our support for resolution 20/8 and to our shared objective of universal access to the Internet. For the internet to remain global and open, it is imperative that countries currently lacking capacity to adequately deal with security concerns adopt a growth- and freedom-oriented, participative, bottom-up perspective on security that has human rights at its core. This will promote participation for all.

We welcome all other states who wish to associate themselves with this statement.