

# Child Online Protection





“Opening up whole new worlds.”

## What’s Happening Online

Computers have brought untold benefits to children around the world, with the number of connected households increasing each year. By early 2009, there were over 1.5 billion people online, up from under 200 million at the beginning of 1998.

The Internet’s potential for good is undisputed. This technology is already greatly enriching the learning process, providing new, exciting and personalized ways of discovering the world. The Internet has also provided an excellent platform for a wide range of games, music and other cultural activities which have huge appeal among the young. However, the Internet has also brought with it a

number of unintended, unforeseen and unwanted consequences. Some of these are of particular concern to the health and safety of children and young people.

According to recent surveys:

### **In the USA**

93% of teens 12-17 go online, with 63% going online daily.

### **In China**

44% of children said they had been approached online by strangers.

### **In France**

72% of children surf online alone.

### **In Korea**

30% of under 18’s spend two hours a day or more online.

“If MySpace was a country, it would be the 8<sup>th</sup> largest in the world.”<sup>1</sup>



## What Many Parents Don't Know

In many countries it seems there is a disconcerting gap between what parents think is happening online and what children know is going on. For example:

### **In the UK**

81% of parents are confident they know what their children are looking at online. 31% of UK kids disagree .

### **In France**

85% of parents know about parental control software but only 30% have installed it . The highest level of use of safety software is in India where 55% of parents have set controls on web usage.

### **In Brazil**

parents think their children are spending 56 hours per month

online. They are actually spending around 70 hours per month online .

### **In the USA**

86% of teenage girls said they could chat in a chat room without their parent's knowledge and 30% said they had been sexually harassed in a chat room but only 7% told their parents immediately because they were worried they would be banned from using chat rooms again .



# The Risks



## Grooming and Pornography

While filtering programs and parental controls are getting better, many children around the world are still at risk of viewing images that they aren't mature enough to understand or appreciate. Even worse is when children themselves are lured into and used or depicted as sexual objects in child abuse material.

## Bullying

With the arrival of the Internet and mobile technology, children today are open to bullying and intimidation wherever they are – it's no longer just a playground event. Surfing the Internet can have severe consequences for a child's self-confidence and personal development.



## Violence

While aggression is an unfortunate part of life, the sheer range and volume of online violence is something most of us don't want our children to see or hear. Children, especially young ones, are better off not being exposed to depictions of war, domestic abuse, bigotry, misogyny and other vicious attacks.

## Racism

The Internet has given us instantaneous global access. While this can promote greater communication, understanding and respect; it also makes it easier to spread racial abuse and hate.



“How it happened, God, I don’t know how it happened, but it did.... My baby was in front of me on her computer. I mean in front of me. Not in her room.”<sup>2</sup>

Father of teen kidnapped by someone she met on the Internet



#### **Online Gaming & Addiction**

There is a growing body of evidence that many children are developing an unhealthy addiction to spending time online. Often, this addiction takes the form of Internet gaming, but essentially any online activity can become addictive. Addictions such as these increase a child’s risk of health and social problems.

#### **Online Fraud**

Many fraudsters like to specifically target children, as young people often don’t have the experience and knowledge to distinguish legitimate requests from fraudulent ones. Fraudsters can use knowledge gained from children online to steal, blackmail, terrorize, or even kidnap.





# Connecting the World Responsibly

Children are among the most active and most vulnerable participants online. ITU's motto is "committed to connecting the world", but we are also committed to connecting the world responsibly. That means working together to ensure cybersecurity, enable cyberpeace and, perhaps most importantly, protect children online. That is why ITU established the Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA).

## **GCA & COP**

Confidence and security in using ICTs are fundamental in building an inclusive, secure and global information society. Confidence

and security are also prerequisites for using ICTs effectively, as acknowledged by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

The Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) is an ITU framework for international cooperation aimed at proposing strategies for solutions to enhance confidence and security in the information society. It builds on existing national and regional initiatives to avoid duplication of work and encourage collaboration amongst all relevant partners.

Child Online Protection (COP)

is a special initiative within the GCA framework. COP aims to bring together partners from all sectors of the global community to ensure a safe and secure online experience for children everywhere.

## **WSIS Mandate**

At the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), ITU was assigned Action Line C5: "building confidence and security in the use of ICTs". As a response, ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun Touré formally announced the launch of the Global Cybersecurity Agenda (GCA) on 17 May 2007.

