

11 November 2021 - Déclaration

# Standing up for children's rights in the digital environment

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The digital world is now an essential aspect of the living environment of children.

We recognize that digital technology can help them fully realize their human rights, in particular concerning the rights to education, freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly. It opens new avenues for them to engage in social relationships with their peers, access to information and participation in public decision-making processes.

We also note that in the digital environment, children can come across harmful and violent content and manipulation of information. Just like adults, children have rights to privacy, which should be respected. Online interactions can, in addition, expose them to threats amplified by technology, including cyber bullying and cyber harassment, online abuse, including sexual abuse, exploitation and prostitution, technology facilitated solicitation and grooming, cyber procuring, human trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence or violent online radicalization.

We call upon all governments, online service providers and relevant organizations to stand up for children's rights in the digital environment, to make their safety and security in this environment a priority, and to participate in the ongoing work undertaken on a joint declaration for the protection of children's rights in the digital environment.

We reaffirm our commitment to the rights of the child and their promotion, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols, and in relevant regional human rights and child rights instruments in the digital environment, including by:

## 1) Better educating children on digital environment and developing child-friendly digital tools

As digital tools can be of great use to children, especially but not exclusively for educational purposes, we aim at giving them access to these tools and the Internet and to work with all relevant partners to bridge digital divides, including gender and socio-economic digital divides, and to encourage the safe development of their skills while avoiding over-exposure to screens at a young age.

We aim at facilitating access to adequate digital literacy and education for all children from an early age, in order to empower them to use digital tools autonomously, to acquire skills to explore, create and interact online safely, and with an understanding of the digital environment, its prospects, its opportunities and its risks. Media and information literacy is especially important, so that they are equipped to navigate safely and then become empowered citizens in an increasingly digital society.

We will reinforce our support to parents, caregivers and educators in acquiring digital literacy and awareness of the risks to children in order to help them assist children in the realization of their rights, including to safety, and to help them protect children facing those risks, in relation to the digital environment.

## 2) Protecting children effectively against online threats

We call for closer cooperation between governments, online service providers and relevant organizations to protect children's rights online.

We express our determination to a zero-tolerance policy towards online child-related abuses and will therefore commit to take necessary measures, through efficient cross-sector partnership with private and non-private organizations, to fight against online child sexual exploitation and abuse, to support victims of online abuse and to facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators.

We commit to fight against any form of economic exploitation, including child labor, online as offline, and therefore to exercise the utmost vigilance regarding the new forms of forced child labor in the digital environment. We are committed to taking necessary measures to enable children to use digital technologies more safely, without being exposed to cyberbullying, cyber harassment or any other kind of online abuses such as hate speech. We ask online service providers to commit to the implementation of safety and privacy by design products into the platforms to minimize the potential harm caused to the children.

We also call upon online service providers to exercise the highest level of vigilance regarding all forms of online threats to children and to address these issues, including by conducting child rights due diligence. In particular, we call upon an increase in the development of child rights-respecting parental control tools installed by default on devices and operating systems to better protect children against harmful content, as well as measures ensuring the fast and effective removal of child sexual abuse material or cyber harassment material, while fully upholding international human rights law. We also call upon the refinement of algorithms that may push harmful content to children.

In order to advance these issues,

- We collectively commit to finalize our work on a "Declaration on the rights of the child in the digital environment", for its earliest endorsement by all willing countries;
- We collectively call upon online service providers and relevant businesses to maintain high standards of transparency and accountability and support this initiative on the rights of the child in the digital environment, including by developing or expand their own initiatives, by setting up relevant working groups and by committing resources towards expediting their efforts;
- We collectively call upon civil society to work on these issues including through offering expert advice on how to improve children's rights in the digital environment.
- We collectively commit to build a momentum and widen support for children's rights in the digital environment. In order to follow-up on the progress made by governments, by online service providers, and on the mobilization of civil society, we agree on reconvening a meeting at the next Paris Peace Forum in 2022 and, beforehand take stock of our efforts in early 2022 to further structure our collective action.
- We collectively call on all interested and relevant parties, governments, companies, nongovernmental organizations alike, to join this call for action.