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| Neelie Kroes Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda Taking care of the Internet Internet Governance Forum Nairobi, Kenya, 27th September 2011  |
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| **SPEECH/11/605****Neelie Kroes**Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda**Taking care of the Internet**http://europa.eu/rapid/exploit/2011/09/SPEECH/EN/s11_605.eni/Pictures/100000000000011C0000010968C92F0B.jpgInternet Governance Forum**Nairobi, Kenya, 27th September 2011**Ladies and Gentlemen, It is a real pleasure to be here in Nairobi for the Internet Governance Forum. I am grateful to Kenya for hosting this important event.The Internet is changing the world. It is not just a trillion-dollar marketplace. It is a forum where people connect, a platform for astounding innovation, and a powerful vehicle for human rights and fundamental freedoms.In May, at the High Level Meeting on the Internet Economy hosted by the OECD, I put forward my vision for how the Internet could maintain this success. I called this vision my “Internet essentials”. A "Compact for the Internet": because we should have an Internet of **C**ivic responsibility, **O**ne Internet that is **M**ulti-stakeholder, **P**ro-democracy, **A**rchitecturally sound, inspiring **C**onfidence and **T**ransparently governed.For me, such ideas are the compass for guiding our Internet policies in Europe and in our international relations. Let me give a few examples today of how we are using the Compact in the EU. First, it can be used to guide public and private actions in cyberspace. One of my principles was that the Internet must inspire confidence; people will use the online world only as far as they trust it. If the Internet is for everyone, then it must be a place of security, privacy and safety for everyone, not just for those with deep technical expertise, or deep pockets.The European Commission is working on several fronts to achieve this goal. People must be confident about their online privacy, so we are revising the rules on EU personal data protection to make them clearer and better suited for the globalised, online century. Parents must be confident that their children are safe online and I am working on a new initiative to ensure informed choices about online behaviour and to protect from threats like bullies or sexual predators. Finally, for confidence in the system as a whole, I am working on an Internet security strategy to help us face all sorts of cyber-threats to information and networks.Second, the Compact can be used to guide decisions on how the Internet should be governed. I support, and have always supported, a transparent and multi-stakeholder approach. Involving different stakeholders in policy-making and encouraging transparent and accountable self-regulation is a benefit to everyone. Indeed it is the approach the Commission has been taking for many years, in this policy area and others. However, we must be clear what "multi-stakeholder" means. Ultimately, different actors have different fields of expertise and responsibility: that must be respected, and due weight must be given accordingly. I can agree that sometimes the question of attribution, of who is responsible for what, might not always be perfectly clear. And that public authorities must cooperate to avoid legal uncertainty or outright conflict, especially in a cross-border environment like the Internet. On these and similar issues I am fully open to discussion. But the fact remains that public authorities have a particular role, indeed a particular obligation, to deal with public policy matters, off and on-line, and this must be reflected in the decision-making process. Otherwise, the outcome of the multi-stakeholder approach is that lobbyists hijack decision-making, that private vested interests trump the public interest, and that some put themselves above the law. These are not things I will accept, now or in the future. In particular, the next IANA contractor must be protected from conflicts of interest, and must interact efficiently with the Governmental Advisory Committee. These are issues on which we have had very constructive discussions with international partners.Sometimes this debate, this search for Internet principles, is caricatured as an attempt to “regulate the Internet” – whatever that might mean. It is far from that. On the contrary, the space which the Internet creates for freedom, self-expression and innovation is not one which public authorities should seek to crowd out.Yet, few people question the need to regulate the offline world in pursuit of legitimate public policy obligations, for example to assure trust and security, to protect fundamental rights, or to defend markets from monopolies. And there is an equal need on-line. As the net becomes an ever more structural part of our economic and social framework, so grows the case for public authorities to take a role modest but not inactive. If the Internet is to fulfil its glorious potential, public authorities must support and protect it, but not kill it. Regulation is only ever a last resort, and even then keyhole surgery rather than amputation. We must in particular recognise the global character of the Internet, and keep it from fragmenting. But it is for exactly this reason, to avoid fragmentation, that we need a globally coherent approach. In the first instance, I would welcome a degree of convergence between the different visions emerging out there, from the Council of Europe, G8, OECD and so on. For our part, we are bringing our own Compact to the table, but we are also open to listening to other ideas out there.In the longer term, we should remain open about the means to achieve this goal. At this point in time, international binding rules might not be the appropriate answer, or indeed even feasible.But we should not rule them out for the future. After all, the rule of law is a basic foundation of democracy, and now is not the time to exclude that option for the Internet.Ladies and gentlemen,The Internet carries enormous potential for the future of our economy and society. For me, principles on the lines of the Internet Compact provide an inspiration, a lens through which to scrutinise proposals for shaping that future. So let's keep an open ear and an open mind in the discussions to follow. I think that future generations will thank us for it. Thank you for your attention. |