

Sarkozy: Gov'ts must regulate the Internet

May 24 2011, By JAMEY KEATEN , Associated Press

(AP) -- French President Nicolas Sarkozy said Tuesday that governments need to lay down and enforce rules in the digital world - even as they need to foster creativity and economic growth with the Internet.

The French leader acknowledged he took a risk and faced mistrust over his push for the so-called e-G8 conference when Japan's earthquake, fiscal troubles in Europe and revolutions in the Arab world have filled the plate for the Group of Eight summit later this week in Normandy.

The two-day gathering is bringing together Internet and media world gurus like [Google](#) executive chairman [Eric Schmidt](#), News Corp. Chairman and CEO [Rupert Murdoch](#), and Facebook founder and CEO [Mark Zuckerberg](#).

Paris plays host to the e-G8 at a time about simmering concerns that some countries - including several in Europe, including France - have taken measures or enacted laws that could curb Internet freedoms.

And it comes after social media played an important role in a push for greater freedoms across the Arab world - with many people mobilized and brought together through Twitter or Facebook.

Conflicting visions about the Internet - notably about how regulated it should be - has pit companies like Amazon.com and Google in opposition with governments who to protect privacy and copyrights online.

Sarkozy alluded to the tensions.

"We need to hear your aspirations, your needs," Sarkozy told hundreds of business executives, creative minds and journalists at Tuileries Gardens in Paris. "You need to hear our limits, our red lines."

Policymakers like Sarkozy say the blistering pace of growth has often left regulators behind. He said a "balance" needed to be struck to prevent misuse of the Internet - such as to protect children who might Web surf - and boost its potential as a tool for economic growth.

"That's the meeting point, and the balance, that we are going to try to reach: to keep everything that you bring, and at the same time, understand there is a minimum value of rules that must not impede your development but will allow for us to continue together toward much higher growth rates," said Sarkozy.

The two-day conference of top digerati is billed as the first of its kind, and is expected to draw recommendations for the G8 summit Thursday and Friday in the English Channel resort town of Deauville.

Last week, the United Nations' U.N.'s independent expert on freedom of speech said governments that cut users' access to the Internet are violating a basic human right - regardless of the justification.

Britain last year joined France by announcing would cut off Internet access to people who illegally download copyright-protected material. The French government has so far issued only warnings under the "three strikes" formula for possible penalties.

Google and French songwriters and composers struck a deal last September under which the artists will get paid when their videos are seen on the Internet search giant's YouTube video service.

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