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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by Vittorio Agnoletto, Umberto Guidoni and Miguel Portas

on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

on the Internet and freedom of expression

European Parliament resolution on the Internet and freedom of expression

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous annual reports on the situation of human rights in the world;
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders (2004) and on Human Rights Dialogue (2001);
- A. where the Internet has become the means of expression of choice for pro-democracy activists, human rights defenders and journalists worldwide and whereas freedom of expression is a fundamental human right;
- B. whereas governments have been working on ever more far-reaching methods of controlling the net, chiefly using more and more sophisticated filtering technology and surveillance of electronic communications;
- C. whereas, among others, Burma, Iran, Libya, Maldives, Nepal, North Korea, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia and China are in the frontline in this onslaught against freedom of expression on the internet;
- D. whereas companies based in the EU and the USA have often given these countries the means to censor the web and to monitor electronic communication in exchange for access to their markets;
- E. whereas Yahoo, Google and Microsoft agree to censor their services by following orders from the Beijing's government; whereas other companies like Secure Computing and Fortinet supply governments in Tunisia or Burma with the means to censor the internet;
- F. whereas CISCO Systems sell police in these countries equipment allowing surveillance of internet users and Yahoo has been collaborating for several years with the Chinese justice system resulting in arrests of journalists and political dissidents;
- G. concerned by the fact that Wanadoo, a subsidiary of France Telecom announced in April of last year that it was launching a broadband service with Tunisian operator, Tunisia Planet; where the Tunisian government decided to make all opposition websites inaccessible in the country;
- H. believing that the EU should demonstrate that the rights of internet users are at the heart of its concerns and that it is ready to act to promote free expression on-line;

1. Reaffirms the fact that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and that EU countries have to take concrete steps to defend it;
2. Considers the Digital Divide is one of the main limits to the improvement, defence and realisation of the freedom of expression;
3. Calls on the EU Council and its Member States to agree on a joint statement confirming their commitment in favour of the protection of the rights of internet users and of the promotion of free expression on the internet world-wide;
4. Calls on the Commission and the Council to draw up a code of conduct that would put limits on the activities of companies in repressive countries;
5. Recalls that freedom of expression is one of the priority issue of the EU human rights dialogue and a key element of the EU's policy in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries;
6. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to transfer technology in order to diffuse access to internet world wide, notably to developing countries;
7. Condemns the policies of major internet firms Yahoo and Google which have bowed directly and indirectly to Chinese government demands for censorship;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.