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(ITU) للاتصالات الدولي الاتحاد في والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم أجراه الضوئي بالمسح تصوير نتاج (PDF) الإلكترونية النسخة هذه والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم في المتوفرة الوثائق ضمن أصلية ورقية وثيقة من نقلاً.

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## Protecting children in cyberspace

This year, the theme of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) was “Protecting children in cyberspace”. In selecting the theme at its meeting in November 2008, ITU’s Council drew attention to the great importance of an issue that affects a fast-growing number of children and teenagers worldwide. And during the High-Level Segment of the Council meeting, ITU launched the Child Online Protection (COP)\* initiative, jointly with international partners with the aim of creating a safe online experience for children everywhere. It was endorsed by Heads of State, ministers and heads of international organizations from around the world.

### Child Online Protection initiative

The COP initiative is in line with ITU’s mandate to establish the foundations of a safe and secure Internet for future generations. The need for COP is clear. A decade ago, there were just 182 million people using the Internet globally — and almost all of them lived in the developed world. By early 2009, however, there were over 1.5 billion Internet users worldwide, and more than 400 million of them had access to broadband.

The Internet is a growing common resource — vastly increasing the opportunities but also the dangers online, especially for children.

COP aims to tackle cybersecurity by addressing legal, technical, organizational and procedural issues, as well as capacity building and international cooperation. Its key objectives are to identify the risks to children in cyberspace and improve awareness of the dangers, as well as to develop practical tools to help

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\* Further details of COP can be viewed at [www.itu.int/osg/csd/cybersecurity/gca/cop/index.html](http://www.itu.int/osg/csd/cybersecurity/gca/cop/index.html)

minimize risks and share knowledge and experience in applying them. The COP website acts as a repository of links to many useful resources in this area.

### A call for action

Marking this year's World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, ITU issued a call to all policy-makers, regulators, operators and manufacturers in the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector. They were asked "to promote the adoption of policies and strategies that will protect children in cyberspace and promote their safe access to online resources." This will not only lead to the building of a more inclusive information society, but will also help countries to meet their obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in November 1989.

All stakeholders, and particularly ITU Member States, were called on to:

- ▶ Create public awareness of the issues related to protecting children in cyberspace; to identify policies, tools and resources for use in their countries, and to participate in relevant ITU events in order to share experience and best practice.
- ▶ Support ongoing work aimed at developing guidelines for policy-makers and regulators on protecting children online.
- ▶ Identify risks to children in cyberspace as the Internet continues to expand.
- ▶ Build resource repositories for common use.
- ▶ Promote capacity building aimed at strengthening the global response to threats against children as they venture into cyberspace.



### Partners' programmes

Under the COP umbrella, ITU is already working with a wide range of organizations in the public and private sectors. These organizations have a variety of programmes for improving the safety of children and teenagers online, of which the following are just a few examples.

#### INTERPOL coordinates police investigations

INTERPOL is the world's largest international police organization, with 187 member countries. Based in Lyon, France, it facilitates cross-border cooperation among police forces, and supports efforts to prevent and combat international crime. One of the most serious of such crimes is the sexual exploitation of children, and the Internet is increasingly being used by perpetrators. INTERPOL estimates that there are up to 10 000 to 20 000 child victims of sexual abuse whose images are available online.

The organization is able to use its unique position in the international law enforcement community to coordinate investigations, and to analyse information and intelligence. It also manages the INTERPOL Child

► Abuse Image Database (ICAID), which is one of the main tools for helping police fight child sexual exploitation on the Internet. ICAID contains more than half-a-million images, including video recordings of brutal assaults. So far, the database has helped police to identify and rescue almost 600 victims from 31 countries. It also provides a mechanism for alerting authorities when new images of sexual abuse are found.

### Egypt's Cyberpeace Initiative

Young people themselves are helping to protect children online through a programme of the Cyber Peace Initiative, which was launched in 2007 by the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement. The initiative was founded by Egypt's First Lady with the objective of empowering the youth of every country to become catalysts for change through ICT. Under its umbrella, the Youth Internet Safety Focus Group (or *Net-Aman* in Arabic) aims to increase awareness of the issues and to help children and young people identify harmful content and deal with it.

The group consists of members aged between 18 and 28, and it carries out research into the online safety needs of young people in Egypt, in order to reflect the wide range of concerns that they and their families have in regard to using ICT. *Net-Aman* also assesses the most appropriate guidelines for young people on safe use of the Internet, and helps create effective educational resources. In addition, members contribute to wider strategic programmes and act as ambassadors and champions of safety online from a youth perspective.

