Some UNESCO activities in the field of Information Ethics undertaken in 2010-2011

UNESCO's contribution in the field of information ethics has focused on interventions in three principle areas which are outlined below:

> *Contributing to the international debate on the ethical dimensions of information*

On 18 May 2011, at the WSIS Forum held at the ILO Headquarters in Geneva an Action line facilitation meeting for the C10 Action line, "The Ethical dimensions of the information society" was organized jointly by UNESCO's CI and SHS Sectors. The session was held under the theme "Cyber and Information Ethics: freedom & Security, Privacy, Malice & Harm, Property", with an expert panel from academia, civil society and the intergovernmental sector. The session facilitated a rich debate on the ways in which evolutions in the field of technology was contributing to dynamic societal changes not yet well understood. These interactions are changing our understanding of what it means to be human as well as our perceptions and relationship with technology.

Areas identified during the debate for further investigation included:

➢ Exploring and understanding what constitutes informed consent in the virtual environment;
➢ Understanding the ethical responsibility of corporate actors marketing to youth and children in virtual spaces;
➢ Development of indicators in this field;
➢ Better understanding the design and development of human machine interfaces and the potential for harm; and
➢ Establishing guidelines for the use of user-generated/provided data.

In addition to the participants in Geneva a number of virtual participants based in Brazil, Canada, France, Mexico and Portugal representing international organizations, NGO's and academics also contributed to the event.

On September 30, 2011, UNESCO and UNECA successfully organized a workshop on the unintended consequences of participation in the digital environment held within the framework of the Internet Governance Forum in Nairobi, Kenya. The session examined challenges around:

➢ Diversion of resources,
➢ Trust and safety,
➢ E-waste and Linguistic diversity and survival.

The panel drawn from academia, civil society and the policy-making community offered rich and varied insights into the identified challenges and their implications for the African information society. A lively interactive session following the presentations allowed deeper exploration of the session topics and drew on the audience's diverse experience in addressing similar challenges in other developing regions. Of the 4 topics, e-waste and the role of ICT in supporting the survival of African languages captured the greatest attention. The cross-fertilization of ideas, raising awareness of other global initiatives allowed a number of networks and resources to be identified which could enable interested persons and institutions to further explore/undertake activities in these areas.

The session while recognizing the challenges of the unintended consequences reaffirmed the importance of continuing efforts in Africa to reduce digital divides and expand opportunities and participation in the digital spaces. Measures identified to mitigate adverse effects included:
➢ awareness raising of policy-makers and civil society,
➢ including information on adverse consequences in information and digital literacy programmes and
➢ stimulating local content creation. Participants were also invited to provide the organizers via e-mail with proposals for follow-up activities.

Supporting capacity building, policy, curriculum and future research in information ethics

Excellent progress continues to be made by UNESCO in its efforts to support capacity building in the area of information ethics for tertiary education institutions in Africa.
An academic workshop on information ethics took place on 4 and 5 July 2011 at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. Which brought together representatives of African universities (Central African Republic, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia,

Nigeria, South Afrrica, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe), Europe and the United States of America to advance the development of a curriculum for teaching information ethics in Africa.

The workshop was organized by the Africa Network for Information Ethics (ANIE) with the support of UNESCO and its Windhoek Office, the University of Pretoria, the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and the South African Department of Communications.

The workshop in Pretoria was the fourth event dealing with ethical challenges posed by modern information technology in the African continent. Information ethics are crucial for building information and knowledge societies driven by critical reflection on values within the African context. There are opportunities, unique to the development of African societies, which need to be addressed in this context. Past events have been held in 2007 (South Africa), 2009 (South Africa), 2010 (Botswana) and South Africa (2011).

The code of ethics for the information society proposed by the intergovernmental information for all programme (IFAP) was presented to UNESCO's Member States at the 36th General Conference. This 5 year process further elaborated and built on the work of various UNESCO regional consultations, work of the UNESCO Chair in Computer and information ethics and the IFAP Working Group on Information Ethics. UNESCO's General Conference took note of the work and invited the Director-General to suggest possible ways that the Organization could address issues of ethical dimensions of the information society.

UNESCO's Rabat Office and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) in cooperation with the Mauritanian Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences, organized from 14 -16 November 2011, an expert meeting on the ethical dimensions of the information society in the context of freedom of expression and the respect for human rights. The event held in Nouakchott, Mauritania brought together experts from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and host country Mauritania to examine current legislative and institutional policies in the context of promoting freedom of expression and human rights on the information networks. The forum provided opportunities to explore the interrelations between

freedom of expression and ethical responsibility as well as to share and evaluate national experiences this area. Experts tabled recommendations aimed at strengthening democracy, advancing liberalization of the audio-visual sector and promoting access to institutional information. UNESCO and ISESCO have also been invited to conduct follow-up activities in the Maghreb States to support the ongoing review and modernization of information and communication laws of particularly those relating to the Internet.

Building partnerships to raise visibility and action in the area of information ethics

Enhanced inter-sectoral collaboration between the CI Sector's Knowledge Society Division in its work on the ethical dimensions of the information society and complementary activities being undertaken by the Division for the Ethics of Science and Technology in SHS Sector lead to the organization in May 2011 of the session on "Cyber and Information Ethics: freedom & Security, Privacy, Malice & Harm, Property", in Geneva.

The CI Sector at the invitation of the SHS

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Sector participated by teleconference during a special session on information ethics held in Doha, Qatar during the 7th session of the intergovernmental World Commission on the Ethics of Science and Technology (COMEST). On the basis of these discussions it is envisaged that active cooperative links between COMEST and the intergovernmental Information for All Programme, (IFAP) will be shortly established.

UNESCO continues to collaborate with other stakeholders from civil society, IGOs, academia and international networks of practitioners in this field including the Internet Society (ISOC), the Council of Europe (COE), UNESCO Chairs in computer and information ethics and the International Centre for Information Ethics (ICIE).

UNESCO and Info-Ethics