NYC Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer
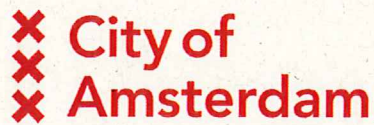
City of Amsterdam

Ajuntament de Barcelona

New York City, Amsterdam, and Barcelona Launch Global Coalition To Protect Digital Rights

The Cities Coalition for Digital Rights builds upon five shared principles to create policies, tools and resources to promote and protect resident and visitor rights online.

NEW YORK— Today, Amsterdam, Barcelona and New York City formally launched the *Cities Coalition for Digital Rights*, a joint initiative to promote and track progress in protecting residents' and visitors' digital rights. The Coalition will create policies, tools and resources to help advance this effort in alignment with the Charter for Human Rights and Principles for the Internet, established within the framework of the UN's Internet Governance Forum around five core shared principles. The Coalition marks the first time that cities have come together to protect digital rights on a global level.

The shared principles will set the agenda for further policy discussions in coordination with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and other participating cities over the next year:

1. Universal and equal access to the Internet, and digital literacy
2. Privacy, data protection and security
3. Transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination of data, content and algorithm
4. Participatory democracy, diversity and inclusion
5. Open and ethical digital service standards

For full details, visit https://citiesfordigitalrights.org.

Digital rights refer to the human rights that individuals and communities are entitled to when accessing and using the internet and digital technologies. The *Cities Coalition for Digital Rights* is based on the principle that the same human rights that people have offline must also be enjoyed and protected in the digital society. We are entering a world where digital technologies are becoming pervasive and imply greater risks for these rights in the real and virtual spaces where we live, and in our interactions with institutions and public administration.

The internet has become inseparable from our daily lives. Yet, every day, there are new cases of digital rights abuse and misuse, and personal information, including our movements and communications, being monitored, shared and sold without consent; 'black box' algorithms making unaccountable decisions; social media being used as a tool of harassment and hate speech; and democratic processes and public opinion being undermined.

Cities can work together to solve common digital challenges. As a coalition, the cities commit to share practical examples of their work, learn from each other, and create and share action programs.

"The Cities Coalition for Digital Rights is the right next step in ensuring that all people can benefit and thrive from using technologies that play an important role in our daily lives," said **Deputy Mayor Laura Anglin, City of New York**. "More work still needs to be done, and I look forward to partnering with officials and experts around the globe to set an example for the implementation and proliferation of these principles at home, for New York City's 8.5 million residents, and abroad."

"A human centric digital society shall reflect the openness, diversity and the inclusion that are at the core of our societies and values. We want an open Internet that allows every citizen to take part in the online society," said **Deputy Mayor Gerardo Pisarello of Barcelona**. We want an Internet that empowers citizens not discriminates them. We are very proud to join forces with NYC and Amsterdam to protect citizens' digital rights, such as their privacy, data protection and right to information self-determination.

"Through digital technologies we can connect to everything and everyone across the world. At the same time we are discriminated by algorithms and locked into digital bubbles," said **Deputy Mayor Touria Meliani of Amsterdam**. "The city of Amsterdam feels the responsibility to found this global cities movement, and demonstrate that cities lead the way in human centered innovation."

"Cities are closer to the citizens and can become custodians of citizen's digital rights. We need to ask what are the social, ethical and economic implications of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and make sure we bake rule of law, human rights and democracy into AI," said **Francesca Bria, Technology and Digital Innovation Commissioner of Barcelona**. "That's why together with this declaration we have defined a set of digital ethical standards and policy guidelines that are now shared amongst cities in an open source platform. This will lay the foundations for a people-centric digital future."

As technology continues to be an integral part of living in today's world, we in cities see it as our civic duty to protect all people from the threats to human rights that come with an active, digital life," said **Alby Bocanegra, interim Chief Technology Officer, City of New York**. "With these rights and principles, we are committed to upholding the public right to internet access, privacy, transparency, a participatory democracy, and the responsible use of technologies in the

public realm. I'm proud of our work to partner with other cities and re-enforce global digital rights."

