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Pictures of abuse: child pornography¹

What is child pornography?

In the 2000 Optional Protocol to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, child pornography is defined as: “any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes”. The Interpol Specialist Group on Crimes Against Children currently defines it this way: “any means of depicting or promoting the sexual exploitation of a child, including written or audio material, which focuses on the child’s sexual behaviour or genitals”.

These definitions are broadly typical of the formulations to be found elsewhere within national jurisdictions. Each speaks of visual images, depictions or representations of sexual activity involving a child, although the definition of ‘child’ in national law, of course, varies. Additionally, the age at which a person is legally permitted to engage in sexual acts also varies from country to country. The age of consent for sexual activity can range from as low as 12 to the more common 16, although some states stipulate 17 or 18. Others have no legal limit at all, sometimes stipulating that legally sexual activity can begin upon marriage or reaching puberty. Definitions generally emphasize the sexual nature of the representation, distinguishing child pornography from, for example, wholly innocent images of young children, perhaps in a family setting or on the beach, where children may be in a state of total or partial undress or engaged in other activities which, in context, are appropriate to the wider lawful activity shown in the depiction.

The emphasis on the sexual nature of the depiction also allows us to distinguish child pornography from simple depictions of nudism, or from classical iconography or other artistic forms where the overall context might link the imagery of naked or scantily clad children, often shown as angels or saints, to religious beliefs or forms of worship. So far from being sexual in nature, the nudity or partial nudity of children in this context can be used by an artist to underline notions of purity and innocence.

Some definitions seek to cover every type of visual representation and/or audio material. Others exclude paintings and drawings or texts. Cartoons or ‘morphed’ images are excluded by some jurisdictions because a real child has not been subjected to sexual abuse, whereas others make no such distinction.

The crucial element defining what constitutes child pornography is the absence of consent. A child cannot consent, even if he or she appears to say ‘yes’. It is this alone, the absence of true consent, that creates the essential element of illegality. Every part of the supply chain, from the original producer of the material, through the distributor, publisher and owner or possessor of child pornography is touched by this inescapable legal fact.

Where the age of consent for sex is different from the age of majority, the law ought to make it clear that a legal minor cannot under any circumstances consent to participate in pornographic depictions.

This should allow authorities to intervene to protect young people who, although they may have passed the legal barriers to consensual sex, might nevertheless still lack the mature judgement to decide whether or not to allow themselves to be photographed or filmed in such situations, particularly since they might be consenting to the creation of a permanent record that could haunt them for the rest of their lives.

This is important not least because differences in legal definitions between countries, and the perceptions of local police forces, mean it is increasingly likely that, operationally, the only types of cases where there will be no potential legal obstacles to co-operation between national law enforcement agencies are those where the young people involved in the pornographic depictions are very obviously

below the age of the 'lowest common denominator'. In practice this means that police cooperation across states can probably only be guaranteed where the victims are clearly pre-pubescent, or where there are no bodily or other circumstantial signs that the child has reached any level of sexual maturity.

It is strongly suspected that this is also happening within many national jurisdictions: in the absence of any evidence to the contrary in the picture itself, the authorities will tend to ignore or give low priority to investigating child pornographic images where the age of the young people involved is indeterminate. In practice what this means is that any child depicted in a pornographic image who has pubic hair and well developed sexual organs and, in the case of girls, mature breasts, will be treated as an adult. In short, because of such physical characteristics, some children may well be losing the protection of the law

Is child pornography harmful?

Generally speaking child pornography is both a crime in and of itself, and is also a picture of a crime scene that may provide evidence of further crimes against a child or children. It can consist of a child or children engaged in sexual behaviour alone or with one or more adults, or it could involve two or more children performing sexual acts, with or without adults being involved or being visible. It can include the most abject pictures of brutal anal or vaginal rape, bondage, bestiality or oral sex, or other forms of degradation, and involve children of all ages.

Child pornography amplifies and broadcasts the original act of abuse that it depicts. In so doing it can substantially aggravate the harm to the child of the original offence. Child pornography is at once therefore both a form of child abuse and a representation of it. The consequences of that abuse are now very well known and understood.

