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|  | **Document CWG-COP-19/4** |
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| Contribution by the Philippines | |
| ENCOURAGING ITU AND ITS MEMBER STATES TO GENERATE STRATEGIC PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS AND INTEGRATE CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION MEASURES TO ALL EXISTING INITIATIVES AND TO DEVELOP INFORMATION, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNICATION MATERIALS FOR IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN | |
| **Purpose**  The purpose of this document is to encourage ITU and its member states to generate strategic plans, policies, and programs and integrate Child Online Protection (COP) measures in all existing initiatives and to develop Information, Education, and Communication materials for in-school and out-of-school children in line with ITU resolutions Resolution 179 (Rev. Bucharest, 2023) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference on ITU's role in child online protection; Resolution 67 (WTDC, Kigali, 2022) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference on the role of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) in child online protection; Resolution 1306 (C09 Modified C15) on ITU's role with regard to International Public Policy Issues concerning Creating a Safer Internet Environment for Children as well as to the ITU’s COP Global Initiative.  **Action required**  The Council is invited to **consider** this document and **adopt** the draft resolution in the [Annex](#Annex).  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [Resolution 179](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-179-E.pdf) (Rev. Bucharest, 2023) - ITU's role in child online protection  [Resolution 67](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/tdc/D-TDC-WTDC-2022-PDF-E.pdf) (WTDC, Kigali, 2022) - The role of the Telecommunication Development Sector in child online protection  [Resolution 1306](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-cop/Documents/Council-R-1306%20(3).pdf) Council Res 1306 (C09 Modified C15) - ITU's role with regard to International Public Policy Issues concerning Creating a Safer Internet Environment for Children. | |

**Introduction**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) recognizes that children are an especially vulnerable group and upholds children’s rights in the digital environment as per the principles set by the UN CRC General Comment No. 25 (2021) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment.

Accessible and affordable connectivity is increasingly a determinant of equal opportunity for children to access basic education, social interactions, and support services. Meaningful connectivity and online safety education are now more vital than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the urgent need to act and strengthen meaningful connectivity to uphold children’s rights, and it has put children at a higher risk of harm through that connectivity.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The 2020 UNICEF Report on Protecting Children Online shows that at the global level, one-in-three Internet users is a child under 18 years of age. Over a billion and a half children were affected by the closure of educational institutions at the peak of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. More than a third of young people in 30 countries report being cyberbullied, with 1-in-5 skipping school because of it. Some 80 percent of children in 25 countries report feeling in danger of sexual abuse or exploitation online. In 2020, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) CyberTipline received 21.7 million reports of suspected child sexual abuse material (CSAM), an increase of 28 per cent from 2019.

According to ECPAT International (2022), in ASEAN countries, the Philippines ranked first with 20.2% of estimated proportions of internet-using children aged 12-17 who experienced at least one form of clear online sexual exploitation and abuse within the year prior to being surveyed. Meanwhile, The 2022 Disrupting Harm Study conducted by UNICEF, ECPAT International, and Interpol reveals that 2 of 10 Filipino internet-using children aged 12-17 were subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation in 2021, which places the Philippines as the number 1 country with the highest number of OSAEC victims among the 13 countries that participated in the study.

Although, the Philippines has an existing legal framework for child online protection, including laws that penalize child pornography, and online child abuse and exploitation. It is a reality, however, that in today’s digital age where information is readily accessible, implementation and enforcement remain a challenge. Advancements in technology become a double-edged sword, and many online activities remain unregulated.

With this, there is an imperative need for an urgent collective response to combat Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children. Further, protecting children and young people is a shared responsibility of policymakers, industry, parents, carers, educators, and other stakeholders to guarantee an empowering digital environment.

By Resolution 1306 (modified 2015) ITU Council established the Council working group on Child Online Protection (WG-COP) with the terms of reference to exchange views and promote and work on the subject matter and to report to the Council annually on the activities CWG-COP.