"As we move closer toward a more global online society, we need to align the ideologies and best practices that will secure and protect our digital rights at home and abroad," said **Council Member Peter Koo, Chair of the Technology Committee**. This global coalition anticipates a future in which our daily online lives will be governed by the principles of democracy, transparency, and security, and we look forward to creating a framework that will employ these values to address our common challenges."

"As home to more than half the world's population and growing, cities play an indispensable role in promoting human rights, including when it comes to our vibrant digital spaces," said **Penny Abeywardena, Commissioner of the New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs**. "With technology now fully woven into our daily lives, it is imperative that global cities act together to ensure that online experiences are informed by the principles of inclusion, fairness and opportunity. We are pleased to join our international partners to launch this groundbreaking coalition to protect the digital rights of our residents and visitors."

"In cities we are the first to experience the impact of digitization", says **Ger Baron, Chief Technology Officer of Amsterdam**. "We experiment which solutions work and which don't. This gives us the unique possibility to provide feedback towards national, European and global governments on policy-making and regulation needs. With the digital rights coalition, we unite to protect our residents' personal rights and our position to make city policies in a global digital marketplace."

"Due to the growing reliance on the internet, it is imperative to ensure Human Rights are protected, respected and fulfilled in the digital realm and guaranteed to all." said **UN-Habitat Human Rights Officer, Tessy Aura**. "UN-Habitat is eager to collaborate with the Cities Coalition for Digital rights and other partners committed to protecting, upholding and advancing full respect for human rights in the digital era."

"The Internet Rights and Principles Coalition is proud to see the municipalities of Amsterdam, New York, and Barcelona putting the Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet at the heart of digital cities agendas," said **Marianne Franklin - Chairman Internet Rights Principles Coalition, Professor at Goldsmith University London**. "They are leading the way in showing how internet futures for our cities can be not only human rights-centred and digitally smart but also environmentally responsible."

"Digital rights are human rights! Let's make sure no one is left behind in the quest to deliver better public services through the digital transition," said **Anna Lisa Boni - Secretary General of EUROCITIES**. "People need to be able to access and manage their data and have trust in

their local authorities. In the coming months, EUROCITIES will be working with our members to translate these principles into further actions at the local level."

"Technology reflects values and decisions and is therefore never neutral," said **Martin Brynskov, Chairman Open & Agile Smart Cities Network**. "As cities we have an responsibility towards our future generations to reflect on the direction we are heading and what implications our choices have. Ethical considerations should be at the heart of the design process of a digital society. As Open & Agile Smart Cities we support models where governments, private sector, academia, and residents cooperate to shape cities in which people have control over technologies. We welcome this initiative and will further engage with the cities in our network to endorse the statement. We look forward to appending the exciting work of Amsterdam, Barcelona, and New York within our efforts on Digital Rights and Skills."

"I expect from cities to make a difference to protect and uphold our digital rights. In cities we experience the influence of technology at an early stage," said **Marleen Stikker - Director Waag Society Amsterdam**. "That's why it is important to shape our digital future guided by public values."

"Municipalities and local governments have a huge role to play in implementing digital standards that support and empower human rights from a multi stakeholder perspective," said **Article 19's Head of Digital, Mallory Knodel**. "We see that many cities are already doing so much to connect the unconnected, and this initiative will ensure that human rights standards and best practices are incorporated not only with access, but importantly with the services that come with this access. This is a fantastic initiative and Article 19 looks forward to advising cities as they further define and act on these principles.

"The internet is becoming increasingly entwined with urban life. We rely on it for everything from transportation to accessing essential public services," said **Mark Surman, Executive Director** of the **Mozilla Foundation**. "In recognition of this, cities around the world need to make commitments to ethical, responsible technology. The Cities Coalition for Digital Rights is doing that -- crafting localized policies that reflect unified principles of privacy, inclusion, equal access and accountability. Together, they are building on the internet's intended nature -- a decentralized resource, open and accessible to all."

"The **City of Athens** is implementing an ambitious digital transformation strategy which is making it a better place to live, work and visit," said **Mayor Kaminis**. "Upholding and advancing the digital rights of our residents is a central focus of this effort and we are proud to become part of this coalition in the next wave of cities."