Authorities face a difficult task in identifying and locating a child who has appeared in child pornography and, even where it is possible to identify a victim, the chances of being able to help the child to recover from the trauma of the initial involvement in the abuse can be seriously compromised if the child believes that the images of them might have been stored, shared or otherwise distributed.

Is there a link between child sexual abuse and child pornography?

There are several very significant links. A person in possession of child pornography is very likely either to be an active abuser already, or to be on a path that will lead to abuse.

A study by the Chicago police in 1984 states that, in almost all the arrests they made for possession of child pornography, they discovered photographs of the abusers having sex with children, and these photographs had been taken by the abusers themselves. The US Customs Service claims that at least 80 per cent of those who buy (child) pornography are active abusers.

Child abusers also use both adult pornography and child pornography to persuade children that engaging in the acts depicted is somehow 'normal' and to encourage them to comply. They will show pictures in which the children have been forced to smile so that it can be claimed, especially to younger children, that they are 'having fun'. Children who are exposed to child pornography are therefore harmed through this process of desensitizing.

A child may believe that, by participating in pornography, s/he has committed an offence and 'evidence' of this in the form of the pornographic images taken can be used as blackmail to force the child to commit further sexual or other offences. This might be especially true if the child is shown abusing other children. Alternatively the child might be afraid that the person possessing the image might show it to their parents or friends, and that this would cause huge embarrassment or upset.

The organized exchange of child pornography is also used by abusers to 'legitimise and normalize' their sexual interest in children. By sharing the images with others they 'prove' to themselves that their interest and activity is 'normal' and within the bounds of accepted behaviour.

How much child pornography is there? Is it ‘big business’?

There can be no certainty about the volume of child pornography in existence. By its very nature it is an illegal item and no one will declare how much they have or how much they are making. Moreover because of its durability there is little doubt that a great deal of child pornography currently in circulation can be as much as 20 years old. It is consequently difficult to distil modern trends.

However there have been frequent suggestions that the arrival of the Internet is not only opening a new and hugely expanding market for child pornography but is also creating greater demand for new material.

Essentially, the production of child pornography is overwhelmingly a ‘cottage industry’, mostly produced by amateurs as a by-product of abuse. But once the images are in circulation, their reproduction, sale and distribution can become international and lucrative. In the United States child pornography is reported to represent a market worth some US\$2-3 billion a year. A report of the Permanent Sub-Committee on Investigations, US Senate, 99th Congress, 2nd Session (1986) noted that “the US market for child pornography is widely thought to be the most lucrative in the world”.

On 13 April 2000, a Federal Grand Jury in Texas, US, returned an 87-count indictment against five individuals and a corporation, Landslide Inc., in what may turn out to be the largest single commercial child pornography operation ever uncovered. All the accused were found guilty and were sentenced in August 2001 for terms between 14 years and life.

Landslide was a US\$9 million dollar business that worked through the Internet. The owners of the business established a system for collecting monthly subscriptions to hardcore pornography sites, including child pornography sites. They were working with a Russian and four Indonesians, all operating out of their own countries. At the time of the arrests in Texas, in the previous 12 months the company had grossed more than US\$1.9 million. As of August 2001, neither the Indonesians nor the Russian had been arrested.

‘Traditional’ forms of child pornography

In those parts of the world where the Internet is not widely available, traditional methods of producing and distributing child pornography remain dominant. Despite a much-repeated belief that traditional child pornography is disappearing altogether with the onslaught of digital images and electronic transmission, the US Customs and Postal Inspection Service reports that much of the child pornography it seizes still contains home-made videos and that pornographers still rely heavily on the mail to exchange video tapes and computer disks. Amateur child pornography continues to provide paedophile and non-paedophile exploiters with the images they collect not only for sexual gratification and to ‘fix’ the age of the child, but as membership requirements of abuser networks.

Similarly, the long-established market in child erotica continues to flourish in many countries, pushing the boundaries of what is pornographic and what is not, and testing laws and public acceptance. Toys, games, catalogues, erotic fiction and cartoon magazines aimed at satisfying the desire of some people for sexual pleasure involving children continue to be available in countries from Switzerland to Japan, and to perpetuate the belief that children are legitimate sexual commodities.

