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#### Abstract

This document presents a suggested set of basic principles that the authors believe should underlie all future work in the area of Internet governance. The purpose of this document is to work towards as broad a consensus as possible, in the diverse Internet community, about principles that should inform the way the Internet is

administered for the benefit of all humanity.

The principles have been drafted under the auspices of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, with several iterations internal to that organization. However, they are still very much seen as a work in progress. Comments are solicited from all interested parties. Future versions will be refined based on these comments and published as future Internet-Drafts, with a goal of publication of a finalized version of the declaration as an Internet RFC in summer, 1998.

All comments on this document are welcome; please send them to [onenet-comments@cpsr.org](mailto:onenet-comments@cpsr.org). Open discussion of this document is encouraged on the onenet-discuss list, which is archived at <http://www.findmail.com/listsaver/onenet-discuss>.

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## One Planet, One Net: Principles for the Internet Era

The emergence of the Internet presents enormous opportunities and challenges to humanity. If we work to preserve its openness and diversity, we can ensure that the Net will be used to change the human condition for the better, and can prevent or mitigate its less desirable consequences.

The Internet is more than wires, computers, software, modems, routers, standards, and the applications that use them. It even encompasses more than text and pictures, and the audio and video that are rapidly joining those media. The Net is also the collective knowledge and experience of countless communities, each with its own modes of interaction, languages of discourse, and forms of cultural expression.

Certain principles must be understood and respected as we consider the more detailed daily questions that arise in the administration or governance of the Net. We believe that among these principles are the following:

### 1. The Net links us all together.

- [2.](#) The Net must be open and available to all.
- [3.](#) Net users have the right to communicate.
- [4.](#) Net users have the right to privacy.
- [5.](#) People are the Net's stewards, not its owners.
- [6.](#) Administration of the Net should be open and inclusive.
- [7.](#) The Net should reflect human diversity, not homogenize it.

The continuing evolution of the Internet presents both opportunities and challenges. We must work to counter the political, economic, social, and technical forces that work against these principles and threaten the promise of open communication on the Internet. Failure to do so may lead to a future in which the Internet is homogenized, commercialized, and regulated to the extent that it fails to meet its fundamental mission - to serve as a medium for maximizing human potential through communication.

[1.](#) The Net links us all together.

The nature of people and their use of networking technology provides a strong natural drive towards universal interconnection. Because the flow of information on the Net transcends national boundaries, any restrictions within a single country may act to limit the freedom of those in other countries as well.

The true value of the Internet is found in people, not in technology. Since each new user increases the value of the Net for all, the potential of the Net will only be reached when all who desire can openly and freely use the Net.

[2.](#) The Net must be open and available to all.

The Net should be available to all who wish to use it, regardless of economic, social, political, linguistic, or cultural differences or abilities. We must work to ensure that all people have the access to the technology, education, and support necessary for constructive, active

participation. People in all walks of life should have as much right to send and receive information as do the affluent and powerful.

### **3. Net users have the right to communicate.**

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Every use of the Net is inherently an exercise of freedom of speech, to be restricted only at great peril to human liberty. The right to communicate includes the right to participate in communication through interacting, organizing, petitioning, mobilizing, assembling, collaborating, buying and selling, sharing, and publishing.

The Net offers great promise as a means of increasing global commerce and collaboration among businesses, but restrictions on information exchange would eviscerate that promise.

### **4. Net users have the right to privacy.**

Without assurances of appropriate privacy, users of the Net will not communicate and participate in a meaningful manner. The right to privacy includes at least three forms:

- Individual Network users should control the collection, use, and dissemination of personal data about themselves, including financial and demographic information.
- Network users should be free to use any available technical measures to help ensure the privacy of all aspects of their communications.
- Individuals have the right to control who they communicate with, and how they conduct that communication. The privacy implied by the decision to not communicate must be respected.

### **5. People are the Net's stewards, not its owners.**

Those who want to reap the benefits of the shared global Net are obliged to respect the rights of others who may wish to

use the Net in different ways. We must work to preserve the free and open nature of the current Internet as a fragile resource that must be enriched and passed on to our children.

Individual pieces of the Net, such as wires, routers, and servers, have owners whose economic rights and interests must be respected. However, just as the ecosystem in which we live cannot be owned, the Net itself is not owned by anyone.

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#### **6. Administration of the Net should be open and inclusive.**

The Net should be administered in an open, inclusive, and democratic manner for the betterment of humanity. The needs of all who are affected by the Internet - including current users, future users, and those who are unable to or choose not to be users - must be considered when making technical, social, political, and economic decisions regarding the operations of the Internet.

Although administration of the Net should aim to enhance its efficiency, availability, and security, it should not do so at the cost of discouraging use of the Net. Administration should facilitate and encourage greater use of the Net for communication, rather than inhibit it in any way.

#### **7. The Net should reflect human diversity, not homogenize it.**

The Net has the potential to be as varied and multi-cultural as life itself. It can facilitate dialogue between communities and individuals that might previously not have encountered each other in a dozen lifetimes. However, the Net could also become a homogenizing force, working to suppress diversity in favor of a bland globalism.

Individuals and communities should not be forced to forego local cultures and traditions in order to participate in the Net. In order to preserve the vitality that comes with a

diversity of viewpoints, we should work toward helping the whole world participate as equals.