



5 Country Ministerial Statement on the Second Anniversary of the Launch of the “Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse”

In March 2020 the Five Country Ministerial (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States) launched the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, in consultation with six technology companies, and the WeProtect Global Alliance. Since then, G7 Interior Ministers have added their [support](#), and a total of sixteen companies have [endorsed](#) the Principles. The goal of the [Principles](#) is “the prevention of child sexual exploitation and abuse”.

We commend companies for making commitments to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse on their platforms. We trust each company is taking action to implement the Principles, commensurate with those commitments. We note though that there remain fifteen industry members of the WeProtect Global Alliance and thirteen members of the Technology Coalition¹ - organisations whose stated purpose is to protect children online - that have not endorsed the Principles. Two years on from their launch, with three months until government, industry and civil society meet at the WeProtect Global Alliance’s Summit in June - we reiterate our call to those remaining companies, and wider industry, to endorse and transparently implement the Principles.

We all have a duty to do more to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Governments must ensure that they support education, research and innovation, have appropriate legislative frameworks in place, and that law enforcement has the resources it needs. Industry also must play a central role in tackling these crimes. The online world is a powerful and important creation, which has brought incredible change and benefits throughout the world. But along with these benefits, there are harms that arise from the misuse of the online world. Industry has many tools at its disposal to influence its design, and a central role to play in ensuring children are protected.

Industry made 29.4 million reports to the U.S. based National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in 2021 alone. We applaud these efforts. We also note that over the last five years, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection’s (C3P) “[Project Arachnid](#)”, a web-crawling technology solution to identify child sexual abuse material, sent over 11 million notifications to 1,000 tech companies, spanning nearly 100 countries. In response to C3P’s requests, companies removed more than six million images and videos of child sexual exploitation and abuse from circulation. These efforts show that online child sexual exploitation and abuse is a global threat, constantly evolving and changing with the landscape of online platforms, operating across a broad online ecosystem. However, the volume and severity of online child sexual abuse and exploitation material is increasing rapidly year on year, despite current efforts.

¹ The Technology Coalition is an industry organisation established to fight child sexual abuse online.

In the interests of supporting joint efforts to address this global challenge, we call on those companies that have already endorsed the Voluntary Principles to share more information on the decisions you make and steps you are taking to keep children safe online, particularly as the threat grows and tactics used by perpetrators for luring children on the internet evolve. The Internet Watch Foundation recently found that increasingly young children are being targeted and groomed, with a sharp rise in content showing the sexual abuse of children between the ages of seven and ten years old. A key part of the response to this constantly evolving threat to the safety of children is for platforms to continue to be innovative in their responses, commit resources commensurate to the threat, make their services “safe by design”, provide age-appropriate services, and share information and lessons on gaps and challenges.

We reiterate our call to the Technology Coalition to deliver on the commitments they made in June 2020 under their “[Project Protect](#)”, which has led to investment in technology and research, making important contributions towards tackling the evolving threat. To support shared efforts to address this problem, we call on the Technology Coalition to provide more information on the impact of this work to date. We have also consistently advocated for an approach to industry transparency that draws on expertise from technology companies, civil society organisations and governments. We were therefore pleased to see the Technology Coalition’s recent [commitment](#) that it will “publicly launch” a voluntary industry framework for transparency reporting on June 1, 2022, and its commitment to consult widely. We call on industry to deliver concrete proposals as part of this work, with the objective of developing baseline metrics. An initial meeting held recently, convened by the WeProtect Global Alliance, was an important first step, but broad and thorough consultation will be key to the development of a meaningful framework.

We are hopeful that this work will provide momentum for further action ahead of the WeProtect Global Alliance’s Annual Summit in June 2022, which also coincides with the second anniversary of the launch of Project Protect. In the lead up to the Summit, our countries look forward to receiving further information on the steps being taken and to further dialogue on transparency.

We must all work collectively to make greater progress to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse online, and to address the re-victimization of survivors of these crimes.

Hon Karen Andrews MP, Australian Minister for Home Affairs.

Hon Marco Mendicino MP, Canadian Minister of Public Safety.

Hon Jan Tinetti MP, New Zealand Minister of Internal Affairs.

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Merrick B. Garland, Attorney General of the United States.

Alejandro N. Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security of the United States.