Part of a tradition that stretches back centuries, the consumption of sexualized children for adult pleasure developed quickly in the early 1970s to become a thriving commercial enterprise, in the process becoming increasingly hardcore and pornographic. Most of the children depicted were Caucasian, many from the US, and many of their images continue to circulate. Some of the children were from India, Mexico and Africa. The growth in child sex tourism in the 1980s and 1990s increasingly saw images of children from Asia and Eastern Europe being added to the stock, as exploiters filmed their crimes and shared the evidence. This essentially amateur capturing and exchange of images continues to be a significant source of child pornography alongside materials specifically produced for commercial profit. In August 2001, however, the UK National Criminal Intelligence Service issued a statement saying that there is now some evidence that organized criminal groups may be starting to involve themselves in the production and sale of child pornography .

Whatever form child pornography takes – whether on paper or electronic, sent by mail or along digital phone lines, for commercial profit or personal satisfaction -- efforts continue to criminalize, intercept and track it at all stages of the process from production to distribution to possession.

However there seems little doubt that, as the Internet broadens its reach so, in the absence of any countervailing measures, traditional or customary forms of child pornography will gradually be displaced or at any rate supplemented by patterns similar to those that have already emerged elsewhere. The Internet's reach and the constant demand for new material which it is generating mean that child pornography produced anywhere in the world will quickly find an international audience.

What other impact have new technologies had on child pornography?

Video cameras, computers, different sorts of communications devices, scanners, digital cameras and similar technologies are becoming cheaper and more widely available. They have hugely facilitated the production and storage of child pornographic images and made their large-scale distribution possible. Beyond the 'hardware', however, new processes have also complicated efforts to combat child pornography.

For example, in some countries the definition of child pornography has been based on the notion that it always involves a real child. New technologies allow 'morphing' of an adult image to make it look child-like, or even the total 'construction' of a computerized 'child', so that in fact no real children appear in the pornographic images.

Having to make fine forensic distinctions between real and artificial images of child pornography risks making a mockery of the law. If to the rest of the world something looks like child pornography, it should be treated as if it were child pornography.

Civilized society has declared that the depiction of children as sexual objects is unacceptable. It has done this not just because of the harm it generally does to the children who are its immediate victims, but also because viewing child pornography can desensitize adults and provide perceived society acceptance of behaviour that is in fact either reprehensible or illegal. This can in turn lead to harmful or abusive behaviour, and therefore also puts children at risk. It can also desensitize or sexualize children in inappropriate ways. Child pornography is often deliberately used by sexual predators to lure children into abusive relationships. In that context, therefore, whether or not the image is real or artificial is of no real significance or relevance.

In the debate on new technologies and child pornography, however, it is the impact that the advent of the Internet has had on child protection and abuse that dominates.

No new technology has ever taken off and grown in the same way and at the same rate as the Internet. For the cost of a local telephone call today it has the power to send and receive messages more or less instantaneously anywhere around the world, to receive and broadcast sound and vision, to store essentially infinite amounts of information and, when linked to cheap and readily available technology such as cameras and scanners, it can turn any home or office into a fully equipped multimedia publishing operation.

In less than eight years, the Internet has moved from being an obscure network used primarily within the academic community to becoming a mass consumer product which is having a profound impact in terms of restructuring many areas of social, cultural and economic life in industrialized countries and, little by little, in the developing world. Today the Internet extends to just over 6 per cent of the world's population, but almost 90 per cent of all users are in the major industrialized countries.

Because of the way the Internet is being integrated into educational systems, and because of the ready way in which they can adapt to new technologies, children are among the fastest growing groups of Internet users worldwide.

As a result, there are fears that it is acting like a magnet to child sex abusers who are stalking children, seeking to entice them either into the production of new child pornography, or into real world meetings where they are at risk of abuse, or both.

