

## MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **SINGAPORE BANKS JOIN GLOBAL BATTLE AGAINST CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

#### ***Action plan drawn up supporting U.S.-based Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography***

Singapore - The Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) today announced that its 9 merchant acquiring and credit card issuing member banks (ABN AMRO Bank NV, Bank of China Limited, Citibank Singapore Limited, DBS Bank Ltd, The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, Maybank, OCBC Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and United Overseas Bank Limited) have banded together to work with the major payment card providers in Singapore (including American Express, JCB, MasterCard and Visa) to help combat child pornography on the Internet.

The initiative is spearheaded by Standard Chartered Bank, and is led by the Bank's Group Executive Director Mike DeNoma, and supported by the ABS Council and its merchant acquiring and credit card issuing banks.

The nine banks – in particular, the five merchant acquiring banks (Citibank Singapore Limited, DBS Bank Ltd, OCBC Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and United Overseas Bank Limited) that can play a more direct role – and the payment card providers (i.e. the Singapore Group) aim to support the global effort to identify commercial sources of child pornography and cut off the flow of funds that support its dissemination. This is in line with the efforts of the Washington, D.C.-based Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography (FCACP). Among the Singapore Group are members who are also active in the efforts of the FCACP.

Beginning immediately, the ABS will man a hotline to facilitate the sharing of information from banks and members of the public on suspected child pornography websites. Members of the public may call the ABS at 62342210 to report child pornography websites. The information to be reported must include the name of the website and its URL address.

Banks and payment card companies in Singapore currently already have their own procedures to identify and shut off the flow of funds to commercial sources of child pornography and will continue to carry out these procedures, which include investigating merchants and checking the details of new merchants against the fraud / criminal databases maintained by payment card companies such as American Express International Inc, MasterCard and Visa.

Says Mrs Ong-Ang Ai Boon, Director of the ABS: “Despite the low incidence of child pornography cases in Singapore, the industry has decided to come together as a group to signal support for the eradication of and our vigilance against this criminal activity.”

Members of the public who wish to find out more about the issue and express their support for the initiative may visit [www.lightamillioncandles.com](http://www.lightamillioncandles.com).

## **Background**

Commercial child pornography has grown explosively in recent years, particularly on the Internet. The abused children are sometimes very young, some of whom are less than three years old.

A large part of the child pornography industry – from the ensnaring of unsuspecting victims through to the exploitative commercial abuse of young children – is generated on the Internet due to the high degree of accessibility of the Internet and the anonymity it permits. The ease and relative anonymity of Internet payments using credit cards and other means of online payments have also exacerbated the problem.

The financial industry can therefore contribute to eradicating the commercial viability of Internet child pornography directly by disrupting Internet credit card payments. Removing the ability to purchase child pornography through the Internet by using a payment card is a significant step in shutting off the flow of funds to commercial sources of child pornography.

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**About The Association of Banks in Singapore:**

The Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) plays an active role in promoting and representing the interests of the banking community in Singapore. In doing so, ABS works closely with the relevant government authorities towards the development of a sound financial system in Singapore. Since its establishment in 1973, ABS has promoted common understanding among its members and projected a unifying voice on banking issues. It has brought its members closer together through various guidelines and banking practices as well as the support of projects of mutual benefit to face the challenges of the financial and banking community in Singapore. Today, ABS has a membership of 107 local and foreign banks. Further information on ABS is available on the website: [www.abs.org.sg](http://www.abs.org.sg).