



Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken

H.E. Mr Carl Bildt
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Kingdom of Sweden
STOCKHOLM

The Hague
26 October 2009

Dear Carl,

I am writing to you to follow up on our discussion at the General Affairs and External Relations Council of 9 September 2009 about restricting the export of internet filters to Iran. I understand that the Council Secretariat and Commission are currently exploring options in this regard, and wanted to share some initial ideas with you. I intend to share these ideas with our EU colleagues at the GAERC dinner on 26 October, and would like to invite the Council Secretariat and Commission to provide us with an update of their thinking as well.

One option that could be explored is the introduction of targeted licensing of the export of internet filters to Iran from the EU. This could restrict the export of certain filter technology to the Iranian authorities. Such a licensing scheme would have the distinct advantage of directly targeting the Iranian authorities without harming innocent Iranians or Iranian companies.

We could also agree to ask telecom companies based in the EU to work in accordance with a code of ethics. This code could be based on or linked to the Global Network Initiative (GNI), a US initiative of internationally operating companies, human rights defenders and academics. The network's goal is to

protect freedom of expression within ICT, without targeting companies.
Companies such as Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft are already allied with GNI.

A copy of this letter is being sent to all our EU colleagues, the Commission and the Council Secretariat. I look forward to discussing these ideas with you and our colleagues in Luxembourg.

Best regards,



Maxime Verhagen

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands