



GPA

Global Privacy Assembly

NEWSLETTER

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Highlights from the 47th Annual Conference in Seoul, South Korea

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Executive Committee Chair



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Message from Philippe Dufresne

Chair of the Global Privacy Assembly and
Privacy Commissioner of Canada



Dear colleagues,

I would like to once again express my gratitude for the support and trust that you have placed in me in electing me Chair of the Global Privacy Assembly (GPA) Executive Committee. This is a tremendous opportunity to work together to help shape the future of data protection and privacy in our increasingly digital and globalized world.

As I mentioned during the 47th GPA in Seoul in September, my vision for this role is to leverage our combined capabilities and expertise to contribute to the advancement of the Assembly's objectives by providing representation, strategic direction, and leadership that is centred around collaboration on three main themes so that we may achieve the greatest impact: addressing the privacy impacts of technology, championing youth privacy, and continuing the excellent work that the GPA has already started to advance data free flow with trust.

Over the last months since Seoul, I have also heard thoughtful feedback from many GPA members about the ambitions and opportunities that we have ahead. This includes a recognition of the importance of engagement with members, of transparency around procedures and decision making, and of being accessible and inclusive for all members, including data protection and privacy authorities of all sizes and from every region.

To achieve this, I look forward to working together to continue evolving this Assembly to strengthen the impact of our collective voices and to provide more value for the entire membership. I also intend to work with the Executive Committee to look at the structures and processes that are currently in place to ensure that they are responsive to member feedback and provide the best possible support for all members.

The diversity of perspectives and experiences of the international privacy community is critical to our success as a global thought leader on privacy protection and I look forward to maximizing that collective strength.

I envision the Global Privacy Assembly becoming the forum for regional groups to come together, coordinate, share, and collaborate – to maximize capacity building and impact – and renowned as a key source of international privacy and data protection information, resources, and vision.

Together, we can further advance united global efforts to champion privacy in today's data-driven world, and I am extremely pleased to have the opportunity to work with all GPA members in my new capacity.

Philippe Dufresne

Chair of the Global Privacy Assembly and
Privacy Commissioner of Canada



Borislav Bozhinov

Chairman of the Bulgarian Commission
for Personal Data Protection

Borislav Bozhinov is a Chairman of the Bulgarian Commission for Personal Data Protection since May 2025. Mr Bozhinov has vast administrative experience in various areas of state governance. He has more than 17 years of experience in the security and public order services along with over 14 years of legal experience. From 2014 to 2016, Mr Bozhinov was seconded in the European External Action Service. In 2023, he was a representative of the Republic of Bulgaria in the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol). In his capacity as CPDP Chairman Mr Bozhinov is actively involved in the work of the Global Privacy Assembly, the European Data Protection Board, as well as the European Conference of European Data Protection Authorities. He holds a Master's degree in Law.

Dear colleagues,

We are facing today one of the most technologically advanced moment in human history. As we stand at this inflection point, where artificial intelligence reshapes nearly every facet of our lives. We find ourselves asking not only what technology can do, but also 'should' we let it happen. Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant concept confined to research labs or speculative fiction. It is in our homes, in our hospitals, in our schools, in our governments. AI filters the news we read, predicts the diseases we might suffer and even assists in courtrooms and policing. The power of this technology is immense and accordingly we should have in mind - the responsibility. We bear to ensure that it serves humanity, not the other way around.

Around the world, algorithmic systems have already been programmed to allocate welfare and even to guide everyday decisions. These systems often operate with limited transparency and weak accountability. Today we should address crucial issues: how to merge the sustainable AI ecosystems as

well as the cross-border data flows with practical deployment of privacy-enhancing technologies. We will explore the science and ethics of synthetic data, the challenges of pseudonymisation in high-risk environments. And how the privacy-by-design can become more than a slogan - but a standard.



I believe that there is cause for optimism. In this very Assembly, we see a growing convergence of values. From the European Union's GDPR and the African Union's Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection, to South Korea's robust Personal Information Protection Act. We are witnessing a global consensus emerge that the free flow of data must be guaranteed by the adequate protection. The innovation must be matched by oversight. The AI patterns must be managed by humans – not just designed by us.

