

8 June 2021

**To:** G7 Digital and Technology Ministers

**CC:** George Eustice, UK Sec. of State for the Environment

**Fr:** The Alliance to Counter Crime Online (ACCO) and the World Parrot Trust

**Re:** “Building back better” by harmonizing laws to make cyberspace safer for people and animals alike

Dear All,

The Alliance to Counter Crime Online (ACCO)<sup>1</sup> and our member The World Parrot Trust<sup>2</sup> want to thank the G7 Digital and Technology Ministers for their commitment to “build back better,” with a more productive, inclusive and resilient global economy, with digital technology at its heart.

To that end, we want to implore you to take a unified and harmonized approach to countering the scourge of online crime. Technology has transformed the way people conduct commerce, with illicit actors shifting their operations into cyberspace alongside licit commercial businesses.

Just as this shift in illicit behavior offers new opportunities for data sharing and interdiction of illicit actors, the borderless nature of cyberspace and the needs to protect user privacy and free expression simultaneously create challenges that must be addressed at the legislative, policy and technical levels.

Organized criminal syndicates that have shifted onto social media platforms in particular have transformed entire black markets, which have grown exponentially in size in multiple serious crime sectors, including illicit and counterfeit drugs, child sex abuse content, human trafficking, and the illegal wildlife trade.

The World Parrot Trust is one of many conservation groups, who are members of ACCO, that are tracking the collapse of key wild populations, thanks at least in part, to the growing illicit trade of endangered species on social media platforms.

We urge G7 ministers to read the most recent research on the harms caused by online crime, and have provided our own Fact Sheets to help launch that process. We further ask G7 ministers to:

- Work towards harmonizing laws governing illicit activity in cyberspace in order to respond to the rising tide of illicit activity on surface, deep and dark web platforms;
- Impose regulations on tech firms to legislate that algorithms and other products they develop work to limit illicit activity rather than amplify it;
- Adopt laws that provide victims of online crime, and moderators at tech firms, a path to justice; AND
- Take into account the impacts cybercrime is having on endangered flora and fauna.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://counteringcrime.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.parrots.org/>

The UK's Draft Online Safety Bill, places the UK at the forefront of efforts to make the Internet a safer place. It is a welcome step towards ensuring that tech companies have a duty of care towards their users so that what is unacceptable and illegal offline will also be unacceptable and illegal online. It is vital that harms to wildlife and the environment are also considered in the final drafting of this bill and we encourage the creation of statutory codes of practice to prevent harmful content accelerating the Biodiversity crisis.

In the United States, headquarters to many of the world's biggest tech companies, legislators have introduced more than one dozen bills to reform Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act (CDA 230), which currently provides a liability shield for technology companies for hosting user-generated content, even when those platforms know they host content that facilitates serious crime and extremism.

Despite the broad, bipartisan concern about CDA 230, American Trade Representative under the prior U.S. administration included liability shield language modeled after CDA 230 in the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), and there is concern this language will again appear in the US-UK trade deal.

ACCO and World Parrot Trust urge the G7 Ministers to make a public pledge that their countries will not include liability shield language in any upcoming trade deals.

Sincerely,



ACCO Executive Director, Gretchen Peters

Sincerely,



World Parrot Trust, Dr. Rowan Martin

On behalf of:

ACCO Governing Board Member, Dr. Amr al Azm  
ACCO Governing Board Member, Dr. Shawn Graham  
ACCO Governing Board Member, Dr. Damien Huffer  
ACCO Governing Board Member, Kathleen Miles  
ACCO Governing Board Member, Katie Paul  
ACCO Member, Dr Tim Mackey