## **The Tunis Commitment**

"We recognize the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the protection of children and in enhancing the development of children. We will strengthen action to protect children from abuse and defend their rights in the context of ICT."





# Child Online Protection (COP)

COP aims to tackle cybersecurity holistically, addressing legal, technical, organizational and procedural issues as well as capacity building and international cooperation.

Our children are our future. This universal fact, coupled with young people's particular vulnerability online, made it obvious that there should be a specialized initiative for children within the larger GCA framework.

The legal, technical and institutional challenges posed by the issue of cybersecurity are global and far-reaching and can only

be addressed through a coherent strategy taking into account the role of different stakeholders and existing initiatives, within a framework of an international collaborative network.

## Key Objectives of COP:

- Identify risks and vulnerabilities to children in cyberspace
- Create awareness
- Develop practical tools to help minimize risk
- Share knowledge and experience

Ultimately, we want to ensure that children everywhere can enjoy the benefits of a networked environment, safely and positively.



# ITU's Ongoing Commitment

## Extra Attention for Developing Countries

While there are many established projects and programmes in developed countries to protect children online, there are very few in the developing world. ITU already has a special “Children and Youth” initiative, supporting children and young people from developing countries to improve their access to, and use of, communication technologies to bridge the digital divide. Now with its COP initiative, ITU is reinforcing its commitment to connect the world responsibly

## A History of Consensus

ITU has a long and successful history of forging consensus on how the world should manage global resources relating to ICTs, such as satellite orbits and radiofrequency spectrum, which

is why ITU was entrusted with the responsibility to lead international efforts to build confidence and security in the use of ICTs.

## Child Helpline

ITU is lobbying telecommunications administrations around the world to consider the allocation of the number 116 111 to give access to helplines run by organizations dedicated to the support and welfare of children. Already in use in several European countries, the universal use of this number would make it easier for children to access help when they need it, wherever they are.

## Working Together

COP has been established as an international collaborative network for action to promote the online protection of children worldwide by providing guidance

on safe online behaviour in conjunction with other UN agencies and partners.

ITU is working with the following organizations<sup>3</sup> on COP and would like to thank them for their support:

- Bebo
- Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety (CHIS)
- Child Helpline International (CHI)
- Cyber Peace Initiative
- ECPAT International
- European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA)
- European Broadcasting Union (EBU)
- European Commission - Safer Internet Programme
- European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online (eNASCO)
- eWWG
- Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI)
- Insafe
- GSM Association
- International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol)
- International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children
- Microsoft
- Save the Children
- Telecom Italia
- Telefonica
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC)
- United Nations Inter-regional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)
- Vodafone



## 2009-10: Call to Action



The theme for ITU's World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) 2009 was "Protecting children in cyberspace". At this event, ITU's Secretary –General, Dr Hamadoun Touré announced a year-long Call To Action, in which he encouraged all stakeholders (policy makers, regulators, operators and industry) to promote the adoption of policies and strategies that will ensure safe access to online resources for the world's young people.

Countries and organizations around the world have already responded with their own initiatives in:

- Creating public awareness
- Supporting the development of Guidelines
- Identifying risks and vulnerabilities
- Building resource repositories for general use
- Promoting capacity building

### **Our goals**

To put child online safety on the global agenda.

To promote and strengthen the many excellent efforts being made around the world to limit the risks to children online.

To permit every child to benefit from all the good things the Internet has to offer.

“With your support,  
we can make every  
child’s online  
adventure a safer  
one.”

## Contact us:

Website: [www.itu.int/cop](http://www.itu.int/cop)

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1. Source: [www.chatalert.com/dangers/research.php](http://www.chatalert.com/dangers/research.php)

2. Source: [www.pcsndreams.com/Pages/Predator%20Quotes.htm](http://www.pcsndreams.com/Pages/Predator%20Quotes.htm)

3. As of 13 September 2009



*“In this new digital world, we all have a special responsibility to ensure the safety and security of young people in the online world, just as we do offline.”*

Dr Hamadoun Touré  
ITU Secretary-General




*“I welcome the ITU’s Child Online Protection Initiative and I urge all States to support it.”*

Mr. Ban Ki-Moon  
UN Secretary-General

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