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United States Hosts Global Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Online Ministerial Conference

Today, United States Attorney General Eric Holder and European Union (EU) Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström welcomed high-level government officials representing over 30 members of the Global Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Online to a ministerial conference in Washington. The Global Alliance was launched by Attorney General Holder and Commissioner Malmström in December 2012 with the aim of uniting decision-makers all around the world to commit to more effectively identify and rescue child sexual abuse victims, investigate and prosecute online exploitation offenses, increase public awareness of the risks posed by children's online activities, and reduce the amount of child sexual abuse images available online.

"Together, thanks to the hard work of the Global Alliance countries, this important, life-changing work has enabled us to intervene to rescue numerous child victims suffering at the hands of abusers; to arrest and prosecute those who did them harm; and to begin the long process of healing for each one of these survivors," said Attorney General Holder. "I have no doubt that this work will continue – and be amplified – by the work we're discussing today."

The conference was divided into two sessions. The morning session featured global leaders and experts from the investigative, public policy, victim advocacy and legal arenas, who shared insight and experience from the cutting edge of combating online child exploitation. They addressed a variety of topics related to the shared policy targets of the Global Alliance, including: investigative tactics that enabled the takedown of a hidden, highly sophisticated global enterprise of distributors of child sexual abuse images; the latest technological and tactical breakthroughs in identifying previously unknown victims of child sexual abuse online; and novel approaches to partnering with the private sector to combat the online proliferation of child sexual abuse images. The afternoon ministerial session featured keynote speakers from law enforcement and from the private sector with deep experience in combating the online exploitation of children. In addition, ministerial or other high-level government officials from each nation in attendance highlighted notable accomplishments over the past two years related to the Alliance's policy targets, as well as offering their vision for the Alliance's future.

"The threat to young people posed by online sex predators is on the rise," said Commissioner Malmström. "Challenges are constantly evolving. Every time a picture of an abused child is shown that child is being abused, over and over again. The global alliance shows our collective willingness to fight this hideous crime, something we can only do by working together. Our collective promises must become a reality."

The states participating in the Alliance include Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova,

Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Global Alliance: Greater Commitments for Better Results

At the conclusion of the conference, the 54 Alliance members endorsed a Ministerial Declaration that commits to addressing the transborder obstacles to identifying and rescuing victims of exploitation and to identifying and prosecuting offenders, by agreeing to pursue the following potential actions where and when possible, in full respect of due process and fundamental rights requirements:

- Enabling law enforcement among Global Alliance countries to gain timely access to electronic information and evidence held by Internet service providers and other repositories of electronic information that is material to the investigation and prosecution of child sexual abuse offenses through central authorities and other legally authorized channels, so that no nation becomes a safe haven for such information;
- Facilitating prompt and comprehensive exchange among law enforcement of information and evidence pertinent to child sexual abuse offenses featuring transborder offense conduct, victims, co-conspirators or evidence repositories;
- Enabling Internet service providers and other repositories of electronic information to provide information pertinent to the identification, apprehension, and ultimate prosecution of online child sexual abuse offenders to law enforcement pursuant to legal process in a manner and time frame consistent with reasonable investigative and prosecutorial demands; and
- Augmenting existing, collaborative and transborder efforts to identify and rescue victims of online child sexual abuse.

Background

The United States, through the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, the Postal Inspection Service and other government agencies, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry and international partners, has made progress in combating all forms of child sexual exploitation.

For example, this past March, the Department of Justice obtained a 30-year sentence against a United States citizen who served as an English teacher in China, using that position of authority to molest children under the age of 12 and to produce child pornography. In July, the department obtained a sentence of 120 years against a noncommissioned officer in the U.S. military who had drugged and sexually abused children, producing images and videos of that horrific abuse.

A recent U.S. operation targeting offenders exploiting children on a global scale secured convictions of 30 and 40 years, respectively, for Peter Truong and Mark Newton. Truong and Newton were residents of Queensland, Australia who brought their five-year-old son to the United States and France to meet with other men from various countries, so that these persons could record the sexual abuse of the minor victim. Over the course of this scheme to sexually exploit their son, Newton and Truong were also found to have engaged in a conspiracy to transport the child pornography produced during these encounters to individuals around the world, including individuals living in Florida, Virginia, and Indiana. It was this trafficking of materials that alerted United States Postal Inspectors and Indiana investigators to the case, launching the two year investigation of Newton, Truong, and the other men who conspired to abuse their son. Prosecutions of these other men are ongoing.

In addition, the U.S. Congress has funded the creation of state-level task forces, known as the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces, which help state and local agencies to develop successful, long-term responses to online child exploitation. These task forces are supported by the Department of Justice, not just with funding, but with training.

As threats to our children continue to evolve in every corner of the globe, the Department of Justice is committed to drawing upon the collective experience of every country, and the cooperation of every community, to protect our young citizens and to hold abusers accountable to the fullest extent of the law. For more information regarding the Justice Department's efforts to combat child exploitation, please visit: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/ceos>.