The Cyber Peace Initiative also has a Parents Internet Safety Focus Group, established in 2008. One of its first tasks was to conduct a survey of parents in Egypt, which found that only 30 per cent knew what to do if their children encountered dangerous or unsuitable

content online. In a situation where children are often much more familiar with the Internet than the older generation, it is crucial that parents and teachers are helped to understand the issues and the role they can take in keeping children safe online. The Parents Internet Safety Focus Group is working towards that goal, through holding training sessions and workshops, at which parents can discuss their concerns and request information about how best to ensure that children can enjoy the benefits of the Internet while avoiding the risks.

### Europe's Safer Internet Programme

The European Union coordinates and supports efforts to make the Internet a safer place, especially for children. During the period 2009–2013, under the umbrella of the Commission's *Safer Internet Programme*, EUR 55 million will be used to fight illegal content and harmful behaviour. It will fund projects to:

- ensure that children, parents and teachers are aware of how to stay safe online







Parents have a crucial role in keeping children safe online

Christopher Fletcher

- ▶ provide citizens with national contact points to report illegal and harmful content and conduct
- ▶ foster self-regulatory initiatives in the field
- ▶ encourage children to become involved in creating a safer online environment
- ▶ establish a knowledge base on the use of new technologies and related risks, by bringing together researchers engaged in online child safety at the European level.

Already, “Safer Internet Centres” have been established in 26 European countries, to develop materials and offer information sessions for children, parents and teachers. They also receive reports on illegal content found on the Internet and give advice on how to stay safe online. The centres have set up youth panels who are consulted on the issues, and some operate helplines to deal with such problems as cyber bullying.

The *Safer Internet Programme* funds various projects to help collect and coordinate data on child pornography that is distributed online. It also looks at the dangers of unsuitable content that children might see in, for example, online video games. The *PEGI Online* project is an offshoot of the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) system. It was started by the Interactive Software Federation of Europe in 2003 to help parents and others make better informed decisions

about what children can access on the Internet. The PEGI system aims to provide content descriptions that relate to age suitability. A PEGI Online Safety Code is being developed, and games producers that comply will be able to display a “PEGI Online” label on the access page of an online game.

#### Telefónica advises on mobile phone use

The telecommunication company Telefónica, based in Spain, operates globally and is one of the world’s largest providers of fixed-line and mobile phone services. It states that it is “committed to providing an environment in which children can use new technologies safely.” This is increasingly important as the use of mobile phones in particular spreads among children — for example, the company says that around a half of Spanish children between 8 and 13 years of age have mobile phones.

Telefónica is fostering responsible use of its services by children through collaborating with governments, other partners in industry, and with parents and guardians. It is also helping children to make the most of the possibilities offered by technology by offering products and services adapted to their needs. Telefónica Móviles España, for instance, has launched phones specifically designed for children, with an appropriate selection

of functions geared towards education. Globally, the company is applying policies to protect young phone users from viewing “adult” content. The aim is to establish an appropriate mechanism in all of Telefónica’s lines of business, offering guaranteed ways of limiting access to this kind of service by minors.

The company has joined national and international programmes to promote the responsible use of mobile phones, especially when they allow access to the Internet. It also offers guidance to the community, such as through the publication “Child protection: O<sub>2</sub>’s mobile phone guide for parents”, produced by the United Kingdom arm of Telefónica.

### UNICEF promotes a protective environment

The United Nations Children’s Fund, or UNICEF, estimates that 300 million children worldwide are subjected to violence, exploitation and abuse, and that millions more are without adequate protection. The abuse includes the type of paedophile predation that may be conducted online, and which is a major factor behind the trafficking of children. UNICEF quotes a global

estimate by the International Labour Organization, published in 2005, that of the 1.39 million people who have been forced into commercial sexual exploitation, between 40 and 50 per cent are children. This, says UNICEF, “is a modern form of slavery”.

UNICEF advocates and supports the creation of a protective environment for children, in partnership with governments, the private sector, and civil society. In South Africa, for example, UNICEF contributed to raising awareness of the problem of child pornography by giving technical and financial support to a national conference on the topic, held in 2005. The conference adopted an action plan for the elimination of child pornography. Internationally, UNICEF, the World Tourism Organization and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) International launched a *Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism*. The project aims to involve the tourism industry in actively combating child sex tourism.

### ITU’s continuing work

At the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), ITU was entrusted by leaders of the international community with Action Line C5: “building confidence and security in the use of ICT”. An outcome of WSIS, the Tunis Commitment of 2005 recognized the role of ICT in the protection of children and in enhancing their development, as well as the need to “strengthen action to protect children from abuse and defend their rights in the context of ICT”.

ITU will continue to pursue this important work as an area of priority. For the future of society, it is essential that children and young people should be able to enjoy the fruits of the online world, without being ensnared by its predators.



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