

**Global Network Initiative**  
*Protecting and Advancing Freedom of Expression and Privacy  
in Information and Communications Technologies*

**Diverse Coalition Launches New Effort  
To Respond to Government Censorship and Threats to Privacy**

October 28, 2008— In an effort to protect and advance the human rights of freedom of expression and privacy, a diverse coalition of leading information and communications companies, major human rights organizations, academics, investors and technology leaders today launched the Global Network Initiative.

From the Americas to Europe to the Middle East to Africa and Asia, companies in the information and communications industries face increasing government pressure to comply with domestic laws and policies that require censorship and disclosure of personal information in ways that conflict with internationally recognized human rights laws and standards.

The Initiative is founded upon new Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy – supported by specific implementation commitments and a framework for accountability and learning – that provide a systematic approach for companies, NGOs, investors, academics and others to work together in resisting efforts by governments that seek to enlist companies in acts of censorship and surveillance that violate international standards.

The Initiative is being launched in the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is founded upon the internationally recognized human rights for freedom of expression and privacy set out in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#).

The Principles and accompanying Implementation Guidelines require significant new commitments from participating companies, including: establishing greater transparency with users; assessing human rights risk; requesting the legal rationale for government actions and policies; training employees; challenging human rights violations; and providing whistle-blowing mechanisms through which violations of the Principles can be reported.

The participants recognize that responsible company actions alone cannot guarantee that human rights are not violated. Instead, governments have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that human rights are respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled. That is why the Initiative establishes significant new commitments for company, NGO, investor and academic participants to collaborate with each other to promote the rule of law and the adoption of laws, policies and practices that protect and respect freedom of expression and privacy.

Protecting freedom of expression and privacy in a climate of rapidly changing technologies, products and services is a complex and constantly evolving task, so collaboration among participants to lobby governments, dialogue with stakeholders in local markets and share learning from their experiences will be critical to the success of the Initiative.

The participants also announced the formation of an organization to promote and support the long-term success of the Initiative. A multi-stakeholder governance structure for the Initiative is being established to support joint efforts by all participants and ensure the accountability of the participating companies.

The success of the Initiative in establishing a worldwide standard requires a global perspective that is broadly based in the information and communications industry. Therefore, a key priority of the Initiative is actively recruiting new members – from business, academia, investors, and civil society – with a clear commitment to the advancement of freedom of expression and privacy.

The Initiative is the outcome of a multi-stakeholder process that began in 2006 and was formalized in early 2007. The group has closely examined issues and cases relating to freedom of expression and privacy around the world, as well as relevant international laws and standards and a number of global multi-stakeholder processes in other industries.

### **Quotes**

**Colin Maclay, Acting Executive Director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, said:**

“The number of states actively seeking to censor online content and access personal information is growing, and the means employed – technical, social, legal, political – are increasingly sophisticated, often placing internet and telecommunications companies in difficult positions. In a situation characterized by rapidly evolving technologies, models and products, with more users – and government interest – than ever, a strong code of conduct for companies embodies the most promising approach to dilemmas that neither national law nor international regulation can effectively resolve at this time.”

**Dawn Wolfe, Research Analyst, Boston Common Asset Management, said:**

“As an active investor, Boston Common Asset Management expects its portfolio companies to be responsive to the myriad of risks facing their global operations. Information and Communication Technology companies currently face evolving challenges to their ability to deliver products and services, which depend on the protection of personal privacy and free expression rights in order to thrive. Boston Common views the implementation of these Principles as a strong indicator that management is taking credible action to mitigate risks to these human rights and, ultimately, to the companies' ability to deliver quality products to its customers.”

**Bennett Freeman, Senior Vice President, Social Research and Policy, Calvert Group, said:**

“Internet service providers and other ICTs face serious risks related to human rights around the world. This initiative has the immediate potential to become the global standard that guides companies in addressing these risks and meeting their responsibilities not only to their shareholders, but also to the hundreds of millions of users who are also their stakeholders around the world. Balancing respect for freedom of expression and the right to privacy with government policies and practices is not easy, but these principles give companies a reasonable basis to guide their actions.”

**Leslie Harris, President and CEO of the Center for Democracy & Technology, said:**

“The Initiative launched today sets out an ethical and accountable framework to help companies respond to the growing challenges to privacy and freedom of expression in today's digital world. It is the result of an extraordinary two-year collaboration among a diverse set of companies, human rights groups, investors, academics and other stakeholders. Together, we aim to sow the seeds of a global standard that will be adopted by companies and promoted by advocates of digital rights worldwide. We also aim to create a powerful forum for continued collaboration, shared learning and joint action on digital freedom.”

