

United States Comments on 'Recommendations for Human Rights Based Approaches to Cybersecurity' by the Working Group on an Internet Free and Secure

The government of the United States appreciates the efforts of the Working Group on an Internet Free and Secure of the Freedom Online Coalition, and commends its members for the Recommendations for Human Rights Based Approaches to Cybersecurity the group has produced.

As a nation, we promote strong cybersecurity and human rights protections both domestically and around the globe. These aims are sometimes portrayed as conflicting with each other, but in fact, as the Recommendations make clear, cybersecurity and human rights are complementary, mutually reinforcing and interdependent. In fact strong cybersecurity often promotes privacy and other rights, and protecting privacy and other rights can likewise improve cybersecurity.

The Recommendations draw attention to the importance and relevance of human rights to cybersecurity policies and practices, for all stakeholders. When states attempt to use cybersecurity aims as a pretext for laws and policies that prevent individuals from exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms, we must reject these justifications.

Similarly, cybersecurity conversations are sometimes directed to multilateral institutions, where civil society and the private sector may be excluded. The notion that states alone have an interest in cybersecurity is incorrect. Indeed, all stakeholders must work together to promote a free and secure Internet that enables innovation, development, and human rights, particularly privacy rights and freedom of expression.

Finally, the Recommendations highlight the critical role of cybersecurity capacity building in putting these recommendations into practice. Without such capacity building measures, Internet users will lose trust and confidence in the integrity and safety of their personal data and communication online.

The United States endorses the approach the Working Group has taken to these important issues, and we look forward to continuing to work together to promote cybersecurity policies and practices that are consistent with human rights and the rule of law.

26 August 2016