

Statement of the 2nd UNESCO INFOethics Congress '98

October 3rd 1998

UNESCO, since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights fifty years ago, has emphasized constantly that

- „everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas to any media and regardless of frontiers“ (art. 19) and
- „no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family house or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of law against such interference or attacks“ (art. 12) ¹.

While the new communication media provide new opportunities they also produce new threats to these principles.

We, the participants of INFOethics'98 congress, consider the promotion of the role of information in the public domain, of multilingualism, the protection of privacy, confidentiality and security, are vital issues.

In the light of the conclusions of the conference

- we recognize that the new information and communication environment will influence our societal structure and value systems
- we believe, however, that it is the people who shall shape the future
- we recognize that the improvement of the new environment is within the mandate of UNESCO, the United Nations Organization for education, science, culture and communication
- we believe that the new electronic world should reflect and reinforce the world's cultural and linguistic diversity and encourage international cooperation
- we consider knowledge a public good that needs to be made publicly available in accordance with the principles of the free flow of information and of fair use.

We consider that among the most urgent problems in this context are those of freedom of access and personal privacy.

Access to the resources of the Internet should reinforce democratic participation and is a contemporary realization of the universal principle of the freedom of expression. Privacy is one of the most threatened values and needs special protection in the electronic world.

We recommend that UNESCO, in cooperation with UN and other international organizations, should

1. promote and defend freedom of expression and privacy protection in cyberspace as well as in traditional media

¹ Cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 19; cf. Art 12; United General Assembly Resolution 59 (I) of Dec. 14, 1946; General Assembly Resolution 45/76 A from Dec. 11 1990; General Conference of the UNESCO, 25th session 19989, Resolution 104

2. support all measures to overcome barriers between the information rich and the information poor
3. promote and extend access to the public domain of information and communication
4. promote education and training to achieve media competence for everyone
5. contribute to a world-wide electronic forum on information ethics designed to support UNESCO's work in that field
6. promote interdisciplinary debate on all ethical implications of new communication technologies
7. support actions to prevent the criminal abuse of the Internet
8. support cultural diversity and multilingualism in cyberspace and take measures which allow every individual, every culture and every language to contribute to and benefit from the new store of world knowledge.