**Robert Mahoney, Deputy Director, Committee to Protect Journalists, said:**

“The Internet and mobile communications have given journalists a powerful new voice. But Big-Brother governments are increasingly turning such liberating technologies into tools of control and repression. Censorship, Internet filtering and wire-tapping are rampant. If they fail to stifle independent voices, there's always jail. One in three journalists imprisoned today worked online. This initiative is a first step, but a landmark first step, toward putting the basic human rights of

freedom of expression and privacy front and center in the battle between the public and the gatekeepers of communication and information. We hope that many more companies and groups will join us, particularly those from countries where journalists are sacrificing life or liberty just for doing their job.”

**Adam M. Kanzer, Managing Director & General Counsel at Domini Social Investments LLC, said:**

“This initiative represents a serious effort to wrestle with some of the most difficult challenges facing Internet and telecommunication sector companies around the world. These technologies are helping to build global communities, advance knowledge and contribute to global broad-based wealth creation. Their long-term success is intimately connected to the fundamental human rights of the users of their products and services. This initiative strives to highlight that connection, and provide practical, meaningful principles for companies that face government requests that violate international human rights norms. It is grounded in international human rights law, practical experience, and a commitment to transparency and accountability. We have not solved every problem, but we have built a strong foundation of trust and agreement to build upon.”

**Karina Litvack, Head of Governance & Sustainable Investment, F&C Investments, said:**

“Information and Communication Technology companies face increasing scrutiny of how they manage human rights-related risks in challenging conditions that are often not of their own making. The Principles come at the right time and provide a valuable body of best practice to help companies address these concerns. We encourage all telecommunication and internet companies to sign up to the Initiative and use the Principles and supporting tools as part of their internal controls for managing these business risks.”

**Andrew McLaughlin, Google Director of Global Public Policy, said:**

“Google has a strong record of promoting freedom of expression and protecting its users’ rights. We have joined this initiative because we know that a wide range of groups working together can achieve much more than the company acting alone. The principles we’re announcing today are universal, and our next step must be to bring on board more companies and NGOs from around the world.”

**Mike Posner, President, Human Rights First, said:**

“In today’s world, it is urgent for Internet providers and other communications companies to challenge government censorship and intrusion into personal privacy. These practices often lead to tragic consequences for front line human rights activists. Through this initiative, we take a crucial first step in advancing free expression and privacy, at a time when government interference with these basic human rights is on the rise.

“As we move to implement this initiative, we will judge our success by whether we can develop a credible system for reviewing and evaluating individual company compliance with these standards. The public must have confidence that participating companies are taking the necessary measures to challenge unwarranted government interference. Technology must no longer be used to trample basic human rights.”

**Arvind Ganesan, Director, Business and Human Rights Program, Human Rights Watch, said:**

“This initiative is an important opportunity to ensure respect for human rights in the ICT industry. The hard work is still ahead, but this is an important step forward.”

**Meggin Thwing Eastman, Senior Research Analyst for Technology and Communications, KLD Research & Analytics, said:**

"KLD recognizes that freedom of expression and the right to privacy are essential to civil society. The socially responsible investment community believes that corporations play a vital role in sustaining these core freedoms. By defining and promoting worldwide standards for Internet and telecommunications companies, the Global Network Initiative can help protect human rights in the digital age."

**Pamela Passman, Corporate Vice President and Deputy General Counsel for Microsoft's Global Corporate Affairs, said:**

"Microsoft's core mission is to help enable many more of the world's citizens and societies to realize their full potential. A key aspect of this mission is to help enable the capabilities today's global networks and technology provide, such as access to reliable information, opportunities for self-expression, engagement with public issues, and the ability to connect across borders. Microsoft is pleased to support this Initiative to help advance basic protections for freedom of expression and privacy and to further our commitment to responsible leadership."

**Jonas Kron, Senior Social Research Analyst at Trillium Asset Management Corp., said:**

"Trillium Asset Management Corp. is guided by a belief that active investing can offer good returns to the investor, while also promoting social and economic justice. The Internet provides individuals a powerful vehicle for expression – political, social, economic and cultural. Unfortunately, it can also be used to violate the human rights we hold dear. Therefore, we are acutely aware that these gatekeepers of the Internet must address privacy and freedom of expression concerns in a proactive and accountable manner which protects our hard won rights. We believe these three documents represent a productive first step in meeting these responsibilities."