Police forces across the world have also noted that child pornography has moved on to the Internet in a major way. Child pornography was often a hard-to-find commodity, requiring the customer to take a number of risks in order to obtain it. With the arrival of the Internet, however, it is no longer necessary to go to 'certain parts of town', risking being identified or being seen by the police going into or coming out of certain types of stores. It is no longer necessary to send for child pornography by mail order and risk name and address or bank details being recorded. With the removal of these barriers or inhibitors, the early signs are that more people are being tempted to become involved in the child pornography trade as both customers and sales outlets.

Child pornography can be and has been traded using almost every technology available on the Internet. However there are three principal access points: the web, newsgroups and chat rooms.

World Wide Web: The web is a source of child pornography on the Internet but it is not the major source. In a study carried out by the University of Cork, Ireland, between June and November 1997, sexualized images of under-age girls on the web were coming principally from Japan, with 73 per cent of all sites found originating there. The next highest source was the US with 14 per cent, followed by the UK at 3 per cent. A greater number of sites offered sexualized images of boys but no comparable percentages were provided. Changes to the law in Japan were introduced after the study.

Newsgroups: Newsgroups are the principal source of publicly available child pornography on the Internet. Newsgroups are similar to electronic bulletin boards where people with shared interests can exchange information and files that they post to a specific group whose name generally indicates the nature of the subject matter.

An analysis of reports submitted to the UK's Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) suggests that the great bulk of child pornography is to be found in only 28 newsgroups, with nearly half originating in just three of them. By country of origin, the US appeared to be the greatest source (77 per cent), with only the UK and Japan then showing as individual countries at 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively, with Europe as a whole registering 3 per cent, 'other' and 'unidentified' at 7 per cent each.

Services analogous to Newsgroups, sometimes referred to as 'online communities', have been established by a variety of Internet companies and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and many of these have also become repositories for illegal material.

Chat rooms: Chat rooms are where child sex abusers go looking for children as well as to trade, swap or otherwise acquire child pornography. On one day in December 1997, researchers from the University of Cork's COPINE project sampled 55 channels on two different IRC networks. They had indicative titles and altogether had 518 participants.

Child sex abusers have coined a term for their search for children in chat rooms. They call it 'chicken hawking'. The child sex abuser will enter a chat room where he believes he may find a child. He will not necessarily take part in the ongoing conversation but will instead simply observe the conversation until he spots someone whom he believes to be a child, maybe an especially vulnerable child. Here the sex abuser is playing the role of a 'hawk', circling and watching for his prey, the 'chicken'.

Typically the abuser will seek to befriend the child, perhaps by pretending initially to be a child himself with shared interests and concerns. Then he will try to persuade the child to enter a private chat room where just the two of them can talk. Eventually they will exchange e-mail addresses and maybe then mobile telephone numbers for text messaging or direct telephone calls. The child sex abuser will seek to draw the child into his web and may encourage the child to take pornographic photographs of him/herself, either alone or with friends. Ultimately a meeting in the real world might be arranged.

What is being done to combat the proliferation of child pornography and on-line abuse?

There is no internationally agreed basis for recording crimes where the Internet played a significant part. Indeed many individual countries do not separately identify the Internet as a feature within their own crime figures. Some do not even record whether a computer was involved.

As an example: even in the US, with the longest and most extensive experience in this field, the Federal agencies involved – the FBI, the US Customs and Postal Inspection Services -- run their own independent, separate and different reporting systems.

The FBI began a specific initiative to monitor and pursue online offences against children in 1995. Called the Innocent Images campaign, it received special funding from Congress. As the name implies, the campaign has a particular focus on child pornography although it also involves itself in on-line sexual solicitation cases.

The FBI publishes aggregate figures for all classes of on-line offences against children, and data on the number of investigations with which it is engaged. It is not possible to differentiate between child pornography offences and other types of on-line offences against children, but it is thought that the majority are concerned with child pornography. A substantial number are also so-called 'traveller' cases, where a child has gone missing following contact with a stranger on-line. In 2000, of the 1541 investigations started, 300 were traveller cases. The figures show a steady increase in the number of investigations started and convictions obtained, from 96 investigations and 13 convictions in 1995 to 1,541 investigations and 214 convictions in 2000.