Moreover, resolution 179 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) at the Plenipotentiary Conference (Bucharest, 2022) resolved, under others:

1. to continue the COP initiative as a platform to raise awareness and share best practices on child online safety issues;
2. to continue providing assistance and support to Member States, especially developing countries, in developing and implementing roadmaps for the COP initiative;
3. to continue to coordinate the COP initiative, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders (see full Resolution 179),

**Proposal**

To fully implement the global challenge on Child Online Protection, the following strategies are recommended to strengthen the existing COP global initiatives:

1. *Generate strategic plans, policies, and programs for Child Online Protection and integrate COP measures in all existing initiatives;*

To effectively respond to online risks and harms for children, an inclusive multi-stakeholder national child online protection strategy includes the development of new plans, programs, and policies. Furthermore, a review of the existing legal framework is also recommended to ensure that it adheres to global standards for the protection of children from all risks and potential harms that aim to ensure a safe, inclusive, and empowering digital environment.

1. *Develop information, educational, and communication materials for in-school and out-of-school children*

In line with the existing COP advocacy initiative to promote a holistic approach to child online protection to build safe, gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, inclusive, and ​rights-respecting digital environments for children and young people worldwide, it is proposed to develop a communication strategy that will both address the information needs of children both in-school and out-of-school.

Since poverty is still one of the most prevalent reasons for child online sexual abuse and exploitation, children in and below the poverty index are the most vulnerable. Hence, the advocacy campaign should adopt communication strategies that also reach children, parents, and carers who have no access to formal education and forum. Further, it should also consider partnering with the key stakeholders at the local community level to ensure wider reach.

**Recommendation**

The Council is invited to notethis document and encourage ITU and its member states:

1. To generate strategic plans, policies, and programs for Child Online Protection and to integrate COP measures in all its existing initiatives; and
2. To develop information, educational, and communicationmaterials for in-school and out-of-school children.
3. To report the implementation and progress of this initiative at Council Working Group
4. To encourage the implementation through the regional initiatives and discussion at the Regional Development Forums

ANNEX

Draft New Resolution [...]

Encouraging ITU and its Member States to generate strategic plans, policies, and programs, and integrate child online protection measures to all existing initiatives and develop information, education, and communication materials for in-school and out-of-school children

The ITU Council,

considering

*a)* Resolution 179 (Rev. Bucharest, 2023) ITU's role in child online protection;

*b)* Resolution 67 (WTDC, Kigali, 2022) on the role of the Telecommunication Development Sector in child online protection;

*c)* Resolution 1306 Council Res 1306 (C09 Modified C15) on ITU's role with regard to International Public Policy Issues concerning Creating a Safer Internet Environment for Children;

*d)* Resolution 45 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) of WTDC, on mechanisms for enhancing cooperation on cybersecurity, including countering and combating spam,

recalling

Resolution 1306 adopted by the 2009 session of the Council, under which a child online protection working group was set up, with the participation of Member States and Sector Members,

taking into account

Resolution 179 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) at the Plenipotentiary Conference (Bucharest, 2022) resolved, under others:

a. to continue the COP initiative as a platform to raise awareness and share best practices on child online safety issues;

b. to continue providing assistance and support to Member States, especially developing countries, in developing and implementing roadmaps for the COP initiative;

c. to continue to coordinate the COP initiative, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders (see full Resolution 179),

recognizing

that there is an imperative need for an urgent collective response to combat Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC),

invites Member States and Sector Members

1 to encourage ITU and its Member States to generate strategic plans, policies, and programs and integrate COP measures in all existing initiatives;

2 to develop Information, Education, and Communication materials for in-school and out-of-school children*;*

3 To report the implementation and progress of this initiative at Council Working Group;

4 to encourage the implementation through the regional initiatives and discussion at the Regional Development Forums.

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1. *Lobe, B., Velicu, A., Staksrud, E., Chaudron, S. and Di Gioia, R. 2020. How children (10-18) experienced online risks during the Covid-19 lockdown* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)