**Deirdre K. Mulligan, Assistant Professor at UC Berkeley School of Information, said:**

"This effort once again reflects the unique willingness of the high-tech sector – corporations, non-profits, academics – to work collaboratively to advance the rights and freedoms of online users around the world. This Initiative, while nascent, sets the groundwork for a shared bottom-up strategy and mechanisms for advancing and protecting human rights in digital media."

**Mark Bench, Executive Director of the World Press Freedom Committee, said:**

"As the world increasingly obtains its news and information from a press that is making a progressively larger – or even exclusive – use of the Internet, old problems must be attacked in new ways. Longstanding censorship issues such as laws imposing criminal penalties for alleged defamation or even truthful statements that "insult" a head of state (or other government officials) become even more damaging when the last bastion for the wrongfully persecuted, protecting oneself under the cloak of anonymity that the Internet may provide, cannot be fully utilized. These principles assist the press and any other citizens who seek to inform and influence others by ensuring a strong united front against the government persecution and censorship that is often effected against the lone dissenter."

**Jerry Yang, Co-Founder and CEO, Yahoo! said:**

"Yahoo! was founded on the belief that promoting access to information can enrich people's lives, and the principles we unveil today reflect our determination that our actions match our values around the world. These principles provide a valuable roadmap for companies like Yahoo! operating in markets where freedom of expression and privacy are unfairly restricted. Through the collective efforts of industry, advocates, and government, we will continue to see technology and the Internet as a way to improve people's lives."

## **More Information**

The Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy and related documents can be found at [www.globalnetworkinitiative.org](http://www.globalnetworkinitiative.org).

## **Press Contacts**

### **Berkman Center for Internet and Society**

Lexie Koss

+1 617 384 9100

[lkoss@cyber.law.harvard.edu](mailto:lkoss@cyber.law.harvard.edu)

### **Calvert Group**

Melinda Lovins

+1 301 657 7089

[melinda.lovins@calvert.com](mailto:melinda.lovins@calvert.com)

### **Center for Democracy & Technology**

Brock Meeks

+1 202 637 9800 x114

[brock@cdt.org](mailto:brock@cdt.org)

### **Committee to Protect Journalists**

Meredith Greene-Megaw

+1 212 465 1004 x105

[mgmegaw@cpj.org](mailto:mgmegaw@cpj.org)

### **Domini Social Investments LLC**

Geoff Wisner

+1 212 217 1063

[gwisner@domini.com](mailto:gwisner@domini.com)

### **Electronic Frontier Foundation**

Rebecca Jeschke

+1 415 436 9333 x125

[press@eff.org](mailto:press@eff.org)

### **F&C Investments**

Paula Garrido

+44 (0)20 7 011 4190

[paula.garrido@fandc.com](mailto:paula.garrido@fandc.com)

### **Google**

Bob Boorstin

+1 202 346 1221

[rboorstin@google.com](mailto:rboorstin@google.com)

### **Human Rights First**

Matt Dorf

Rabinowitz-Dorf Communications

+1 202 265 3000

[matt@rabinowitz-dorf.com](mailto:matt@rabinowitz-dorf.com)

**Human Rights in China**

Mi Ling Tsui

+1 212 239 4495

[miling.tsui@hrichina.org](mailto:miling.tsui@hrichina.org)**Human Rights Watch**

Arvind Ganesan

+1 202 255 8305

[ganesaa@hrw.org](mailto:ganesaa@hrw.org)**Internews**

Annette Makino

+1 202 822 2093

[aymakino@internews.org](mailto:aymakino@internews.org)**KLD Research & Analytics**

Amy Blumenthal/Karen Myers

Blumenthal &amp; Associates

+1 617 879 1511

**Microsoft**

Waggener Edstrom

+1 503 443 7070

[rrt@waggeneredstrom.com](mailto:rrt@waggeneredstrom.com)**Rebecca MacKinnon**

Journalism and Media Studies Centre

University of Hong Kong

Office: +852 2219 4005

Mobile: +852 6334 8843

[rmack@hku.hk](mailto:rmack@hku.hk)**Note:** Rebecca MacKinnon is in the Hong Kong time zone and can do interviews in Mandarin.**Trillium Asset Management Corp.**

Jonas Kron

+1 971 222 3366

[jkron@trilliuminvest.com](mailto:jkron@trilliuminvest.com)**World Press Freedom Committee**

Mark Bench

+1 703 715 9811

[embench@aol.com](mailto:embench@aol.com)**Yahoo!**

Tracy Schmalzer

+1 202 777 1053 or +1 202 631 9463

[schmalzer@yahoo-inc.com](mailto:schmalzer@yahoo-inc.com)

###