

Web pioneer wants new 'contract' for internet

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Web pioneer Berners-Lee said 'all kinds of things have gone wrong' with the internet

The inventor of the worldwide web, Tim Berners-Lee, on Monday announced plans for a "contract" to ensure the internet remains "safe and accessible" for all.

"All kinds of things have things have gone wrong," the computer scientist, who in 1989 invented the Web as a platform, said at the opening of the Web Summit, Europe's largest tech event.

"We have [fake news](#), we have problems with privacy, we have people being profiled and manipulated," he said.

Like other tech pioneers, Berners-Lee saw the [internet](#) as a platform that would open [new horizons](#) but he is disappointed with how it has evolved.

Employees of Google, Facebook and other tech giants have in recent months gone public with their regrets, calling the products they helped build harmful to society and overly addictive.

"We've lost control of our [personal data](#) and that data is being weaponised against us. The power to access news and information from around the globe is being manipulated by malicious actors," his Web Foundation said in a report outlining the need for a new contract for the web.

"Online harassment is rampant, and governments are increasingly censoring information online—or shutting down the internet altogether," it added.

Berners-Lee, 63, wants governments, companies and citizens to iron out a "complete contract" for the web by May 2019, the date by which 50 percent of the world will be online for the first time.

The French government and [internet giants](#) Google and Facebook back the principles of the proposed contract, such as respect for people's right to privacy and guarantees that everyone can connect to the internet, according to his Web Foundation.

The two firms now have direct influence over nearly three quarters of all internet traffic thanks to the vast amounts of apps and services they own such as YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram.

"We have big and small players, it's not the UN of the digital world, it's a call for voluntary engagement, for those who want to be part of the solution, whether they're part of the problem or not," the foundation's policy director, Nnenna Nwakanma, told AFP.

The Web Foundation said the majority people not online live in poor countries and it criticised the fact that "billions of people" access the internet "through a small handful of huge companies".

The United Nations General Assembly in 2013 called on countries to "respect and protect the right to a private life, including online".

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