US Postal Inspection Service inspectors have been involved extensively in child sexual exploitation and child pornography investigations since 1977. Since the enactment of the Federal Child Protection Act of 1984, Postal Inspectors have conducted investigations resulting in the arrests of more than 3,300 child molesters and pornographers.

Since August 1997, the principal organizing base within US Customs for action against child pornographers is the Customs CyberSmuggling Centre (C3). C3 works very closely with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Since 1 January 2000, C3 has reviewed more than 10,000 tips about child pornography on-line, with approximately 1,100 new tips each month, or roughly 300 per week. During the year 2000, these tips prompted more than 225 investigations.

The FBI has indicated that on-line offences against children in the US seem to be increasing at a rate of 10 per cent a year. What is true for the US is very likely also to be true in many other parts of the world as the level of Internet use continues to climb.

Perhaps the most striking feature of police action against child pornographers in the US is the extent to which law enforcement uses 'sting' operations, where police officers go undercover and set traps for offenders. In some countries, because of local laws on entrapment, such actions can be anywhere between impossible and very difficult to mount. However as on-line offenders make greater use of encryption and other smart technologies to hide their crimes and their trails, police forces around the world will have to find new and pro-active ways of countering their actions.

No other country produces such comprehensive data on these types of offences as the US, although a recent report has uncovered data showing the number of 'known or reported cases of child pornography' for 1997 and 1998 for Germany (3370 cases), Ireland (4), Switzerland (449) and Hungary (13). This research also established that, from 1996 to 1998 in the UK, there were 723 prosecutions for producing, distributing or possessing child pornography, with an average conviction rate of 73.5 per cent.

An example of action: The Wonderland Club and Operation Cathedral

Operation Cathedral began in California, US, in April 1996. It quickly developed into the largest operation in the history of international policing. It is worth looking at the operation in some detail because there are many very important lessons to be learned from it.

A 10 year-old girl went to stay for the weekend at her friend's house. During the weekend her friend's father R took the girl into the room where he kept his computer. It had a camera attached and R sexually abused the child live on camera, taking instructions over the Net about what to do next to the girl from the other members of something called The Orchid Club who had tuned in and were watching. The images were recorded on to R's computer and he later traded them in an Internet chat room.

Some weeks later R was arrested on suspicion of molesting another child. The police questioned him about his recent contacts with children and as a result were able to contact the 10 year-old's mother to alert her to the fact that her daughter had recently stayed in the house of a suspected child molester. The mother spoke to her daughter and sensed that something was wrong. Eventually the mother was able to persuade her daughter to reveal what had happened and reported this to the local police who went to R's home and seized his computer.

R was sentenced to 100 years for his crime, and twelve other men in other parts of the US also received custodial sentences for their part in The Orchid Club.

R's computer, however, provided a link to three men in the UK, one of whom, B, was a computer consultant living in Sussex. The Sussex police visited his house, seized his computer and started to unravel evidence of the existence of another and more extensive club that had 180 members in all parts of the world. This was The Wonderland Club. It was highly organized with a chairman, a secretary, a management committee, a procedure for vetting new members and five different levels of security calculated to keep unwanted eyes away from their activities. The club made extensive use of complex passwords and encryption technology. Some of the computers later seized by police in this case had encrypted material that was never seen by police or produced in court because it was impossible to break the code.

The police were able to identify photographs of 1,263 different children, only a few of whom have since been located. Altogether in this operation police seized more than 750,000 child pornographic images and some 1,800 hours of digitized videos of child sex abuse. One individual had more than 180,000 individual pictures on his machine. The men who were caught were, in the main, well educated, employed and in a wide range of professions, but with a preponderance of men who worked a lot with computers or the Internet.

To gain entry to the club, a candidate member would need to produce 10,000 new child pornographic images. Once a member, status could be gained by finding new children to abuse, providing fresh pictures as evidence.

