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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

In the present study, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 51/17, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights examines solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats.

The High Commissioner highlights the systemic and structural barriers young people face to digital education and in realizing their human rights online in a safe, inclusive and empowering manner and provides recommendations to States to adopt a youth-centred, human rights-based approach to youth rights online and to implement it in partnership with young people.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 51/17, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in cooperation with States and relevant stakeholders, to conduct a detailed study on the solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats, and to submit the study to the Council for consideration prior to its fifty-seventh session.

2. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) solicited contributions and received 79 responses from States, national human rights institutions and other statutory bodies, United Nations entities, the private sector and civil society.¹ The study is also informed by submissions from young people, youth-focused and youth-led organizations² and youth contributions to recent global human rights and education consultations. In the present study, the High Commissioner builds on existing work on youth rights and on digital spaces carried out by OHCHR.³

3. The High Commissioner examines systemic and structural barriers to digital education for young people and the challenges that they face in realizing their human rights online in a safe, inclusive and empowering manner. The High Commissioner sets out a youth-centred, human rights-based approach to youth rights online, to be implemented in partnership with young people.

II. Youth rights and the digital world

4. Young people live in a digitalized world in which technology has become an integral fixture of all spheres of their public and private lives. As the most connected age group, with 79 per cent of people aged 15–24 using the Internet in 2023,⁴ and the generation that has grown up with technology, young people are considered digital natives. However, young people worldwide are not always able to access the infrastructure, devices or knowledge required to navigate the digital world in a safe, empowering and inclusive manner.

5. Access to the Internet is an indispensable enabler of a broad range of human rights, including education.⁵ Globally, 2.2 billion individuals under the age of 25 lack Internet access at home,⁶ which affects their education, training, access to information, and employment. That digital divide increases young people's risk of rights being violated and of their being left behind, including their meaningful and effective access to, use of and engagement with digital education.

6. Education enables young people to realize a broad range of human rights, and is central to equal opportunities and the growth, dignity and development of the individual.⁷ It is also the primary vehicle through which economically and socially marginalized young people can lift themselves out of poverty and fully participate in society.⁸ However, only one in six countries is on track to achieve universal access to quality education by 2030.⁹

7. In the context of the present study, digital education refers to the use of digital technology and online resources in education delivery, teaching and learning. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic elevated digital education, with the rapid

¹ All submissions are available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-inputs-solutions-promote-digital-education-young-people-and-ensure-their>.

² Ibid.

³ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/youth> and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/digital-space-and-human-rights>.

⁴ Most of the 21 per cent of young people not using the Internet are not able to do so due to lack of access (see <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2023/10/10/ff23-youth-internet-use>).

⁵ See, for a broader analysis, A/HRC/50/55, para. 7.

⁶ See https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/youth_home_internet_access.aspx.

⁷ See <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/tackling-inequality-new-social-contract-new-era>.

⁸ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13 (1999), para. 1.

⁹ See <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/articles/84-million-children-risk-still-being-out-school-2030>.

adoption and expansion of initiatives to support remote learning. Those continue to develop and encompass a broad range of resources, content, platforms, systems, tools and technologies, including artificial intelligence.¹⁰

8. While the integration of technology can have positive benefits, including broadening access to populations not previously reached, digital education content and platforms are also sometimes shaped by the objectives of for-profit companies. That commodification of digital education, guided by technological rather than human rights standards, can have adverse impacts on education systems and learners' experiences and rights.¹¹ The human rights challenges associated with integrating technology into education – such as data protection and surveillance, decreased quality of education and widening inequalities, and impacts on physical and mental health – have been extensively documented, including by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).¹²

9. Young people today require digital literacy and competencies to exercise all their rights online and participate meaningfully as active citizens in all aspects of life. Comprehensive digital education should equip young people with the skills and knowledge to use digital tools and navigate online platforms, including learning platforms, in an effective, safe and empowering manner. However, students globally report that contemporary education often leaves them lacking the digital literacy, global citizenship and sustainable development skills required to adapt and thrive in the rapidly evolving digital world.¹³

10. The promotion of education to master digital tools and advance digital literacy of young people is also critical to their empowerment online. Digital, media and information literacy can help equip young people with those essential skills. It concerns the digital skills and competencies to use digital technologies effectively and ethically, as well as to access, evaluate and use media and information critically.¹⁴ Those are essential for exercising human rights in the digital age and include, among others, searching and verifying information, analysing and evaluating messages and information, and advocating for human rights. Digital, media and information literacy facilitates equal participation, universal social and economic inclusion and tackling the digital divide.¹⁵

11. The digital world offers both opportunities and challenges for young people as they navigate their transition to autonomy. It opens new spaces for participation, mobilization and socialization, and can empower young people in all their diversity. Digital technologies and innovations in education offer new possibilities for strengthening and expanding education, promoting inclusion and bridging economic, social and geographical divides.

12. However, young people also face threats and restrictions to their human rights online. That includes threats to their rights to privacy, participation, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and association, as well as risks to their safety. Furthermore, the commercialization of digital spaces, including educational platforms, views individuals as consumers rather than rights holders, and has seen profit prioritized over upholding human rights online.

