



REPRESENTATION PERMANENTE DE LA FRANCE
AUPRES DE L'O.S.C.E

**Challenges to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and human rights in the age of
new information and communication technologies, including the respect for privacy -
Working session 2 (Tuesday, 22 September 2015)**

Statement from the French delegation

I stand behind the statement of the European Union and wish to add a few points at national level.

1) The Internet and, beyond, the new information and communication technologies, have opened up a tremendous space for freedom, exchanges and sharing among people and cultures. There is nevertheless a danger, when the Internet is diverted from its proper use to serve as a tool for repression, censorship and tracking down political opponents. To ensure there remains opportunities for development and democracy, all rights must be guaranteed over the Internet and protected in the same way as in the real world.

France considers that these rights should not be prioritized and that the restrictions they may impose must be in keeping with the limitations provided for by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and with the rules and regulations of a state governed by the rule of law.

2) We feel it is time to recall here, at the OSCE, that in 2011 at Deauville, France, the G8 Heads of State and Government strongly affirmed for the first time that "freedom and security, transparency and respect for confidentiality, as well as the exercise of individual rights and responsibility have to be achieved simultaneously. Both the framework and principles must receive the same protection, with the same guarantees, on the Internet as everywhere else. They also affirmed that "Freedom of opinion, expression, information, assembly and association must be safeguarded on the Internet as elsewhere. Arbitrary or indiscriminate censorship or restrictions on access to the Internet are inconsistent with States' international obligations and are clearly unacceptable."

Restrictions on freedom of expression, which may be legitimate in a democratic society when consistent with international law, cannot serve as a tool for political repression. By putting forward national security objectives or the prohibition to blaspheme or indulge in defamation so as to silence dissident voices, certain regimes have turned the Internet into a space to be kept under control and thus artificially limit its potential for beneficial exchanges. At the level of the OSCE, we are concerned about the increasing use of arbitrary censorship and general restrictions on access to the Internet for the sole purpose of reducing the public space. Bloggers, human rights defenders and journalists are the first victims of this state of

affairs. While the digital world cannot be a lawless area, nor should it turn into a repression tool.

3) At national level, France is also seeking to guarantee the exercise of fundamental rights when passing legislation on the new information and communication technologies. France's approach to Internet governance is respectful of the individual and his beliefs and privacy, while guaranteeing a balance with the other fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression, and with public security imperatives and innovation requirements.