

PRESS RELEASE



UN Special Rapporteur supports campaign for IT industry to act to protect children online

London/Bangkok – April 18, 2005 - The United Nation's leading human rights expert on child pornography is backing a new global campaign to get the IT industry to take responsibility for ensuring children's safety online.

The make-IT-safe campaign was launched this morning by children's groups in 67 countries. It calls on the IT industry to take urgent, worldwide action to ensure its Internet and interactive technologies are safe for children and young people.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Mr Juan Miguel Petit, today came out in support of the make-IT-safe campaign.

Mr Petit said his recent report to the Commission on Human Rights about child pornography on the Internet showed that "while IT technology offers unprecedented opportunities for children and adults to learn, participate and choose, it is also very open to abuse".

"The Web is a space of nearly unlimited freedom where real and virtual blur together and cybernauts hide their identities behind smiling emoticons. This no man's land is vulnerable to abusive and harmful use and is proving to be permeated by an alarming proliferation of child pornographic material.

Child pornography on the Internet is a truly global problem and needs global responses from different actors, Governments, law enforcement agencies, the private sector, in particular Internet service providers (ISPs), software designers, credit-card companies, NGOs, including consumers' organizations, the media, teachers and educators, children and their families.

From awareness-raising campaigns to hotlines, a wide range of actions have been undertaken to equip children and their families with the skills and tools against the risks of abuse or to report web sites with abusive contents. A creative use of the media is crucial to get the message across."

The Special Rapporteur said he supports initiatives like the make-IT-safe campaign which go in that direction.

The backing of the Special Rapporteur has been welcomed by make-IT-safe campaign partners, ECPAT International and the Children's Charities Coalition for Internet Safety.

ECPAT International executive director Carmen Madriñán says the support of the UN Special Rapporteur is a major boost for the make-IT-safe campaign and adds weight to its lobbying of IT industry and governments.

The make-IT-safe campaign is being led by ECPAT International, a global child rights NGO with groups in 67 countries, and the Children's Charities Coalition for Internet Safety, which includes all the UK's leading child welfare organisations.

The campaign calls on the IT industry and its leaders to set up a global child protection body which to set industry-wide safety standards and protocols, to fund research into new safety technologies, and to undertake a worldwide education campaign in all the major languages.

As well, ECPAT is using its global network to lobby governments to adopt policies to ensure IT child safety, to enable international legal co-operation to combat child abuse through the Internet and interactive technologies, and care and protection for children abused or exposed to harmful images and messages online.

For further information, please contact:

Mara Steccazzini, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 22 917 9151 Fax: +41 22 917 9006
Email: msteccazzini@ohchr.org

OR

Karen Mangnall, ECPAT International communications officer, Bangkok, Thailand
Tel: +66 2 215 3388; 611 0972 Ext 112 Fax: +66 2 215 8272
Email: karenm@ecpat.net