Simultaneously, the strong stakeholder involvement is a clear sign for the commitment to the topic of data protection and to the development of practice in this area. Data protection is at the heart of digital transformation, trust between people and institutions, and the future of innovation in the world. I hope that we will all have the opportunity to discuss not only the challenges but also concrete ideas on what can and should be improved.

The world we live in is changing at an unprecedented velocity. Data – not just as figures and records, but they should be considered as a resource, as a tool for innovation, education. Thus economic development and public service are becoming more and more important. However, there are also serious responsibilities: responsibility towards the human person, responsibility towards transparency, ultimate responsibility towards trust. As a national data protection authority, the Commission for Personal Data

Protection has one single mission: to ensure that the rights and freedoms of individuals in the processing of personal data are not only respected but also developed in line with technological progress and social expectations.

Today we hear interesting views on how to balance the so-called 'zero risk approach' with the realistic need for 'risk assessment', an issue that concerns not only regulators, but also businesses, technology developers and consumers themselves. As a supervisory authority, we are well aware that regulation must be not only a watchdog but also a development partner. We maintain an active dialogue with colleagues from other supervisory bodies, with business and with civil society. What is much said – and rightly so – is the need for a balanced regulatory approach between data protection and innovation. These are issues that require not only legal precision, but also vision, cooperation and willingness to change.

We must be active, critical but also constructive. Share experiences, ask questions, and raise difficult topics – because this is the only way forward. It is important to remember: behind each dataset is a human being. Not just a file or a string of numbers. Moreover, when I, as chair of the Bulgarian data protection supervisory authority, talk about rules, controls and sanctions, I am talking about the protection of specific people – citizens, clients, employees. Should we keep this focus, we will build an environment where innovation goes hand in hand with trust.



Highlights of the 47th Annual Conference

Advancing privacy in the age of AI

The 47th Annual Conference of the Global Privacy Assembly (GPA) took place September 15-19, 2025, and was hosted in Seoul, South Korea by the Personal Information Protection Commission (PIPC). In the two days of the Open Session, approximately 800 representatives from Data Protection Authorities (DPAs), civil society organizations, privacy professionals, businesses of all sizes, and academia met to network and discuss prominent global data protection issues related to the conference theme “Artificial intelligence (AI) in our daily lives: Data and privacy issues.” In the Closed Session that followed, nearly 200 participants from across the GPA Members and Observers community attended each day.

Members developed and consulted on resolutions in the lead up to the Annual Conference. In the Closed Session, three resolutions were endorsed. The first concerns [human oversight on decision involving AI](#), another on the [use of personal information to train AI models](#), and the final on [data privacy in digital education](#).

For the ninth year, the Global Privacy and Data Protection Awards were presented during the Annual Conference, celebrating the achievements and good practices of the GPA community. The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner in Kenya won three awards for excellence in [Education and Awareness](#), [Innovation](#), and [Dispute Resolution and Enforcement](#). They also took home the People’s Choice Award. The European Data Protection Supervisor of the European Union was recognized for their excellence in [Accountability](#). Beatriz de Anchorena, Director of the Agency of Access to Public Information in Argentina and Chair of the Committee of Convention 108, was awarded the Giovanni Butarelli Award in recognition of her exceptional leadership in the field of data protection and privacy, advancing a fairer digital future for everyone.

Congratulations to all of the winners, nominees, and all GPA members who participated in the vote!

Read the [draft of the 47th GPA Closed Session Report](#) (pending adoption at the 48th GPA Closed Session in December 2026).



First of its kind Privacy and Human Rights Award a seminal achievement for GPA

The work of the Data Protection and Other Rights and Freedoms Working Group (DPORF WG) culminated this year with the much-anticipated rollout of the world's first Privacy and Human Rights Award.

A collaboration with international human rights organization Access Now, the award is the first of its kind recognizing and celebrating outstanding leadership from organizations around the world to advance and support the protection and promotion of the fundamental right to privacy and other human rights, including democratic rights and the freedom of political belief, of movement, association, and expression. Its creation followed the adoption of a [GPA resolution](#) presented in October 2023 during the 45th GPA in Bermuda.

