

Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online

Diplomatic statement | 20-09-2023

Today, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada and Her Excellency Hanke Bruins Slot, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands launched the Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online, endorsed by: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Uruguay and United States.

Purpose

The rapid development of digital technologies creates new possibilities and challenges for democratic engagement through the broad and rapid sharing of information. A reliable, safe and diverse information ecosystem online can foster open, free and inclusive public debate on important societal issues that is based on an understanding of reality grounded in shared facts, including by allowing adequate consideration of scientific evidence. It can be the foundation for solving global challenges, creating inclusive policies and supporting the enjoyment of freedom of expression and the right to education and access to information, among other things. These efforts will have a direct and positive impact on individuals' well-being. At the same time, there is a need to address the erosion of information integrity online, which includes the spread of misinformation and disinformation campaigns by state and non-state actors. We are at a global inflection point where taking action to protect the digital information ecosystem is necessary to preserve safe and productive online environments and continue to enjoy the benefits the digital age provides.

The term “information integrity” is defined in this Declaration as an information ecosystem that produces accurate, trustworthy, and reliable information, meaning that people can rely on the accuracy of the information they access while being exposed to a variety of ideas. By using the term “information integrity,” we wish to offer a positive vision of a broader information ecosystem that respects human rights and supports open, safe, secure, prosperous and democratic societies.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) and other AI systems have offered unprecedented opportunities for development and innovation. Large language models have already shown great potential in facilitating enhanced access to information and understanding of information accuracy. However, the technology also holds the potential to challenge the integrity of the information ecosystem online with generative AI products making it increasingly difficult for public audiences to identify accurate information – as seen with biased AI-generated media, mass produced disinformation narratives in almost every

language, and deepfakes. These developments risk making AI an enabling tool to spread disinformation at a far greater speed and scale than ever before. A multi-stakeholder, transparent, and inclusive human rights-based approach to information integrity can help us better understand and respond to generative AI, its future, and related applications. This approach would allow us to strengthen our responses to the opportunities and challenges AI brings to the information ecosystem and to information integrity online. The development and use of AI must fully respect international law, including international human rights law and humanitarian law.

This Declaration establishes a set of high-level international commitments by participating States to protect and promote information integrity online. It is grounded in international law, in particular human rights treaties, as the foundation of good governance that transcends borders, promotes equality and freedom of expression and the media. The Declaration also sets out participant States' expectations that industry and online platforms adopt a human rights-respecting approach and employ business practices that contribute to a healthy information ecosystem online. It aims to build on the work of the Summit for Democracy Cohort on Information Integrity, the work of civil society, including the Forum on Information & Democracy and its various reports on the reliability of information, and aims to complement existing UN efforts underway such as the Code of Conduct for Information Integrity on Digital Platforms. The Declaration forges a positive pathway forward for the promotion of information integrity online, working together towards a rules-based, democratic, safe, and digitally inclusive world. This focus also enables us to strengthen existing multilateral and multi-stakeholder efforts to protect the information ecosystem. At the heart of this approach is our shared belief in working towards the full and meaningful access to, and use of, the Internet and other digital technologies for all.

We, the participating States, are committed to:

- Respect, promote and fulfill all human rights that are essential to upholding information integrity, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information regardless of frontiers.
- Implement necessary and appropriate measures, including legislation, to address information integrity and platform governance, in a manner that complies with international human rights law, including but not limited to States' obligations to respect privacy rights as set out in Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the rights of freedom of opinion and expression as set out in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Respond to and monitor the rapid development of emerging technologies such as generative artificial intelligence, including through multi-stakeholder fora, to identify the possible risks, impacts, harms, benefits and opportunities to the information ecosystem online and ensure that adopted measures are proportional to the risks, respect human rights and promote international law.
- Promote user access to diverse online content, including national and international sources of news and information, and encourage efforts that promote diversity of

