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Paris, 10 June 2008

Dear Minister,

Reporters Without Borders, an organisation that defends press freedom, is forwarding you a copy of a letter it sent on 9 June 2008 to information minister, Uladzimir Rusakevich, following remarks made on 2 June by one of his team, Liliya Ananich, about regulation of the Internet.

We would like to know your ministry's stance on the issue of Internet filtering. During a round table organised by the magazine *Belaruskaya Dumka*, deputy minister Ananich said: "The information ministry is unambiguously committed to the legislative regulation of the operation of Internet mass media. Those of them that would like to act as mass media (request information, distribute information, be present at press conferences and so on) should be registered in accordance with the established procedure. The procedure should be defined either by the Mass Media Law or a regulatory act of the government."

She also referred to the use of Chinese expertise to block access to foreign websites liable to have a "bad influence" on the Belarusian Internet. We would like to know what kind of sites are

targeted by such filtering and on what precise grounds.

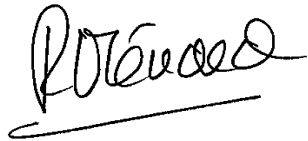
Another round table participant, Oleg Proleskovsky, who heads the informational analysis centre at the office of the president, said: "In organisational terms, it is necessary to use so-called content-filtering software. This is software that helps users or local network administrators block access from computers, for which they are responsible, to sites containing information that conflicts with current legislation or public moral standards."

We regard this manifest desire to control content as a threat to online freedom of expression. It is all the more reprehensible that the government envisage a partnership with China, the world's leading online censor.

The position of your ministry on these filtering methods is crucial. Have you already opened negotiations with some Chinese companies in the telecommunications field?

We trust you will give our request your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Ménard", with a horizontal line underneath it.

Robert Ménard
Secretary-General