

ILLEGAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY REPORTED BY IRISH INTERNET USERS UP 10% IN 2006, NONE TRACED TO IRELAND – HOTLINE.IE REPORT

Provided under embargo until 14:30 p.m. on Thursday 29th March 2007

Thursday, 29th March 2007 – The fourth report of the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland www.hotline.ie service was launched today by Minister for Children, Mr. Brian Lenihan, TD. It shows that reports from the public about child pornography on the Internet, where this content was confirmed as illegal by the Hotline, increased by 10.6% in 2006. None of this material was traced to sources in Ireland.

In the reporting period 1st January to 31st December 2006, the Hotline received 2677 reports about suspected illegal content on the Internet. This represents a 12% increase on the 2039 reports which were received in 2005.

Of the 2677 reports received, 423 were confirmed by the Hotline as referring to sources on the Internet of illegal child pornography. This compares to 388 confirmed cases in 2005, which represents a 10.6% increase in the year.

In every case the Hotline traced the content as located or sent from outside this country. Ireland's "clean record" is confirmed by the 26 other INHOPE affiliated Hotlines around the world who found that no illegal material reported to them was located in this country.

The report provides some data that suggests that growth in the amount of child pornography which can be openly encountered on the Internet may be slowing down. This is based on rates of expected reporting relative to the percentage of reports confirmed by the Hotline as referring to child pornography.

Spam email which advertises suspected illegal content was reported far less frequently in 2006 than in 2005. Such spam represented 50% of reports in 2005 but just 35% in 2006. Back in 2001 suspicious spam represented 85% of all reports. Paul Durrant, ISPAI General Manager commented, "Given the masses of spam generally being experienced today this decline is remarkable. Spam is the way organised criminals promote their child pornography pay-sites. If Hotlines are to find and disrupt these pay-sites, it is imperative that the public report the spam that leads to them. While it is understandable that people are increasingly ignoring and deleting

spam, if anyone spots a spam in their inbox with a subject line that implies child pornography for sale, please report it before deleting it”.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Lenihan said "The nature of the internet industry is dynamic, with ongoing developments in communication technologies allowing for internet access by all means. These are largely positive developments but tackling Internet downside issues is a complex business and requires a combination of responses and co-operation of all the stakeholders, at both national and international level – legislators, law enforcement, schools, child protection practitioners, parents and guardians - is essential.”

Paul Durrant, ISPAI General Manager said, “The ISPAI is very pleased by the fact that no illegal child pornography reported to the Hotline was traced to a source in Ireland. Having this corroborated by the other INHOPE member Hotlines is very reassuring. This “clean record” has now been maintained for seven years. However, there is no room for complacency. It is vital we continue to demonstrate to the world that Irish Internet facilities are a not good place for criminals and paedophiles to harbour illegal content”.

He added, “Making the Internet a safer environment for children is in all our interests. Children must not be dissuaded from using the Internet for safety reasons as they must master its use as a modern life skill. Playing our part through global cooperation and by keeping illegal content away from Irish Internet facilities contributes to this goal. Our excellent record is also very positive for business and attracting e-commerce based organisations to locate in this country”.

The Hotline, run by the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland, was set up in 1999 to combat child pornography. It also accepts reports of other illegal content such as incitement to racial hatred and Internet fraud schemes. As of today, the ISPAI has 22 members. It funds and operates the Hotline which currently receives 50% co-funding from the European Commission’s Safer Internet Action Plan.

A copy of the report can be accessed at www.hotline.ie/report2006 (After announcement by the Minister on Thursday 29th March).

ENDS

For further information please contact: Paul Durrant (email: info@ispai.ie)

WHERE: Buswells Hotel (Boardroom) Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

WHEN: 2.30 p.m., Thursday 29th March 2007