



GLOBAL CYBERSECURITY AGENDA

H.E. Dr. Oscar Arias Sanchez,
President of Costa Rica,
Patron of the Global Cybersecurity Agenda

The power of the virtual world increases every day. By the time your eyes reach the end of this page, that power will have grown even further. A young student in a developing country will have accessed the library of a prestigious university; a senior citizen who has never traveled abroad will have visited a nation on the other side of the world; a small-business owner will have attended an international conference without leaving her office. With each of these achievements, the virtual world brings about another real-world victory for education, dialogue, and better understanding between peoples.

Unfortunately, there is nothing virtual about the hazards that accompany modern communications technologies. The Internet may open our minds to new possibilities, but it also exposes us to the pitfalls and dangers of online predators. What's more, like so many of the challenges facing our planet today, these dangers know no borders. Just as viruses and bacteria can spread unchecked from region to region, computer viruses spread from computer to computer, regardless of location. Just as crime and violence in one country affect life in another by sending streams of displaced refugees seeking relief, cybercrime in one nation can find victims anywhere. Just as pollution and destruction in one area can cause climate change on a global level, child pornography from a single source pollutes minds around the world.

We have a vital responsibility to ensure the safety of all those who venture online – especially as online services become a more integral part of citizens' lives. Technology is improving direct and democratic access to health, financial and telecommunications services, among many others. None of us would stand idly by during attacks or theft at the hospital or bank or phone company; we must provide the same security to the increasing number of people who work with these institutions online. Leaders strive to ensure the safety of their citizens on their countries' highways and roads; the attention to safety on the information superhighway, where people young and old travel for hours each day, should be no different.

The world must take action, and it must stand united. This is not a problem any one nation can solve alone. A global framework is needed, giving us international principles to match hackers' international range, and allow rapid coordination between countries at the regional and global levels. The Global Cybersecurity Agenda represents such a framework, and I am proud that International Telecommunication Union Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré has invited me to serve as a patron of this important effort.

I have spent my life working for education and peace. The free exchange of ideas and information online has tremendous power to support both of these goals. However, threats to online security endanger that potential. I invite you to join with me in supporting ITU's urgent effort – because by the end of this page, by the end of this day, peace and safety in the virtual world will become an ever more essential part of peace and safety in our everyday lives..