The Hague Charter
for Accountability in the Digital Age

The digital world is changing everything. Whether purely digital, cyber-physical or otherwise. And in any context.

As much as the bounties of the Digital Age are improving our lives and economies, it is changing the way individuals and organisations communicate, act and react to each other. Interactions in the Digital Age are complex and raise a number of questions including the protection of human rights, integrity and dignity, and the lack of transparency and accountability.

As Internet has become a need to have, not a nice to have, failure to protect and defend personal and societal rights, integrity, dignity and other values in the Digital Age can have devastating consequences. These human and societal values need to be protected from malicious acts and other threats, and the bounties of the Digital Age distributed.

An internet, where each stakeholder is accountable for the consequences of acts and omissions, accountable to others and to society, is integral and crucial to the success of the digital society and economy.

Accountability may refer to personal, social, professional, economical, ethical, philosophical and legal factors and, in this context, principally refers to the duty for internet actors to demonstrate the appropriate levels of accountability, be responsible for the consequences of their actions and to operate within the confines of the rule of law. It also refers to an open, accessible, secure, resilient and accountable internet for all, in line with universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Hague Charter for Accountability in the Digital Age seek to uphold such human-centric and accountable Internet, encompassing all Internet- and cyber-physical-related applications from artificial intelligence to the internet of things, which are essential to the building of sustainable societies and economies in the Digital Age, and the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda.

Individuals and societies need to be able to trust that their personal integrity, democratic and societal values and rights are safeguarded and protected in the Digital Age. Digitalization and accountability must evolve hand in hand. In order to keep pace with continuous advances and threats, people, communities and organisations in all sectors and communities must join forces and take decisive action.

This requires, where not yet implemented already, making concerted efforts to both protect the integrity and rights of individuals and societies in the Digital Age as well as to protect the integrity of the Internet and related ecosystems, and explore and construct a basis for accountability in a hyper-connected and digital world. One which positions human beings, human rights and universal values at the center, with the main aim to leave nobody behind.

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Our High Level Key Principles:

With this The Hague Charter for Accountability in the Digital Age, the signing partners outline a meta-framework of key accountability principles that we consider essential, within the existing applicable rule of law, for the protection of personal integrity on and of the global internet, and for establishing accountability and safeguarding democratic values on the Internet for individuals, society and relevant public and private stakeholders. Without prejudice to the existing fundamental rights and related frameworks within the applicable rule of law, we believe that a common goal to be pursued is to strive to position human rights and values at the heart of the Internet and its use.

1. **Internet of Values:** We take these values and perspectives as a starting point for analysis and action:

   a. Human and societal values, including human rights and democracy;
   b. The notion of rights and responsibilities, and finding a reasonable and meaningful balance between them;
   c. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as the overall goal, 169 targets to be achieved and the related indicators, metrics and measures to be contextual yet objective;
   d. Net neutrality as an underlying principle;
   e. Respect for the rule of law;
   f. Multi-stakeholders' participation in a multi-faceted context;
   g. Accessible, transparent, enforceable redress, and measurable remedies.

2. **Accountability By Default:** Adopt the highest appropriate level of accountability and ensure that it is configured into the design of services, ecosystems, platforms, processes, technologies, operations, architectures, and value and business models.

3. **It Is Everyone's Task:** Anchor being accountable throughout society including the highest governmental, societal and business levels, and all the way through local, national and international contexts. It is everyone's task to be accountable.

4. **Education:** Include internet accountability and digital skills both in educational curricula as well as career development tools, to facilitate both capacity building and resilience, and to lead the transformation of skills and job profiles needed for the future.

5. **Human-Centricity:** Serve as a trustworthy, guiding and accountable stakeholder towards individuals, communities and society.

6. **Transparent & Technology-Neutral:** Inclusive and overarching principle-based, transparent and technology-neutral approach by default addressing all technologies linked through the internet.

7. **Multi-sectorial Partnerships:** Drive and encourage joint-initiatives and other partnerships between the public sector, private sector and other sectors and stakeholders, in order to implement the principles in the various parts of the digital world without undue delay.

8. **Continuous Co-Creation:** Co-create with a permanent multi-stakeholder dialogue the relevant subsets of principles, parameters, indicators and metrics that may represent the ability of Internet providers and users to be accountable, including but not limited to general awareness-raising, media and information literacy, good practice codes, informed recommendations, statutory legislation or regulation. Apply the expertise developed for the quantification of similar human and societal values to measure accountability in the Digital Age.

9. **Policy Frameworks & Enforcement Collaboration:** Participate in a permanent multi-stakeholder dialogue and network in order to share new insights, information on incidents and trends, and facilitate discussion on effective redress and remedies. Promote local, national, regional and international collaborations in good practices, standardization, regulation and awareness, as well as appropriate, effective and readily accessible alternative dispute resolution and cross-border law enforcement.