

Day of the African Child 2023: The Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment

Outcome Statement

GUIDED by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and its basic principles;

BEING AWARE of the rights of children to have access to a safe and inclusive digital environment;

RECOGNIZING that the digital environment has various benefits for children;

NOTING with concern the various threats to children's rights posed by the digital environment including cyberbullying, seeing inappropriate content, exploitation by predators, health problems from too much screen time, exposure to fake news, privacy violations, limitations on expressing themselves, and the risk of their personal data being hacked or misused;

We, the children, participants of the training and commemoration of the Day of the African Child from 14 to 16 June 2023;

1. Call on Member States of the African Union to:

- i. Develop online protection mechanisms, including enacting laws and policies, creating software that blocks inappropriate websites, filters inappropriate content, and deters children from being exploited online;
- ii. Establish rules on appropriate online conduct and punishing of offenders;
- iii. Create awareness amongst children about their rights in the digital context;

iv. Ratify and implement relevant international and regional child rights treaties that promote children's rights online;

v. Establish child friendly spaces and children's groups to enhance digital literacy; and

vi. Promote equality and inclusion in the digital environment by ensuring all children including children from rural areas and children with disabilities have access to digital devices such as laptops and computers.

2. Call on Civil Society Organizations to:

i. Sensitize children on proper usage of digital spaces and social media, including its benefits and risks and offer platforms for them to express themselves;

ii. Create toll free numbers for reporting online abuse;

iii. Create and strengthen groups to advocate for a safe-online environment for children;

iv. Advocate for policies and laws that protect children's rights in the digital context; and

v. Support service provision such as counseling and legal services to victims of online bullying and other online violations.

3. Call on technological companies to:

i. Strengthen their systems and work with children, governments, and organizations to ensure the safety of children online.

4. Call on the community including parents and guardians to:

i. Educate children at home and at school, on the benefits and dangers involved in the digital environment;

ii. Allow children to express themselves freely and guide them on the safe use of the internet; and

iii. Work together to create and promote a culture of respect and responsibility online.

5. Call on fellow children to:

i. Engage in peer-to-peer support by protecting each other online and not violating the rights of other children online; and

ii. Be responsible and avoid being on illegal platforms and accessing adult related platforms.

Adopted on 16 June 2023, Lusaka, Zambia