

Key Internet summit to discuss online rules

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French President Nicolas Sarkozy kicked off the gathering in Paris, hailing the assembled players as the leaders of the "Internet revolution", but warning that with their power comes great responsibility.

He hailed the role of the Internet in helping protestors organise recent Arab uprisings such as the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, but insisted it must be underpinned by "values" and "rules."

"The people of the Arab countries have shown the world that the Internet does not belong to states," Sarkozy said. "The Internet has become the measure of credibility of democracies and the measure of shame of dictatorships."

Top executives from online giants including Google, Facebook and Microsoft attended the gathering to tout the economic potential of the Internet, which Sarkozy has put on the agenda of the [G8 summit](#) he is hosting two days later.

With blogs and [Tweets](#) oiling the wheels of revolutions in some countries and scans and downloads sparking trade disputes in others, the stakes are high for leaders seeking to promote and profit from the web but also to regulate it.

Authorities in several countries have clashed with Google, the world's biggest [Internet search engine](#), notably in China, where the company accused the government of hacking dissidents' email accounts.

And, while acknowledging the net's power as a force for freedom elsewhere, western countries differ on how to harness or curb it on their own doorsteps.

[Media freedom](#) campaigners such as [Reporters Without Borders](#) have criticised moves by some European countries, such as a recent French law making web users liable to prosecution if they illegally download films and music.

German and Italian regulators have placed restrictions on Google's Street View, over [privacy concerns](#) for people photographed in its online street maps.

In France, several publishers accuse Google of scanning their

copyrighted books for its online library.

Sarkozy touted the meetings of the e-G8 and the G8 as an unprecedented meeting of the online and political worlds.

He convened the e-G8 to draw up a declaration aimed at Group of Eight leaders who will meet at their annual summit on Thursday and Friday in the northern French resort of Deauville.

The e-G8 guests include the executive chairman of [Google](#), Eric Schmidt; the founder of social site [Facebook](#), Mark Zuckerberg; and Jeff Bezos, founder of online retail giant Amazon.

Also attending is Rupert Murdoch, the billionaire head of the global media empire News Corporation, which includes Fox News and the Wall Street Journal, and dubbed by Forbes magazine "the man who owns the news."

Sarkozy was to host 22 of the biggest players for lunch at the Elysee Palace and Murdoch was due to address the gathering later on Tuesday.

Representatives from consultancy McKinsey told the gathering the Internet sector accounted for 3.4 percent of output and 10 percent of growth in the past five years in 13 key economies including the G8 and China.

"Your work can be considered historic and impacts civilisation," Sarkozy told delegates.

"With this in mind, your level of responsibility is undoubtedly the highest ever given to individuals who do not work in the public sector or as state representatives."

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