The [inaugural award recipients were announced](#) during the RightsCon Summit in Taipei, Taiwan, in February 2025.

The two winners were:

- The [5Rights Foundation](#), which was recognized for its global efforts to promote the adoption of laws that guarantee digital privacy and data protection rights for children; and
- The [Internet Freedom Foundation](#), which was recognized for its litigation and advocacy work defending online freedom and the privacy of workers and students in India.

The [second iteration of the Award](#) launched during the 47th GPA in Seoul in September.

The nomination period closed on December 10, 2025 - International Human Rights Day.

Winners will be announced during RightsCon 2026, in Zambia, May 5 to 8, 2026. You are encouraged to mark these dates in your calendar as this is a great opportunity for regulators and civil society organizations to connect, discuss and address matters related to the intersection of privacy, technology and human rights.



Marie-Ève Nadeau, 5Rights Foundation, with Naro Omo-Osagie, Access Now, and Miguel Bernal-Castillero, Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada and GPA representative, with Apar Gupta, Internet Freedom Foundation.

As you may know, the DPORF WG was created following the 41st GPA Annual Conference in 2019 and has since grown to include 40 members from around the world. Its mandate has focused on three priorities:

- Encouraging members to produce materials and collect evidence on privacy and data protection and its relationship with other fundamental rights;
- Engaging in capacity building activities with relevant academic entities and facilitating discussions within the privacy community on linkages to other fundamental rights; and
- Piloting the new GPA Privacy and Human Rights Award.

Other important initiatives of the working group since its inception include:

- A [Joint Statement on Privacy and Democratic Rights](#) in 2023 with Dr. Ana Brian Nougrères, the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy; and
- A narrative report in 2021 on [Privacy and data protection as fundamental rights](#) which is available on the [GPA website](#) in three languages (English, French, Spanish), making it accessible to an ever-wider audience.

The members of the DPORF WG are very proud to share the important work that they have accomplished over the last years to advance the message that privacy is a fundamental right. They remain hopeful that the Privacy and Human Rights Award will be a legacy for many years to come.



Reflecting on a Decade of Cooperation

Data Protection in Humanitarian Action

2025 marks a unique triple anniversary: ten years since the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data protection regulatory frameworks, as well as the GPA [Resolution on Privacy and International Humanitarian Action](#) (2015). On this occasion, the three organisations have come together to produce an edited volume, now available open access: [Data Protection in Humanitarian Action: Responding to Crises in a Data-Driven World](#) (Routledge, 2025).

Developed jointly by the Data Protection Office of the ICRC, the UNHCR Data Protection Office, and the GPA Working Group on the Role of Personal Data Protection in International Development Aid, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management (WG AID), this publication takes stock of the lessons learned over the past decade and the contribution that personal data protection has brought to the humanitarian sector in its ambitions towards responsible digital transformation. It reaffirms how data protection, grounded in the respect for the rights and dignity of affected populations, is a key enabler of effective, accountable, and responsible humanitarian action in the digital age.

A Shared Journey

Ten years ago, the ICRC and UNHCR each adopted their first institutional frameworks to govern the processing of personal data in their operations, while the GPA (the International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners: ICDPPC back then) brought these issues onto the global regulatory agenda through its 2015 Resolution. That Resolution was the first to bring to the GPA the specific context of humanitarian action, already recognised by the Humanitarian Clause in the

1990 UN Guidelines on the Use of Computerized Personal Files, and to recognise the need for sustained cooperation between data protection and privacy regulators and humanitarian actors. It also led to the creation of WG AID, which continues to serve as an important bridge between privacy authorities and humanitarian organisations.

Since then, the humanitarian landscape has evolved significantly. Digital technologies, ranging from mobile-based registration tools and biometric systems to AI-assisted analysis, have become integral to humanitarian work. These tools have enhanced efficiency and reach, but they have also introduced new challenges relating to data sharing, third-party dependencies, and ensuring the respect of individuals' rights and dignity.

