Thank you, Apple, for showing what more is possible to protect children

The publication and exchange of child sexual abuse images and videos over the internet expands and compounds the grave harm already done to the victims of these crimes.

The testimony of the now adult survivors of child sexual abuse should leave nobody in any doubt about the enormity and long-lasting nature of the damage done by the continued publication of images and videos of them being abused.

The detection of child sexual abuse material leads not only to that material being taken down from the platform it is being shared on, but also makes it possible to identify and safeguard children from ongoing or imminent abuse and to arrest offenders. For all these reasons, it is of paramount importance that every technology company, in all parts of the value chain and regardless of size, does everything in their power to detect, remove and report child sexual abuse material as quickly as possible from their systems.

For those same reasons we, as a coalition of child protection organisations and child rights advocates from many different parts of the globe, are writing to support, in the strongest possible terms, the recent policy announcement made by Apple.

In August 2021, Apple announced that in the next update of their operating system, they would include privacy-respecting technology that would enable the company to detect known child sexual abuse images on devices prior to being uploaded to iCloud. We applaud Apple’s decision not to ignore this issue, but rather to confront it.

Apple’s contribution is hugely significant and very welcome

For many years, other companies large and small have been taking steps to identify and delete child sexual abuse material and report it to the relevant authorities. In 2020, for example, nearly 300 companies submitted 21,751,085 such reports to the NCMEC CyberTipline. Apple accounted for only 265 of these, so the company is a late but most welcome actor.

Crucially, Apple is also the first major global technology company to propose the processing and detection of CSAM at device level. It is equally important to note that while the proposed CSAM detection technology used is not new, Apple is proposing to add layers of encryption and other complex technologies to protect the privacy and security of iCloud users. This emphasis on privacy and security is highly noteworthy as a consistent feature of the Apple brand.

The issue may be less about technology or privacy than about trust

We note Apple’s decision to pause implementation of its announced policy towards child sexual abuse material. The company says it is doing so following “feedback from customers, advocacy groups, researchers and others”. Apple goes on to say: “we have decided to take additional time over the coming months to collect input and make improvements before releasing these critically important child safety features.”
While we are disappointed at the delay, we are greatly encouraged that the company gave no indication of an intention to reverse its decision or abandon the policy. On the contrary, Apple appears intent on making improvements, perhaps also taking more time to explain its methods and reassure critics they have nothing to fear in relation to privacy.

Apple’s declared intention is solely to create a capacity to identify verified child sexual abuse material. Nothing more, nothing less. The company’s licence agreement expressly forbids any user from using their systems to “plan or engage in any illegal activity”, and the company, reserves the right to undertake inspections with a view to enforcing the license agreement.

The rights of children to life, safety and wellbeing cannot be the casualties of policies that place the privacy of all users, including people who produce, share and consume child sexual abuse material, above the rights of a child in need of protection or a child whose privacy rights have been violated.

State pressure on technology companies to modify or repurpose their products for political aims is a wholly distinct issue. It requires a specific response and cannot be an argument against protecting children where the technology exists to do so. Rather, the solution lies in increased transparency and accountability globally.

We all look forward to a time when Apple’s products will become a synonym not only for the highest standards of privacy as at present, but also for the highest standards of child protection. As things stand today, Apple’s stance is a hugely important step forward, both for Apple and for the sector as whole. Having been told repeatedly that “nothing more can be done”, Apple has shown precisely what more can be done. If there is a will to do it.

Our collective call to action

- We call on Apple to remain on course and to establish a clear timeline for implementing these vital steps to prevent the repeated sexual exploitation of children.
- We strongly encourage Apple to go further, and we welcome dialogue with the company on how to do this.

Join us now to act

Join us in encouraging and working with Apple to ensure its announced policy stays on track and provides children with the protection they need and deserve.

Together we can make a difference.

For more information or to add your name and organisation to the list please contact ECPAT International at amyc@ecpat.org

Please see next page for signatories
ECPAT International
Dr. Dorothea Czarnecki
Acting Executive Director

Internet Watch Foundation
Susie Hargreaves OBE
Chief Executive Officer

Canadian Centre for Child Protection
Lianna McDonald
Executive Director

Child Helpline International
Patrick Krens
Executive Director

Child Rescue Coalition
Carly Asher Yoost
Founder & Chief Executive Officer

IJM’s Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children
John Tanagho
Executive Director

INHOPE
INHOPE signs on behalf of members represented on this list
Jean-Christophe Letoquin
President of the INHOPE Board

International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
Bob Cunningham
Chief Executive Officer

Missing Children Europe
Aagje leven
Secretary General

National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
John F. Clark

THORN
Thorn
Julie Cordua
Chief Executive Officer

WeProtect Global Alliance
Iain Drennan
Executive Director

End Violence Against Children
Dr. Howard Taylor
Executive Director

#stop_sexting
Anastasiya Dzyakava
Chief Executive Officer

5 Rights Foundation
Beeban Kidron OBE

AjudAjudar
Sónia Rodrigues
President

AMANE Morocco
Aude EHLINGER

Applied Research and Communications Fund
Nikolay Badinski
Executive Director

ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth
Valbona Hystuna-Doka

Borders Beyond Canada
Arly Akerstream
Vice President to the Board of Directors of Beyond Borders Canada

