

The Hague Declaration

Adopted and proclaimed
by the founders of the Digital Standards Organization
in The Hague on 21 May 2008

Whereas almost 60 years ago the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, established in international law these rights and freedoms:

1. Freedom from discrimination by government or law (Article 2, Article 7).
2. Freedom of movement within the borders of each state (Article 13.1).
3. The right to participate in government (Article 21.1).
4. The right of equal access to public services (Article 21.2).

Whereas these rights and freedoms are today accepted by every democratic government and backed by the constitutions of most states;

Considering that all countries are moving, at different rates and from different starting points, towards a society in which full and effective participation in government and society, and access to posthocs, education and opportunity, are increasingly dependent upon access to electronic communications;

Considering more specifically that:

- Government information, services and resources are increasingly provided virtually rather than physically;
- Freedom of speech and association are increasingly exercised on line rather than in person;
- The Internet and the Web provide an unprecedented avenue to equality of education and opportunity for all peoples throughout the world;

Considering that the benefits of the Internet may only be guaranteed, and our hard-won human rights may only be preserved as we transition to a digital society, ensuring affordable, equal access to the Internet, if the openness of the Internet is also preserved;

Considering the unique role that free and open digital standards can play in ensuring this result by fostering competition and innovation, lowering costs and increasing choice;

Considering that governments, through example and procurement, are uniquely able to ensure that all people achieve the benefits that free and open digital standards can provide;

Considering that these benefits are of particular importance to the economically, socially, and geographically disadvantaged peoples of the world;

Considering that there is increasing consensus on the attributes of a free and open digital standard;

We call on all governments to:

1. Protect only information technology that implements free and open standards;
2. Deliver e-government services based exclusively on free and open standards;
3. Use only free and open digital standards in their own activities.

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