- content online while supporting the promotion of cultural diversity, such as through supporting and fostering strong, independent and pluralistic media that also help to preserve cultural heritage and identities, and local languages.
- Promote and respect pluralistic media and journalism, and protect access to media content as one measure to counter disinformation.
 - Support initiatives that strengthen civic education online, especially to improve digital, media and information literacy so that individuals are empowered to think critically about the information they are consuming and sharing, and enable societies to become more resilient to the negative impacts of misinformation and disinformation, and online harms more generally.
 - Take active steps to address misinformation and disinformation targeted at women, LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples, acknowledging that women, adolescents and girls, in all their diversity, persons belonging to minorities and persons in vulnerable situations are specifically targeted and impacted.
 - Strengthen the multistakeholder approach, considered crucial to safeguarding the information ecosystem online, by working with all stakeholders, including with regulatory bodies, industry, technical experts, academia, and civil society, in order to increase understanding of the complexities of the online information ecosystem and foster better and stronger responses to online harms.
 - Support international cooperation and information exchange including by working with other initiatives and partnerships, such as the Forum on Information & Democracy, to promote digital freedom and inclusion, and bridge digital divides, including establishing a possible community of practice to allow for knowledge-sharing.
 - Refrain from unduly restricting human rights online, especially the freedom of opinion and expression, under the guise of countering disinformation, including blocking or restricting access to the Internet, eroding privacy, intimidating, harassing or abusing journalists, researchers and human rights defenders, interfering with their ability to operate freely, or criminalizing or otherwise punishing the exercise of the right to freedom of expression online.
 - Abstain from conducting or sponsoring disinformation campaigns, domestically or transnationally, that willfully spread inaccurate information with the intent and effect of undermining the course of justice or democratic processes, and to condemn any such acts.

Participating States invite online platforms and the industry to:

- Respect the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and uphold democratic principles online across the societies in which they operate, while ensuring not to contribute to violations or abuses of human rights, and taking into consideration the need for human rights due diligence as articulated in the United Nations "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights".

- Encourage a responsible, human rights-based and human-centric design, development, implementation, and use of existing, new and emerging technologies, notably generative artificial intelligence, in a manner that upholds and safeguards information integrity online, and that promotes safety, privacy and security by design, with full respect for international law, including international human rights law.
- Promote research and the sharing of best practices on ensuring transparency, human oversight and accountability in relation to the uses of artificial intelligence systems in ways that promote and uphold information integrity online, including in instances where such systems are used to support content moderation, while ensuring that the rights of individuals to freedom of opinion and expression, the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and other human rights are promoted and respected.
- Enhance the transparency of algorithms, including by making easily and publicly available, drafted in plain and intelligible language, accounts of the main parameters and factors considered by algorithms to curate content feeds and search query results, determine ranking and formulate targeted advertising.
- Enhance the transparency and accountability of algorithms, thereby empowering users to make informed choices, allowing for evidence-based policy decisions by governments, and encouraging companies to examine problems they would not otherwise address.
- Establish or strengthen systems for effective oversight of the algorithmic systems used by online platforms and search engines to make sure that the functioning of such algorithms is in line with the transparency and risk management responsibilities of the online platforms.
- Establish policies around political and issue advertising that support education and user empowerment and that preserve election and democratic integrity, so that users can maintain agency online, and researchers and civil society can identify related implications.
- Ensure the trustworthiness of their services with respect to accounts that purposely undermine information integrity, including through clear and implemented policies in the use of automated systems to amplify, prioritise, recommend or remove content, as well as promoting safeguards against the monetization of misinformation and disinformation.
- Develop effective indicators of trustworthiness of information sources by working with civil society organizations and academia.
- Support interoperability and facilitate the incorporation of third-party applications that provide users with features, functions and tools to promote information integrity and address misinformation and disinformation.
- Promote users' access to meaningful and timely feedback, complaints and appeal processes to any decisions taken in regard to moderation decisions on their accounts or content, as well as decisions made on complaints and reports.
- Support independent good faith research efforts to track and understand online information, facilitate fact checking and, where appropriate, enable access to relevant data on reporting, appeal and approval processes, while ensuring respect for international law.

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