C-Sema Tanzania
Thelma Dhaje

Childnet International
Will Gardner OBE
Chief Executive Officer

Children Support Centre Lithuania
Ausra Kuriene
Director

ChildSafeNet
Anil Raghuvanshi
Founder/President

CRCA / ECPAT Albania
Altin Hazizaj
Executive Director

Defence for Children-Liberia
Foday M. Kawah
Executive Director

ECPAT Austria
Astrid Winkler
Executive Director

ECPAT Ethiopia – Emmanuel Development Association (EDA)
Dr. Tessema Bekele
Executive Director

ECPAT Germany
Andrea Wagner
Chief Executive Officer

ECPAT Japan
Ms. Junko Miyamoto
Co-representative

continued
Signatories (continued)

ECPAT Korea (TACTEENNAEIL)
Hyeon-sook Lee
Executive Director

ECPAT New Zealand
Jane Foster
Acting Executive Director

ECPAT Nigeria
Morenike Omaiboje

ECPAT Norway
Ann-Kristin Vervik
Executive Director

ECPAT Philippines
Dolores SD. Alforte
Executive Director

ECPAT Portugal
(Associação Centro Integrado de Apoio Familiar)
Wilson Lins de Oliveira Junior

ECPAT Sweden
Anna Karin Hildingsson Boqvist
Secretary General

ECPAT Taiwan
Yi-Ling Chen
Secretary General

ECPAT Thailand
Ketsaneel Chantrakul
Programme Manager

ECPAT UK
Patricia Dunn
Executive Director

ECPAT USA
Lori L. Cohen
Executive Director

Empowering Children Foundation Poland
Monika Sajkowska
President

EndCSEC Malaysia
Dr. Raj Karim

Foundation Together Albania
Vera Remškar
Executive Director

Forum for Digital Equality Nepal
Babu Ram Aryal
Executive Director

Future Worlds Center
Yiannis Laouris
Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Grupo Luna Nueva
Raquel Fernández
Coordinadora de Proyectos

Halley Movement Coalition & ECPAT-Mauritius
Mahendranath Busgopaul
Secretary-General

Icelandic Safer Internet Centre
Guðberg Jónsson
Programme Manager for Icelandic Safer Internet Centre

IJM
IJM Germany
Dietmar Roller
Chief Executive Officer

IJM
International Justice Mission U.K.
David Westlake
Chief Executive Officer

Innocence in Danger e.V.
Julia von Weiler
Chief Executive Officer

International Centre on Sexual Exploitation UK
Haley McNamara
Director

ISPCC
John Church
Chief Executive

JellyBeanz
Edith Kriel
Executive Director

Kancelaria Prawniczca
Lipeles Law Group Poland

Kinderschutz Schweiz
Mrs. Regula Bernhard Hug
Executive Director

Latvian Safer Internet Center
Maija Kaktovskaja
Chief Executive Officer

Lifeline Childline Namibia
Zelnadia de Waal
Programme Manager

Ministère de la Population, de la Protection Sociale et de la Promotion de la Femme, Madagascar
Monsieur Auguste Rasolonjatovo
Directeur de l’Enfance et De la Famille

National Center on Sexual Exploitation USA
Dawn Hawkins
Chief Executive Officer

Peter Wanless
Chief Executive

continued >
Signatories (continued)

Individuals

Abhilash Nair
Aston University
Birmingham

Maud de Boer-Buquicchio
President of Missing Children Europe, Member of WPGA Management Board, former UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, former Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Professor Hany Farid
Professor Sonia Livingstone
London School of Economics and Political Science

Tink Palmer OBE
Tink Palmer Consulting

Company

New Zealand Classification Board
David Shanks
Chief Censor

3ABOTA
NGO «Crisis centre «Zabota» Kazakhstan
Ulzhan Luwwkpanova
Director

PantallasAmigas
PantallasAmigas
Jorge Flores
President

MiudosSegurosNa.Net
Projecto
MiudosSegurosNa.Net
Tito de Morais
Founder

Protect Children Finland
Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen
Executive Director

RAINN
Camille Cooper
Vice President of Public Policy

Rede da Criança
Mozambique
Ms. Amélia Fernanda Cardoso
Executive Director

Royal Virgin Islands Police Force
Kendolph Bobb
Detective Inspector

Save the Children Denmark

SAWN
Association for the Protection of Children and Teenagers against Violence and Sexual abuse
Amel Nefoussi Koubaa
Cofounder

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation
Deborah Denis
Chief Executive

The Smile of the Child

Tulir – Centre for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse

Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL)
Mr. Kasirye Rogers
Executive Director

UK Safer Internet Centre
David Wright
Director

Unizon
Olga Persson
President

VACR
Mrs. Nguyen Thu Ha
Member of Central Executive Committee, Officer Manager of Vietnam Association for Protection of Child’s Rights

WAO AFRIQUE
Mally Kwadjo Cléophas

Children’s Groups Express Strong Support for Apple’s New Policy