

Governments urged to support scrambling digital data

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An open letter called governments around the world to reject policies or deals that limit people's access to powerful data encryption tools that could even shield information from intelligence gathering agencies and promote online safety

An open letter posted on Monday by Internet freedom advocates called on governments to back tough encryption of digital data to keep people's information private.

The letter quickly gathered nearly 200 online signatures, including renowned computer security specialist Bruce Schneier and groups such as the Internet Association and the Electronic Privacy Information Center, after it was posted at the website securetheinternet.org.

"The ability to freely develop and use [encryption](#) provides the cornerstone for today's [global economy](#)," the letter said.

"Economic growth in the digital age is powered by the ability to trust and authenticate our interactions and communicate and conduct business securely, both within and across borders."

The letter called on governments around the world to reject any policies or secret deals that limit people's access to powerful data encryption tools that could even shield information from intelligence gathering agencies.

Governments were urged to spurn any idea of making companies build "backdoors" that they could use to get private data and to not ask for software "keys" for unscrambling encrypted information.

"There's no middle ground on encryption," TechFreedom's policy counsel Tom Struble said in a statement announcing that the group signed the letter.

"Any vulnerability imposed for government use can be exploited by those who seek to do harm."

Countries considering proposals to undermine data encryption included Britain, China, India, France and the United States, according to TechFreedom.

"Encryption and other anonymizing tools and technologies enable

lawyers, journalists, whistleblowers and organizers to communicate freely across borders and to work to better their communities," the letter said.

"We encourage you to support the safety and security of users by strengthening the integrity of communications and systems."

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