In the UK 10 members of the club were identified and arrested, and nine were charged. One of them, S, would abuse children live online, taking instructions from other members. He invited some of the UK members to come to his home in the north of England to meet the children whom he called 'the stars' of his movies. S was arrested and tried separately. He received a 12-year sentence. Of the other eight arrested, one committed suicide. Of the 107 arrested worldwide, it is thought that eight killed themselves rather than face trial. One of these was E who, in fact, could probably never have been prosecuted as the police were unable to break the encryption on his machine and see a single illegal image.

It was agreed through Interpol that the UK police should coordinate the worldwide police action that would be necessary to arrest the members of Wonderland and close down the club.

An initial conference was called by Interpol. From information in the possession of the UK police, Interpol had links or leads to suspects in 46 identifiable countries. Interpol called an initial case

conference involving only 15 of these countries.² It was agreed that all the participating police forces would coordinate their swoops on the suspects' addresses to minimize the chance suspects might warn fellow club members who could then destroy or hide evidence. A time was fixed: 04.00 GMT, 2 September 1998. Just before the operation was due to begin, Holland and Canada pulled out, leaving 13: the US, England/Wales, France, Belgium, Finland, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Italy, Portugal, Austria, Germany and Australia. The Dutch police acted later and arrested the suspects identified in their country. Canada did not.

Of the 107 originally arrested, by mid-2001, 50 had been convicted worldwide, 22 were still awaiting trial, and eight had committed suicide. That leaves 27 unaccounted for.

Worldwide the judicial results have been patchy. Sentencing in the cases has varied and there is some evidence to suggest that the judiciary may not fully comprehend the seriousness of some of the issues before them.

Are others involved in combating child pornography or protecting children?

There are several types of community initiative that are important in either identifying sources of child pornography or protecting children from on-line abuse. 'Hotlines' or 'TipLines' are becoming increasingly common in countries with high levels of Internet usage. These are mechanisms that allow people who have found what they think is illegal material on the Internet to report it. If investigators agree that the material is likely to be found to be illegal by a court, they will have it removed from any servers located within their country. Usually the police will also be notified and may try to track down the publisher. If the material originates outside their area or country, the police will pass on the report either directly or through Interpol.

The precise status of the Hotlines and TipLines and their methods of working depends a great deal on where the original impetus for the Hotline came from. In some countries, for example the UK and US, the Hotlines work very closely with the police. In the UK it is an offence to possess child pornography but if an ISP is notified of the existence of such material on his servers and he has it removed promptly, then the police will not prosecute. Thus the UK Hotline, the IWF, performs a very important service for the Internet industry which funds its work.

Hotlines and TipLines across the world have formed an association called INHOPE: Internet Hotlines for Europe. Its birth was funded by the European Commission's Daphne Programme, but it is now open to Hotlines from any part of the globe. There are 15 members from 12 countries, with more known to be in formation. INHOPE's current members are Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the US. Given the cross-border nature of the Internet and the child pornography 'business', coordination and collaboration across national borders by those working against it is vitally important.

A number of community-based initiatives exist to undertake educational and awareness-raising work to help children, parents, teachers and other 'care-takers' to use the Net safely, and to press the industry to do more. These include codes of advice designed to help children stay safe, and to teach that 'stranger danger' is an issue in the virtual world every bit as much as it is in the real world.

Another role that community organizations have taken on relates to pressing for legislative change or supporting those who are asking for changes in the best interest of children. In the UK, for example, this resulted in the formation of CHIS: Children's Charities Coalition for Internet Safety, comprising all the UK's major domestic professional children's welfare organizations

The Internet industry itself has also been part of the debate on and response to child pornography and safety on-line. The basic position of many ISPs is very simple: they only allow people who have reached the age of legal majority to join their services. Thus if any legal minors are using their services it should be because a responsible adult has joined and given them a sub-account. Anything that happens to any user of a sub-account is said to be the prime responsibility of the main account holder. ISPs expect the

responsible adult to be the child's parent, teacher or legal guardian, but few actually specify this or ask for the relationship to be declared, much less verified.

In an ideal world, parents would not allow their children to go on-line unless and until they were completely satisfied that their child knew about the hazards of the Internet and how to avoid or deal with them. But this is not an ideal world. Some parents may be ignorant of the hazards, or unable to communicate the right messages to their children. And many children are far more Internet-literate and computer-literate than their parents. At the same time, the pressure to have an Internet connection is so great, for educational and other reasons, that parents feel obliged to provide this come-what-may.

