

## 2011 Global Civil Society Representatives Statement on Internet Governance

The following statement was prepared for delivery by Amira Yahyaoui of Tunisia on behalf of a cross-regional group of civil society representatives

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First, we want to say how pleased we are to be meeting at the IGF here in Kenya. As a Tunisian, I can bear witness to the fact that the movement for freedom on the African continent has been facilitated by the availability of new ways for us to communicate. When the World Summit on the Information Society was held in my country in 2005, the regime thought that it would serve to legitimate its dictatorship. Instead, because so many people were present, like those who are here in this hall, those of us in the country who wanted a new future were inspired by the show of solidarity and support from abroad for our striving for freedom. Given that so many people were present from around the globe, with so many connections to each other across the world, the effect on a repressive regime was exactly the reverse of what the dictator hoped for. This precedent shows that other dictatorships trying to exploit the magnificent prospects of the new global information society will not succeed.

I am attending the IGF for the first time and I am part of a group of internet freedom advocates. We come from Bahrain, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Thailand, Tunisia and the United States.

As diverse as we are, we all agree on the following:

We appeal to the democracies to adopt policies and legislation that will prevent repressive regimes from continuing to oppress their people. This means that the export of technologies to governments that use them to repress their citizens should systematically be banned. Voluntary codes of conduct adopted by major companies are a positive step that should be backed up by strong legislation enacted by their home governments. Some companies have indicated that they

would welcome such legislation to create a level playing field.

Activists and ordinary citizens everywhere, especially those living under repressive regimes, need a safe and open environment for communicating, including on social networks. We have seen that such networks provide a powerful tool against repression. Those who provide such services should therefore make it possible for democratic movements to communicate among themselves in a secure way. In that regard, privacy and the right to anonymity are major factors for security. Any violation of those principles must be the exception, allowed only in extraordinary circumstances defined by law in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Dictators always have a good excuse to limit our freedoms, whether in the name of national security, defending against extremism, safeguarding morality, cultural protection, respect for religion, or protection of officials against insult. These are all among the pretexts for limiting our human rights through censorship and denial of access, against which the IGF should take a strong stand.

These essential demands are not, of course, the only concerns of the human rights community. If they were to be met, however, they would clearly improve the climate for internet governance in the world.

Thank you for your attention. Asante sana.