



International Office
Internet Freedom desk
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Mr. Howard Stringer
Chairman, CEO and President
Sony Corporation
1-7-1 Konan, Minato-ku,
Tokyo 108-0075, Japan

Paris, 29 June 2009

Dear Mr. Stringer,

Reporters Without Borders, an organisation that defends press freedom worldwide, would like to refer you to your company's sale of computers in China that are equipped with "Green Dam" software. This new software, which is supposed to block content of a pornographic nature, has been installed on Sony's VAIO computers at the Chinese government's behest. We would like to know why Sony complied with this directive, which violates the free flow of information.

The "Green Dam" software filters and blocks content regarded as unwholesome by the Communist Party of China. A directive issued by the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology instructed computer manufacturers to begin shipping their computers with it pre-installed on 1 July 2009. How is it that Sony computers equipped with this software are already available on the Chinese market?

A Japanese company such as Sony has a responsibility to ensure that it respects human rights and, in particular, the fundamental right to information. The promotion of democracy and good governance should be an essential part of the company's priorities.

The "Green Dam" software's web-filtering capacity is by no means limited to the pornographic content it is supposed to target and we fear its abuse. Such software is clearly designed to control and restrict the activities of Internet users, violating their fundamental rights of expression and access to information. The use of this software has been condemned by the European Union and the United States.

Reporters Without Borders would like to draw your attention to the Global Online Freedom Act (GOFA), a bill that was introduced in the US House of Representatives on 6

May 2009. A similar initiative is under consideration in the European Union. Inspired by the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, the GOFA aims to prevent US companies from “cooperating with repressive governments in transforming the Internet into a tool of censorship and surveillance.”

The GOFA’s European equivalent was submitted to the European Parliament on 17 July 2008. Based on the US model, this proposed directive would ask companies to “assume their responsibilities as regards the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

Reporters Without Borders believes that your company has a responsibility to help ensure respect for the free flow of information on the Internet. But in fact its actions have endorsed censorship in China and have thereby hurt its image. We therefore call on you to make a public statement on this subject.

We thank you in advance for giving this request your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Julliard', with several long, sweeping horizontal strokes underneath.

Jean-François Julliard
Secretary-General
Reporters Without Borders

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