



Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Working Session 1: fundamental Freedoms.

Freedom of expression offline and online

The Netherlands aligns with the statement made by the European Union and would like to make the following comments in its national capacity.

Freedom of expression offline and online is a key priority for the Netherlands.

As the importance of ICT in daily life grows, we must ensure that human rights, including the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy, are protected online as they are offline. These rights are essential to media freedom and pluriformity, and foundational to democratic, innovative and progressive societies. They create a healthy environment for the exchange of opinions and counter the opportunities for spreading misinformation among citizens.

Our modern societies face increasing challenges to freedom of expression and privacy. There is thus a need to further these rights through appropriate national legislation, strong safeguards and effective oversight, consistent with international human rights standards.

Although we must remain vigilant about those who use the Internet for incitement to violence, we must also ensure that such violations are countered within the framework of the rule of law without allowing ourselves to be governed by a climate of fear. Human rights and security online are complimentary concepts.

We must remember that a free, open and secure Internet is a global resource which should be managed in the public interest. We need to ensure that the various stakeholders play an active role in the ongoing discussions about its governance, management and security. We must also ensure that those who do not yet have a voice in this debate are empowered to participate in these discussions. That those with a voice remain protected, that violence against journalist gets prevented and if necessary prosecuted. The Netherlands actively pursues inclusiveness of the multistakeholder community in debates about the various aspects of cyber.