

**UN 10<sup>th</sup> CRIME CONGRESS - VIENNA**  
**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2000**

**Report back from the international conference on Combating Child Pornography on the Internet**  
**29<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999, Hofburg, Vienna**

**Comments by Nigel Williams, Director of Childnet International Rapporteur for**  
**the Hotlines Working Group**

Mr. President, it is an honour as the director of an NGO that is concerned with ensuring that children are safe on the Internet to be given the opportunity to speak on behalf of the internet users, child welfare groups, and hotlines that worked so hard here in Vienna six months ago. I would like to thank the Austrian Government, the US Government and the European Commission who organised the conference on Child Pornography for their invitation first to assist them with the arrangements for that conference, and second for inviting me to join them on the platform here today.

The most important outcome for me of the Child Pornography conference was the recognition by all the different sectors - international agencies, governments, law enforcement, the internet industry, NGOs especially child welfare groups, and the newly emerging hotlines -that to combat child pornography on the Internet required new emphasis on working together.

Users - especially parents, teachers and those concerned with child welfare - have a particular role in this growing area of the publication and distribution of child pornography on the Internet. Sadly there are so many pictures of the actual abuse of children on the Internet that law enforcement cannot be expected to find and deal with all the material on their own. That is why hotlines were set up - to provide users with an easy point of contact with a trusted party to whom they can report illegal child pornography they find on the Internet, knowing that some action will be taken as a result.

There are parallels here with the emphasis in this conference on community involvement in crime prevention. In the case of the internet, the community is users around the world, rather than those living in a particular town or country. Hotlines allow such users to act on their concerns if they find illegal material.

Hotlines take varied forms - from formal legal notice and take down procedures run by Government agencies like the Australian Broadcasting Authority, to industry run complaints systems like the Internet Watch Foundation in the United Kingdom or the Austrian ISPA, to child welfare groups like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the USA or Redd Barne in Norway. These initiatives have had a real impact in the countries where they operate - passing reports of images to law enforcement for action, and/or to industry for removal from their servers.

The conference last September coincided with the announcement of the first international association of hotline providers called INHOPE, which has received generous financial support from the European Commission. My own organisation Childnet has acted as the focal point to bring the INHOPE association into being, and I am glad to say it is now a distinct democratic membership association.

Hotlines recognise the crucial importance of international cooperation. Already many reports of illegal material have been passed on quickly from a hotline in one country to a hotline in another country, which are then referred to the appropriate authorities. It is not easy to develop common practices in such a new area when the first hotline was only established in 1996, but already good progress is being made and will be advanced further through the INHOPE Association.

In Vienna, six months ago we identified a number of key issues for further work. I will mention just two:

- **Identifying the Victims** The internet contains many pictures of horrible abuse of children. Law enforcement is getting better at tracking down those who publish or download such pictures. But the question is: Who are the Children in the pictures? No one knows how possible it would be to identify the children who have been photographed - have those children had any support? Are they still being abused? A project is currently being devised that would undertake a pilot exercise to try and answer those questions with a cross disciplinary effort of law enforcement, child welfare agencies, and hotlines.
- **Awareness** - a key recommendation of the conference overall which was echoed by hotlines in particular was the need for more education of internet users. Education about how to use the internet in a safe way, education about what to do if you find material you think is illegal, education about how to avoid children being approached by adults who are pretending to be children in Internet chat rooms. This is something my own organisation, Childnet, is passionate about and seeks to support law enforcement, industry and community efforts to promote awareness on these issues.

Mr. President, I think I speak for all my colleagues in closing with this thought. Congresses like this one inevitably include many meetings, thousands of sheets of paper, much disagreement and debate. Sometimes we may lose perspective on the real world out there, while we work away in here.

But the reason we need to battle together on the issue of Crime, and especially the issue of Child Pornography on the Internet is in order to respond to the cry of the victims. We need to remember that every image of child pornography is an image of an abused child. It is worth the effort if we can save one child from abuse, but I hope we can move to a situation where the Internet is no longer a medium where so much child pornography is published and exchanged.

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Childnet international see [www.childnet-iq.org](http://www.childnet-iq.org)  
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Internet Safety Awareness see [www.netware.org](http://www.netware.org)  
Child Pornography conference see [www.stop-childpornog.at](http://www.stop-childpornog.at)