Art collectors from around the world recently gathered at the New York City studio of world-renowned artist Jeff Koons. It was an opportunity to preview the latest collection by Koons before it was shipped overseas for an upcoming exhibition. Attendees had an opportunity to learn more about the new Koons Family Institute on International Law and Policy that is being created by the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children. The event launched a fundraising effort with a goal to raise $5 million to endow the new Institute.

Most people know Jeff Koons for his art, but less known is that he is also the father of an abducted child, Ludwig. He has battled on two continents to get his little boy back. Yet despite his fame and influence, his son is still beyond his reach. He has become a fervent advocate for protecting children and serves on the ICMEC board of directors.

National boundaries are no longer barriers to child victimization. Today, no country is immune from child abduction or child sexual exploitation. Research estimates that up to 1.2 million children around the world are trafficked for sex annually. Facilitated by the Internet, child pornography has become a global industry generating billions of dollars in revenue. More than one million images

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of children abused and exploited may be found online, and 200 new images are posted daily. Many of these children are very young: one study shows that 19% of arrested child pornography possessors had images of children age 3 or younger.

There are thousands of active, unsolved cases of child abduction worldwide. Abducted children can suffer significant physical and emotional harm and isolation. Victim parents often face difficult legal, financial, cultural, and linguistic barriers when trying to recover their children.

Many countries lack the legal systems necessary to resolve international abductions and more than half of the countries that are members of Interpol, the world’s preeminent law enforcement organization, have no child pornography laws.

There needs to be increased awareness about threats to children worldwide, consistency in laws, and greater cooperation between all countries. The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children – a leading global service agency working to protect children from sexual exploitation and abduction through activism, policy development, and multinational coordination – is establishing the Koons Family Institute on International Law and Policy to achieve these goals.

The new Institute will champion efforts to improve identification of and assistance provided to child victims of abduction and sexual exploitation and to bring perpetrators to justice, regardless of where they live. It will serve in a leadership role advocating for strong and consistent laws to combat crimes against children.

When most people hear the name Microsoft, they think of computer software technology and innovation. What is less known about the company is its commitment to eliminating child pornography and keeping children safe from Internet predators.

Earlier this year, Microsoft provided technology resources for the new Romanian Center for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children that opened in Bucharest, Romania. They also funded a child sexual exploitation prevention program in Latin America, and continue to partner with ICMEC in efforts to implement child pornography legislation.

Since 2003, Microsoft has worked in partnership with ICMEC to provide training for law enforcement around the world. As of November 2007, more than 2,493 officers from 106 countries had attended the training.

The four-day seminar is conducted by ICMEC in partnership with Interpol and provides all the tools necessary for law enforcement in any country to effectively investigate and prosecute online-facilitated crimes against children.

Training scheduled for 2008 includes the Prague, Czech Republic in January; Athens, Greece in March; Kiev, Ukraine in April; Cairo, Egypt in April; Seoul, South Korea in July; Sao Paulo, Brazil in September; and Bogota, Columbia in October. Additional sites under consideration for 2008 include Rome, Italy; Nairobi, Kenya; and Hanoi, Vietnam.

The Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography has made significant progress towards disrupting the profitability of commercial child pornography on the Internet.

Coalition members follow the flow of funds to shut down the payments accounts that are being used by illegal enterprises.

To improve information sharing, Coalition members recently created the “Analytics Dashboard” which will give Coalition members a more detailed understanding of how these merchants operate. A “best practices” guide was also recently published to standardize methods used by the financial industry to prevent merchants from using the payments system for illegal purposes. The U.S. Comptroller of the Currency recently praised the new “best practices” and recommended they be implemented by all U.S. banks and financial institutions.

The Coalition consists of leading banks, credit card companies, third party payment companies and Internet service companies, representing 90% of the U.S. payments industry. Efforts are underway to expand the Coalition to include more non-U.S. institutions.

The Coalition was created in 2006 through a joint effort between the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) and its sister organization, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC).
On May 25 – the day set aside around the world to remember missing children who have not yet been recovered and to celebrate those missing children who have been safely returned to their families – FOCUS, the Romanian Center for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children, opened its doors in Bucharest, Romania.

FOCUS will provide a variety of services for law enforcement and the public including: operating a 24-hour call center for reports of missing and sexually exploited children; establishing networks with Romanian stakeholders who work to solve missing and exploited children cases; developing a network of volunteers for search operations; providing assistance to professionals who work with victim children and their families; increasing public education and awareness; establishing a system to track cases; and working to help prevent children from becoming victims of Internet child pornography.

FOCUS was established under the leadership and efforts of Mihaela Geoana, who will serve as Chairperson of the new center. Mrs. Geoana is a Board Member of ICMEC and is the wife of the former Foreign Minister of Romania.

The opening of the Romanian Center is a part of a global effort by the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children to build a network of centers around the world.

Why Romania?

- There are an estimated 100,000 homeless children throughout Eastern Europe, including 2,000 in Romania. An estimated 5% of homeless children in Romania are forced into child prostitution.

- An estimated 30% of sex workers in Bucharest are under 18 years of age. Romania, and Bucharest in particular, is one of the key travel destinations in Europe for child sex offenders.

- Romania is a country of origin and transit for women and girls who are internationally trafficked from Moldova, Ukraine, and other parts of the former Soviet Union to Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

- Romania has the seventh largest population and the ninth largest territory in the European Union. It is the largest country in Southeastern Europe and the twelfth largest in all of Europe.

The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC), in partnership with Google’s YouTube, and the Find Madeline Campaign, launched a new initiative that will provide worldwide exposure to information and videos about missing children. The new channel is: www.youtube.com/DontYouForgetAboutMe.

Case information and videos of missing children will be submitted to ICMEC for review and verification before posting on the new Channel.

Anyone with information about a missing child featured on the website will be directed to contact the appropriate law enforcement agency.
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ICMEC President & CEO

Work on Child Pornography Laws Continues

After an extensive review of the laws of all 186 Interpol member countries, ICMEC learned in 2006 that more than half of the countries have no laws addressing child pornography. And, in many other countries, existing laws are inadequate. Since then, ICMEC has worked with governments to strengthen child pornography laws and to ensure that child pornography is a universally punishable offense.

A working group was set up in the Bulgarian Parliament to draft new amendments to Bulgarian child pornography legislation. The proposed changes include a definition of “child pornography” and a provision that would mandate reporting of child pornography offenses to law enforcement by Internet Service Providers. It is expected that Bulgaria will amend its national legislation in 2007.

In July 2007, the President of Costa Rica signed a new law that criminalizes the simple possession of child pornography. Similarly, the President of the Czech Republic signed a bill in September 2007 that made simple possession of child pornography a crime.

Officials in India, the Philippines, South Korea, and Turkey are also reviewing and amending their child pornography legislation using recommendations outlined in model legislation provided by ICMEC as a guide.

The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) works with government leaders, NGOs and law enforcement to create national and regional centers around the world to build a strong network of organizations and programs to combat child abduction and exploitation. ICMEC is a 501(c)(3) nongovernmental organization.

For more information or to make a donation contact:

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