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GLOBAL COALITION OF CITIES FOR DIGITAL RIGHTS ANNOUNCES 10 PRINCIPLES FOR THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGIES DURING COVID-19 RESPONSE

With a commitment to the humane use of technology, the Coalition issued a position statement with recommendations for how governments and civil society can use technologies for pandemic response with digital rights in mind.

XX CITY -- The Cities Coalition for Digital Rights, in partnership with the United Nations Human Rights Office, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), EUROCIITIES, and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) released 10 recommendations focused on privacy and human rights related to the responsible use of digital technologies during pandemics such as COVID-19. These principles promote safe, inclusive and sustainable cities.

The Coalition, with a membership of 50 cities, and its partners believe that technologies, such as contact-tracing applications, video conferencing and learning platforms, geographic mapping, and the use of surveillance tools during this unprecedented time in human history should be deployed at the service of people and for the public good.

The founding cities of the Coalition, Barcelona, Amsterdam and New York, invite cities and organizations around the world to join in signing the statement, endorse the principles and to actively put them into practice. Cities interested in joining the Coalition can learn more at <https://citiesfordigitalrights.org>.

Quote Amsterdam

Touria Meliani, Deputy Mayor of Amsterdam: *“Digital Rights lie at the basis for a digital city: COVID-19 showed that things we took for granted - such as access to the internet for everyone and democratic control over technology and the use of data - are important things we still have to fight for.. Our role as city-leaders is to open the process on how public technology is designed and developed and make sure that ethical questioning and values such as freedom, inclusion and equality are embedded in this process.”*

Quote Barcelona

Laia Bonet, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona *“Digital technology can play a role in addressing the pandemic, but it needs to be hand in hand with public health responses and follow human rights criteria. Technology can be a force of good, but can also reproduce and exacerbate social inequalities. Digitalization is a human rights issue: this is why we have worked with fellow cities for digital rights to provide recommendations to protect digital rights in times of COVID-19.”*

Quote UN-HABITAT

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat: *“Cities can do a lot to ensure that the digital revolution does not leave anyone or any place behind. I applaud cities increasing connectivity in underserved urban areas, providing free wifi , rolling out digital literacy training*

and engaging youth in low-income neighbourhoods in community hackatons but these efforts need to be scaled up to bridge the widening digital divide.”

Quote UCLG

Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG: “The principles that guide the Coalition of Cities for Digital Rights are as relevant as ever given the global crisis the world is now facing. It is critical to maintain and make public service provision accessible to our communities and to protect citizens’ human rights, including at the digital level. We need to define access to information and digital services as critical and cities will need to lead the way in the defense of digital rights. It is necessary to enhance the role of local and regional governments in gathering and protecting their citizens’ data and our role, as local and regional government networks, will be to foster and put together strategies to ensure this happens.”

Quote EUROCITIES

Anna Lisa Boni, Secretary General of EUROCITIES: “The effects of the digital transformation are already all around us in our everyday lives and are ever more important now. As public authorities we want to ensure the digital transformation is accessible to and works for all people, and that data is used in a responsible way. Our concept of what makes a city ‘smarter’ begins with the citizen, and that includes making sure people stay safe as well as understand the use of and have access to their data.”

The Cities Coalition for Digital Rights states that:

1. Digital tools that are applied to solve the pandemic crisis and to help transition to a 'new normalcy' should not be seen as stand-alone solutions.
2. While considering the possible role of digital technologies in the transition from pandemic phases of containment, mitigation, and rebuilding, we emphasize the need to respect the rights of citizens, including anonymity, transparency, and control regarding both the medium used and the data collected.
3. Those mandated to deploy technologies for crisis response should avoid fueling asymmetries and inequality.
4. Civil society should be prominently involved in the specification, design, development, and testing of these technologies, with more transparency and openness, including pre- and post-assessment of these technologies.
5. Our cities should work together to promote social dialogue on COVID-19 technologies, with a holistic government approach and through public debate with residents and stakeholders.
6. Human rights and public health responses go hand-in-hand. A rights-based approach to the design and use of technology to respond to COVID-19 is fundamental to the success of public

health response.

The 10 Principles are:

1. **Principle of Purpose and Proportionality.** Purpose limitations must be in place. Neither the technologies nor the data collected may be used for purposes other than those deemed strictly necessary for crisis response or recovery.

2. **Principle of Impermanence.** The use of these technologies and data should be limited in time and deleted when no longer needed. Once the risk of pandemic has decreased sufficiently, their use must be reconsidered, and all personal data should be deleted. There should be both technical and legal sunset clauses in place.

3. **Principle of Consent and Trust.** The use of technologies should be voluntary and adhere to notice and consent. They cannot be imposed under any kind of coercion or reward system. Only then can there be mutual trust.

4. **Principle of Privacy by Design.** The technologies must respect the privacy of users and of all related persons (e.g. contacts). Privacy should be evaluated in the context of the real risks of re-identification or other privacy loss, especially when using highly sensitive information such as healthcare data.

5. **Principle of Control.** Citizens must be considered the primary owners of data they generate through the use of applications and services, where possible. Where applicable, technologies should empower citizens to be stewards of their own data.

6. **Principle of Openness and Transparency.** Technologies should, whenever possible, be developed using open technologies, data models, formats and code, so that the code can be audited, verified, and adopted by other cities and organizations, fostering transparency.

7. **Principle of Responsiveness.** Technologies for COVID-19 should not be stand-alone measures but should draw upon the existing expertise, needs, and requirements of public health authorities and society, culture, and behavior, if they are to be effective in combatting the pandemic.

8. **Principle of Participation.** The development of such technologies should consider the needs of all people and include strong feedback loops between policymakers and citizens, with opportunities for iteration. Human rights should be explicitly taken into account in the selection of solution providers and in the process of technical development.

9. **Principle of Social Innovation.** The successful and equitable use of these technologies requires a focus on social innovation, not merely on technological innovation when they are to be used in everyday life in our societies. Collective social intelligence, behavior, and social cohesion are equally important.

10. Principle of Fairness and Inclusion. Technologies must be accessible and serve all people, assuring equal access and equal treatment across communities. Technologies should be used to eliminate social inequalities while paying particular attention to marginalized groups.

The coalition was initially formed by Amsterdam, Barcelona, and New York City in 2018 and currently has 50 global member cities. It is partnered with the United Nations Human Rights, EUROCITIES, and United Cities and Local Governments to build capacity, increase awareness, and to coordinate the recruitment of other cities and partners.

Read the full statement and background on: <https://citiesfordigitalrights.org/cc4dr-position-statement-recommendations-safeguarding-digital-rights-when-applying-covid-19-related>

To join the Coalition and to learn more about the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights:
<https://citiesfordigitalrights.org>

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