These realities are well known to the industry, yet no company tests parents on their knowledge of Internet safety before agreeing to let them have accounts which they can hand on to their children.

Education and awareness programmes have been developed by some ISPs and other parts of the industry, often with financial and other support from governments. Most responsible ISPs provide advice and guidance on-line, but few provide it off-line. This is a pity, since many parents might feel more comfortable reading safety advice on paper. Some ISPs provide nothing or very little advice or guidance, on- or off-line.

A number of ISPs provide 'parental control' software that allows parents to control access to some or all parts of the Internet, and even to control the amount of time a child can spend on-line. None of this software is perfect and parents should not consider it a substitute for sound advice and appropriate supervision. There have also been new initiatives in the field of rating and filtering.

More recent is the development of so-called 'walled gardens'. These are generally commercial services that provide access only to a part of the Internet and that limit the interactivity to participants whose identities are properly established so that the temptation to abuse the cloak of apparent anonymity has been removed.

ISPs themselves, generally through their national trade associations, have also developed their own Codes of Practice. These stipulate basic standards, generally only reinforcing national laws, but they rarely go beyond that to establish detailed common approaches or policies.

Governments have also acted. The primary international vehicle aiming to tackle child pornography and on-line abuse is the G8 machinery which has established a special police sub-group on Internet-based computer crime. It is likely that the pursuit of collectors and distributors of child pornography will become of secondary importance or only relevant if it leads or points directly towards current active sexual abuse.

Within the G8 machinery, different police forces have been trying to agree common protocols and procedures, for example, for retrieving and storing evidence, responding to requests for information and all the other important minutiae of a criminal investigation.

Several countries have been prompted by the emergence of child pornography on the Internet to re-examine their existing laws. Finland, Japan, Italy, Canada, the UK and the US fall into this category, and other regimes have sought to control Internet access within their countries and have used a desire to keep such material at bay as part of their justification for doing so.

The European Union is providing funds for research into Internet policy questions and for the development of new resources to address the new issues it is raising. This includes activity across a broad range of headings including the establishment of new Hotlines, filtering and rating projects, and awareness raising.

There have been many important international conferences and meetings on the subject of combating child pornography, including an important multi-sector meeting in Vienna in September 1999.³

So has there been progress since the first World Congress in 1996?

The first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm in 1996 prompted a wave of major actions against child pornography across the world at national, regional and international levels. Operation Wonderland was both a tribute to what has been achieved and a reminder of what still needs to be done.

The global conference in Vienna in 1999 gave a particular impetus to the fight against on-line child pornography and, also at an international level, the G8 machinery, Europol, the International Labour Organization (ILO), Council of Europe and the European Union have all reinforced international legal frameworks that consolidate and develop the Stockholm processes.

The period since the Stockholm Congress has coincided with a major increase in the availability of child pornography but this is in very large measure due to the emergence of the Internet as the dominant global channel for its acquisition and distribution. The development of the Internet as a mass medium was in its very early days when the Stockholm Congress took place.

The 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children therefore gives the world community a much needed opportunity to assess what has been achieved, but perhaps more importantly it also provides a global platform from which civilized society can rededicate itself to ending child pornography and the sexual abuse of children on which it is based.

¹ This summary is based on *Child Pornography*, one of six theme papers prepared as background reading for participants at the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Yokohama, Japan, 17 – 20 December 2001. The paper, was written by John Carr. Note that all references to research and other source documents are given in the original paper.

² Of the countries with identified members of the Wonderland Club, the following 14 participated in Operation Cathedral: Australia, Austria, Belgium, England/Wales, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, Sweden, US (the Netherlands acted later). The following 32 countries had Wonderland members but were not involved in Operation Cathedral: Brazil, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Eire, Egypt, Greece, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Malta, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey. In addition, 10 members were identified who could not be linked to a particular country.

³ The full report of the conference can be seen at www.stop-childpornog.at