Against this backdrop, cooperation initiatives have deepened. The ICRC, for example, has contributed to strengthening data protection practices through initiatives such as the [Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), endorsed by many international humanitarian organisations as well as the GPA and the AFAPDP, which has become a key reference for applying data protection principles in operational contexts. The Handbook has also been the basis for the development of a one-week in-depth training and certification programme for Data Protection Officers in Humanitarian Action, developed and run by the ICRC and the European Centre on Privacy and Cybersecurity at Maastricht University, in cooperation with WG AID and with numerous international humanitarian organisations.

Through this course, more than 650 humanitarian practitioners worldwide were trained to date, through 19 sessions held across diverse regions: Senegal (twice for French-speaking Africa), Mexico (twice), Nairobi (three

times) and Mombasa for Africa, Bangkok (twice) for Asia, Amman (twice) for the Near and Middle East, Buenos Aires, Rome (twice), and Istanbul. Many of these were conducted in very close cooperation with the data protection authorities in the host countries.

Meanwhile, the WG AID has provided a sustained platform for dialogue between data protection authorities and humanitarian actors, supporting the development of context-sensitive standards that enable principled and effective humanitarian work.

The Publication

The book (eds. Massimo Marelli, Ana Beduschi, and Aaron Martin) captures this collective evolution, featuring contributions from leading experts, regulators, academics, observers, and practitioners who have shaped the field.

Structured in five interconnected sections, the volume explores how humanitarian operations are adapting to a rapidly evolving digital environment and what data protection means in practice for organisations entrusted with handling personal data in volatile emergency environments.

The **first section** sets the conceptual and historical framework, tracing how, amid growing complexity of data flows and third-party involvement, data protection has become an operational necessity and enabler for ensuring the respect of the rights and dignity of affected populations. It also maps the different interconnected workstreams of the last 10 years including regulation and supervision, participation in the development of global data protection standards and frameworks, technology research and development, and more.

The **second section** explores the digital transformation of the humanitarian space, including how this has been enabled and shaped by increased connectivity, the availability of cutting-edge technologies including biometrics, and the humanitarian-development nexus resulting in a challenging digital ecosystem and infrastructure.

The **third section** analyses intersections between data protection, international law, and diplomacy, and includes a dedicated chapter on the GPA's role in promoting regulatory cooperation in humanitarian contexts.

The **fourth section** offers regional and local perspectives, from Ukraine and Kenya to the Asia-Pacific region, illustrating how local legal, cultural, as well as emergency-related realities shape data protection frameworks and their impact in humanitarian contexts.

The **final section** looks ahead, exploring how capacity-building fosters trust and how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence can be aligned with humanitarian principles.

Throughout, the book highlights lessons learned from operational experience, such as the 2022 data breach affecting the Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network, and looks at future challenges, and how the humanitarian sector can anticipate and prepare for them.

Looking Ahead

The publication stands as both a reflection on the past and a call to action. It underlines how collaboration between humanitarian organisations and data protection authorities has strengthened accountability, transparency, and trust in an increasingly digital humanitarian landscape.

The chapter on the GPA, authored by WG AID Chair Catherine Lennman and Co-Chair Florence Dubosc, reflects on the Assembly's pivotal role in promoting this cooperation, from the 2015 Resolution to ongoing engagement through WG AID. As digital technologies continue to evolve, the lessons captured in this volume reaffirm that sustained dialogue between regulators and humanitarian actors remains essential to ensure that innovation in the humanitarian sector continues to serve humanity and to uphold the dignity and rights of those most in need.

Data Protection Day 2026

Join us in celebrating – January 28, 2026

Every **28 January**, we mark the signing of Convention 108—the world's first legally binding international treaty dedicated to protecting privacy in the digital age. It's a global moment to spark conversations, share knowledge, and champion strong data protection practices in an increasingly connected world.

This year, the GPA invites you to participate online:

- Share your events, insights, and practical tips using **#DataProtectionDay** and **tag the GPA** on our social media accounts
- Raise awareness by spreading the message on why privacy and data protection matter
- Connect, learn, and collaborate with privacy professionals from around the world
- Follow GPA on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to explore inspiring initiatives and activities led by DPAs across the globe

Let's come together to amplify the importance of data privacy and make Data Protection Day a truly global celebration!

#DataProtectionDay





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