GROUP 5
THE MISUSES OF THE TECHNOLOGY

The participants in this workshop on the misuses of the technology focussed on the idea that the Internet is part of a new generation of media and is designed to be anonymous and without boundaries. We must therefore ask the complex question of how to find a way to fight Internet misuse. The participants were aware that too much control could jeopardize the freedom of expression the Internet offers. They also believe that eliminating hate, the dissemination of misinformation and the violation of human rights will restore the Internet's reputation. It is high time for governments to take a position on this new technology, and Canada could become the leader of this awareness campaign for other countries.

The group's participants reached a consensus from the beginning. Co-operation between ISPs, human rights advocacy organizations, law enforcement agents and governments would be invaluable on an international level. It is also believed that an Internet culture must develop; this culture would share standards, values and the vocabulary of the Internet universe. That way, users would employ the same language and it would be possible to harmonize and establish measures to eliminate Internet misuse.

The group found three ways to avoid, or least limit, Internet misuse. The first is education and awareness. Education is preferred because it is not restricting and it remains an effective way to prevent Internet misuse. Next, the group suggested using non-regulatory measures and appropriate legislation. However, these two ways of controlling the Internet were not approved unanimously because they can limit freedom of expression. Many issues quickly emerge. Should national or international regulations or a code of conduct be established? What sanctions should be used and how? According to the participants, the problems resulting from misuse are not caused by the Internet but by users. We should not regulate the technological tool but the people who use it.

The following sets out the ideas introduced and discussed by the group. However, there was not always a consensus on them, and the limited amount of time did not allow them to be further developed. The document produced by B'nai B'rith Canada following a symposium on hate on the Internet provided a good basis. Sometimes the participants used it to repeat the same recommendations or, on the contrary, to develop warnings against certain assertions. Finally, the group found it important to point out the absence of representatives from concerned agencies and how the debate lacked their points of view.