

Thematic Workshop: New challenges to protect children online in the era of non-stop connectivity

Monday, 16 May, 16:30–18:00, Room IV

Session organized by ITU

Moderator: Professor Julia Davidson, PhD, Professor of Criminology, Kingston University, UK

- Mr Badar Ali Al-Salehi, Director, Oman National CERT (OCERT), Oman
- Mr Yasutaka Hirata, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (MIC), Japan
- Ms Marielos Hernandez, Executive President, PANI (National Children’s Patronage), Costa Rica
- Ms Susie Hendrie, Director, Public Policy, GSMA
- Mr David Miles, Director, Europe, Middle East and Africa, Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI), UK
- Ms Yuliya Morenets, Representative, Together against Cybercrime (TaC), France
- Ms Salma Abbasi, Chairperson and CEO, e Worldwide Group

This session aimed to discuss the new challenges of protecting children online in the new media era, which allows people to be always on connected with their new communication devices, and to identify further actions to be undertaken within the COP Global Initiative for social and national benefits.

Broad risks and challenges were identified by panels including:

- i) *Content*
including online grooming or solicitation,
- ii) *Conduct*
including peer-to-peer inappropriate behaviour,
- iii) *Commerce*
including access to age inappropriate goods and services, and
- iv) *Materials*
including access or exposure to age inappropriate materials and/or text.

Two country case studies from the Kingdom of Bahrain and Costa Rica (ITU COP Patron, President Chinchilla), were also discussed where new Internet safety frameworks have recently been developed.

Through the session, the following new challenges were also identified by panels jointly with participants:

1. Effective awareness raising for parents and children on the risks associated with the Internet and moral/ethical issues, particularly in respect of the digital footprint. There has been no real attempt to develop programmes for more vulnerable children who may have different needs.
2. Differences in digital literacy and the digital divide (generational and social class) affect Internet usage and understanding, and can be barriers.

3. There are differing regional and cultural issues that impact Internet usage and understanding. These need to be taken into account in developing frameworks and in designing safety practice. It is important to act nationally but think globally.
4. The importance of incorporating young people's views in the design of safety practices was emphasized again.
5. Developments in technology and changes in usage are impacting upon young people's (YP) behaviour.
 - Research demonstrates that YP do not necessarily identify with the term "online" as digital media are now a central component in their lives.
 - Mobile phone technology is enabling mobile Internet access and this may result in a loss of parental control (particularly for younger children).
 - Concern was expressed about the impact of new technology upon YP's relationships, perceptions, and their physical and psychological well-being.
6. The difficulty of establishing common regulatory frameworks across geographical boundaries to enable collaborative legislative and policy practice.