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|  | **Document CWG-COP20/5** |
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| Contribution by Saudi Arabia | |
| PROGRESS ON THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN CYBERSPACE (CPC) | |
| **Purpose**  Progress on the Global Initiative for Child Protection in Cyberspace (CPC).  **Action required**  This contribution is submitted **for noting**. | |

1. **Introduction**

The GCF Institute is a global non-profit organization headquartered in Riyadh and committed to enhancing Cyberspace security and resilience. Through collaborative efforts, purposeful dialogue, and impactful initiatives, the institute unites global endeavours, champions actions to advance cybersecurity and fosters positive socio-economic impact. This involves pioneering social impact initiatives such as “Child Protection in Cyberspace”. The strategy developed for this global initiative encompassed efforts to create a safe and empowering online experience for children globally by: (a) identifying threats and risks in cyberspace and raising awareness of those and the impact they could have on children, and (b) defining the strategies and tools that can protect children from all forms of abuse, violence, and exploitation online.

To understand how to ensure Child Protection in Cyberspace, the global landscape was assessed and validated insights with experts. 70+ reports, studies, indices, and articles were reviewed to assess the global context, and 80+ relevant organizations, 20+ priorities, 50+ initiatives and 30+ events internationally were assessed. Interviews with international technology and child protection global leaders were conducted to validate the findings.

1. **Highlights of the Initiatives’ activities**
2. **"Creating a Safe and Prosperous Cyberspace for Children" programme**

A comprehensive global programme on "Creating a Safe and Prosperous Cyberspace for Children" was established by ITU and covers the implementation of 2020 ITU COP guidelines globally to enable all key stakeholders of the CPC ecosystem. The programme has successfully launched a set of online self-paced trainings on COP, geared towards parents, educators, policy-makers, and ICT industry professionals, and children themselves (aged 9-18). In addition to supporting the translation and dissemination of COP guidelines in 20 different languages. Detailed update on the 2021-2024 programme can be found in the Document CWG-COP20-C02.

1. **“Why Children Are Unsafe in Cyberspace” Global Report[[1]](#footnote-1)**

The global report was developed by the Global Cybersecurity Forum (GCF)[[2]](#footnote-2) in collaboration with Boston Consulting Group (BCG), focuses on raising awareness on the critical issues facing the protection of children in Cyberspace, at a time when over 90% of children aged eight and above are active on the internet.

The report surveyed over 40,000 parents and children, across 24 countries in six regions, with results overwhelmingly showing that protection of today’s youth in cyberspace is falling short, impacting children globally and requiring urgent collective action. Survey questions were intended to address the significant data gaps identified after a thorough global baseline assessment of child protection in cyberspace—including gaps in available data on children’s online usage and activity and on their awareness and experience of threats. The major findings were:

* There is a major problem with almost every child online by age 12, therefore exposed to cyber threats from a young age. Approximately 40% of children are online before age 8, doubling to 80% children online by age 10, and reaching 93% by age 12.
* Children are experiencing various online threats (e.g., unwanted pop-ups, inappropriate content, online bullying, sexual approaches, content received that made them uncomfortable) however only a fraction of threats are being reported to parents or the police.
* Parents are proactively exposing their children to the cyber world however there remains a gap in awareness and education for both children and parents around online safety including preventive and reactive mechanisms to stay safe online.
* Regional biases exist across awareness, online behavior, and prevention/response however the problem remains global, sizeable across all regions. Children in Asia-Pacific generally feel less safe online but are better equipped through school education; more children in MENA feel less safe online. Parental monitoring is lowest in Asia-Pacific despite also having generally less open and regular communication with their children about online activities. Parental response to their children receiving unpleasant content online varies across regions, and reporting to police is lowest in Asia-Pacific and MENA.

The study yielded two overarching recommendations for increasing child protection in cyberspace. First is the need to introduce cyber safety education and awareness for children by age 10 or earlier and increase online safety education in schools, focusing especially on regions where online safety education is low, children generally feel less safe online, and a higher percentage of children are online from a younger age. Second is the need to focus parents' awareness and upskilling on parental control mechanisms and their importance, regular and open communication with children, and reactive measures to children experiencing cyber threats (e.g., reporting to the police).

1. **Proposal**

Given the universality of the challenge of ensuring online safety of children, we invite ITU members to join the "Creating a Safe and Prosperous Cyberspace for Children" program, leveraging ITU's expertise from the Child Online Protection (COP) initiative and its extensive experience in child protection and global stakeholder engagement.

We also extend our invitation to all stakeholders to join the Child Protection in Cyberspace (CPC) global initiative.

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1. https://globalcybersecurityforum.com/reports/449 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://globalcybersecurityforum.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)