

France, Netherlands seek to halt Internet censorship

July 8 2010



France and the Netherlands called for international guidelines to prevent private firms from exporting high-tech equipment that could be used for Internet censorship. Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen, pictured in June 2010, said there must be "concrete measures taken to ensure that the Internet remains a universal forum" and singled out Iran for blocking access to anti-government websites.

France and the Netherlands called Thursday for international guidelines to prevent private firms from exporting high-tech equipment that could be used for Internet censorship.

Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen said there must be "concrete

measures taken to ensure that the Internet remains a universal forum" and singled out Iran for blocking access to anti-government websites.

"We must support cyber-dissidents in the same way that we supported political dissidents," French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told a meeting in Paris attended by some 20 countries including the United States and Japan.

France and the Netherlands plan to hold a ministerial-level meeting in October to flesh out the guidelines for firms who sell technology that could be used to suppress democracy.

Officials from Google and Microsoft attended the meeting in Paris, the first by a working group on freedom of expression on the Internet.

Concerns about [Internet censorship](#) have mostly focused on Iran and China.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi has accused German engineering giant Siemens and Finnish telecoms firm Nokia of supplying Iran with technology to help it suppress dissent. The firms have denied the charges.

The Dutch foreign minister said blocking websites and [social networking sites](#) was "a violation of human rights".

Jean-Francois Julliard, from the media rights group [Reporters Without Borders](#) (RSF), accused French phone equipment provider Alcatel of selling bugging equipment to Myanmar.

He also singled out networking giant Cisco for allegedly selling encoders to China.

"We can also raise questions about the responsibility of France Telecom as a shareholder in operators in Morocco and Tunisia where information does not flow freely on the Internet," Julliard said.

Several non-governmental groups such as Amnesty International and Internet Sans Frontieres took part in the Paris talks along with experts and business groups.

(c) 2010 AFP

Citation: France, Netherlands seek to halt Internet censorship (2010, July 8) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-07-france-netherlands-halt-internet-censorship.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.