



Global Business Dialogue on Electronic Commerce

## Cyber Ethics Task Force

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### STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES ON CYBER ETHICS

The GBDe - bringing together the leading companies active in electronic commerce - seeks to demonstrate a responsible approach to the Internet.

A core principle that guides the GBDe is the belief that business plays a leadership role in helping to shape the development and the growth of the Internet to be a positive influence on the lives of people everywhere, and in pursuing a medium of which we can all be proud. The GBDe also believes that consumers' trust in the Internet is of crucial importance for the development of the Information Society.

The World Wide Web has become a vital medium for education, communication, entertainment commerce and new employment

opportunities; it has revolutionised the means of human interaction and has developed into an essential tool for the global realization of freedom of speech and the individual's right to receive and impart information. It may even be considered as a late fulfilment of the aspirations embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights offering everybody the means to seek, receive and impart information and ideas regardless of frontiers.

Unfortunately, the qualities of the Internet which make it capable of advancing positive social and commercial objectives also make it susceptible to abuse and the perpetuation of unethical and/or illegal ends through the dissemination of unethical material such as child pornography, anti-Semitic, racist or xenophobic content.

## Extract from Final Recommendations

Pursuing effective solutions proves extremely challenging in the traditional legal and regulatory setting because the Internet spans existing borders, jurisdictions and applicable laws. In addition, cultural diversities and divergent national standards and legal traditions render it very difficult to assert globally accepted and authoritative standards for criminal or illegal material.

The GBDe believes, therefore, that market-oriented transnational solutions should be developed and promoted to protect against the spread of unethical material such as child pornography, anti-Semitic, racist or xenophobic content, while fully protecting rights to free speech and expression as well as artistic and journalistic freedom.

The GBDe welcomes the efforts of the United Nations and other global and regional organisations to raise awareness of the problem, including by proclaiming 2001 the international year of mobilization against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

In seeking to take an active stance against the spread of unethical material on the Internet through voluntary cross-border industry self-regulation, making available filtering and labelling tools for users, and through awareness efforts in cooperation with competent authorities and other organizations, while fully protecting rights to free speech and expression as well as artistic and journalistic freedom, the GBDe agrees upon the following principles:

### **GBDE PRINCIPLES RELATING TO MEMBER COMPANIES' OWN SERVICES, MATERIAL AND OFFERS**

1. GBDe members shall take steps to ensure that their services, materials and offers do not promote unethical material as described above. While taking such steps in appropriate circumstances, GBDe members shall not compromise their longstanding and fundamental commitment to artistic and journalistic freedom and the essential principles of free speech and expression.

### **GBDE PRINCIPLES RELATING TO USERS**

2. In order for 'Cyber Ethics' to become a widely understood and respected part of the Internet discourse, where appropriate, GBDe members shall support the establishment of outreach programs designed to impart media competence and principles of cyber ethics among current users and in the next generation of cyber citizens.

They shall inform users, where appropriate, about ethical practices for the Internet and about the availability and use of labelling and filtering tools.

They shall support filtering and labelling tools such as the Platform for Internet Content Selection (PICS), the Internet Content Rating Association (ICRA) or other user based tools, and shall seek to provide technical assistance in the use of these tools to permit Internet users to allow or deny access to a given site and to preserve the performance of their Internet applications.

### **GBDE PRINCIPLES RELATING TO BUSINESS PARTNERS**

3. Where GBDe members are directly involved in the creation or distribution of content via the Internet, these members shall encourage their business partners with whom they collaborate in the creation or distribution of content via the Internet to comply, through terms of services, with acceptable use policies that respect the spirit of the present Statement of Principles and companies' own ethical policies.

### **GBDE PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PUBLIC AUTHORITIES**

4. The GBDe believes that industry should enter into a constructive dialogue with international and regional organisations in order to coordinate public and private efforts to

## Extract from Final Recommendations

prevent the spread of unethical material on the Internet while preserving free speech and expression on a global level.

Industry will, in accordance with national law and practice and in due recognition of fundamental rights, and in particular the right to free speech, continue to co-operate expeditiously with law enforcement authorities for the investigation of criminal or illegal material on the Internet.