Barcelona has put forward an ambitious Digital City Plan, a people-first approach that uses digital technology and data to transform how the city solves the big urban and social challenges including affordable housing, energy transition, climate change, and implementing a more

participatory democracy. The city is pioneering an Open Digitisation process to define Barcelona's Ethical Digital Standards, an open source Policy Toolkit for cities to develop digital policies that put citizens, their fundamental rights and needs at the center and make governments more open, transparent, and collaborative. In this context, Barcelona is promoting its Manifesto for Technological Sovereignty and citizens' digital rights, for full control of its ICT services and infrastructures.

Barcelona has released several digital services as reusable open source software, such as its flagship citizens' participation platform Decidim that Barcelona has deployed to support large scale citizens' participation, with the objective to integrate citizens' intelligence in the policy-making process. Barcelona is also leading the DECODE project, a collaborative initiative for decentralised, privacy enhancing data management for citizens.

Another important project is the Barcelona Open Data portal, enabling more transparency regarding city services, and showcasing open data projects build by local companies and citizens within its "Reuser" area.

In his first term in 2013, Mayor de Blasio established the goal of making sure every New Yorker has affordable, high-speed internet access by 2025. Since, the City of New York has invested in broadband infrastructure and is creating new ways to bring equitable service to all areas of New York City, including bringing free Wi-Fi to Queensbridge Houses, the country's largest public housing complex.

In 2016, the Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology officer created a set of best practices and resources for using smart technologies responsibly in order to establish open and ethical digital service standards. More than 35 leading cities have signed on to the Guidelines for the Internet of Things.

Earlier this year, Mayor de Blasio launched a national coalition calling on all U.S. mayors to join a Cities Open Internet Pledge requiring all U.S. internet providers with whom they do business to follow a strong set of Net Neutrality principles. Over 100 mayors across the country have signed onto the Cities Open Internet Pledge to prevent providers from being the gatekeeper between residents and the local government services on which they depend every day.

The City of New York also held its first Library Privacy Week this year, which included a series of more than 30 free public workshops aimed at teaching residents better data privacy and security practices. Library Privacy Week 2018 marked the formal launch of NYC Digital Safety: Privacy & Security, a project that ensures that NYC residents can rely on public libraries for their questions about internet privacy and security while promoting civic engagement and participation.

Amsterdam is taking a people-centered approach to technology. Since June 2018, Deputy Mayor Meliani has been developing an ambitious policy framework, called "the digital city," including proposals on data minimization, open by default, privacy by design, and a ban on Wi-Fi tracking.

The participatory manifest "Tada, clarity about data" - created with local business, academia and residents - will be implemented, highlighting concepts such as inclusion, transparency and ethical data use.

To put words into actions, Amsterdam is pioneering an open accountable tech solutions at their Datalab. For example, every year, 250,000 issues in public space, such as trash on the street, are reported to the City of Amsterdam and directly routed to the right person on the street by an algorithm. To ensure this technology is fair and beneficial to all, a neutral audit will be conducted, testing whether the algorithm is not biased towards particular privileged areas in the city or problems.

The city of Amsterdam is convinced that diverse input from residents is essential to policy-making. OpenCity Amsterdam provides easy-to-use digital participation tools to include the residents voice, such as co-creating the design of public space. In Amsterdam, civic initiatives have emerged to empower people digitally.

New York City, Barcelona, and Amsterdam will convene at the Smart Cities Expo World Congress in Barcelona to recruit other cities to join the coalition and to begin planning working groups that will manage progress on each of the five principles.

About the City of New York Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer

The Mayor's Office of the CTO is led by the New York City Chief Technology Officer. We're making broadband, smart city technologies, digital services, and the tech industry work for all New Yorkers. Learn more at NYC.gov/cto

About Barcelona Commissioner's Office for Technology and Digital Innovation

In June 2016, Barcelona City Council created the new Commissioner's Office for Technology and Digital Innovation, fully aware of the importance of technology and data for transforming the City, delivering better and more affordable public services and making the municipal government more transparent and effective for the people. Learn more at barcelona.cat/digital

About Amsterdam

Deputy Mayor Meliani is leading a *"digital city agenda"*, aiming that everyone in Amsterdam has the same opportunities to benefit from digitization in a participatory approach. Learn more at https://www.amsterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/volg-beleid/innovatie-0/