13. As enablers and equalizers to create equal opportunities for all,¹⁶ digital technology and education, including digital, media and information literacy and human rights education, can transform young people's lives. Digital education, including the promotion of digital, media and information literacy, and online protection converge are critical elements in realizing youth rights online in a safe, empowering and inclusive way. They help young

¹⁰ See <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/technology>.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 56–61.

¹² A/HRC/50/32. See <https://www.unesco.org/en/digital-education/ed-tech-tragedy>; <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386092.locale=en>; and <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/05/25/how-dare-they-peep-my-private-life/childrens-rights-violations-governments>.

¹³ Our Common Agenda (A/75/982), para. 48.

¹⁴ See <https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy>.

¹⁵ Human Rights Council resolution 50/15, eleventh, thirteenth and fifteenth preambular paragraphs and operative paragraphs 7 and 8 (i) and (k).

¹⁶ See <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/tackling-inequality-new-social-contract-new-era>.

people stay safe, combat disinformation and support the development of empowering digital spaces that foster learning, inclusion, meaningful participation and civic engagement.

III. Views of young people

14. Young people highlighted the potential of digital spaces to strengthen and innovate learning, provide new opportunities for employment and participation, and realize their rights. They also shared concerns about human rights online and the spread of misinformation and disinformation. In the context of the Human Rights 75 youth declaration, young people from around the world identified the misuse of new technologies, online violence, the spread of disinformation and hate speech, and violations of privacy rights as threats to human rights and democracy. They emphasized that excluding young people from meaningful decision-making processes compounded challenges to their human rights, especially considering their potential to catalyse political, economic, social and technological progress when included in such processes.¹⁷

15. Young people identified several barriers to digital education: primarily, a lack of equal access to digital devices and the necessary infrastructure, such as reliable electricity, Internet coverage and connectivity. They underlined that, even in situations in which digital access existed, it was not always affordable, open or inclusive. Financial constraints limit access to digital devices and services, which are often expensive. Furthermore, some young people face multiple forms of discrimination or are in situations that render equal access to digital education more difficult. They include young persons with disabilities, those affected by poverty or those in rural or remote areas, Indigenous young people, young women, asylum-seeking, migrant and refugee youth, and young people in street situations. Such vulnerabilities are often compounded in emergencies, such as conflicts and humanitarian disasters.

16. Contributions from young people showed that a lack of skills and knowledge of how to navigate online spaces were a significant gap in digital education, which was further linked to their ability to stay safe online, critically evaluate the information they encounter and realize their rights online in an empowering manner.

17. Digital education is not always accessible to young people in its design and content. Young persons with disabilities and Indigenous young people face linguistic, cultural and accessibility barriers. For example, online platforms are not always designed to accommodate the needs of young persons with disabilities, and there is an absence of affordable and accessible assistive technologies. Furthermore, teachers often do not know how to use digital technologies or integrate them effectively into their teaching, and family and community workers/leaders require digital literacy to support young people's use of digital technologies.

18. Young people stressed multiple human rights challenges associated with digital interactions, including online security, information integrity, privacy and data concerns, as well as cyberbullying, online harassment and violence. They further emphasized the mental health risks, such as, social isolation, loss of vital support systems when in-person contact is lost, and digital addictions.

19. Young people called upon Governments to adapt digital education to their realities. For example, the Youth Declaration on Transforming Education urges "decision-makers to invest in the digital infrastructure of education and affordable, dignified, safe, and stable access to digital connectivity for all, to aid learning and close the digital divide".¹⁸ That involves universal access to digital education, devices and infrastructure; curricula and training – both formal and non-formal – that equip young people with the skills and knowledge to navigate online; and training for teachers to integrate digital education effectively. They urged Governments to specifically focus on marginalized young people or those facing multiple forms of discrimination and tailor digital education accordingly.

¹⁷ See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/youth/hr75/hr-75-youth-declaration.pdf>.

¹⁸ See https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2022/09/tes_youthdeclaration_en.pdf.

20. Young people have advocated for the mainstreaming of human rights online and ensuring that online interactions and spaces are positive. In the Human Rights 75 youth declaration, young people call for the application of a human rights-based approach to the development, deployment and regulation of technology, including artificial intelligence, in accordance with human rights obligations, and for the protection of children and young people from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation online.¹⁹ Young people globally highlighted the importance of States implementing their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights online.

IV. Legal framework related to young people and digital spaces

21. Youth is a period of transition from dependence to independence and autonomy. Socioeconomic and cultural context, age and development influence that transition, which occurs at different times regarding different rights, for example, education, employment, and sexual and reproductive health.²⁰

22. There is no consistent global definition of “youth”, nor a universal human rights instrument dedicated to youth rights. The definition of “youth” varies across and between United Nations entities and differs at the international, regional and national levels among conventions, agreements and stakeholders.²¹

23. The human rights of young people refer to the full enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms by young people. All international human rights instruments apply to young people.²² Human rights obligations are relevant for young people both online and offline.

24. The right to education is integral to young people’s transition from dependence to autonomy. Beyond serving as a gateway to the realization of other rights, it equips young people with essential knowledge, skills and means to realize their full potential and exercise agency.

25. The transition to autonomy in the context of education starts with individuals under 18 years. All individuals under 18 are protected and have a distinct set of rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.²³ The Committee on the Rights of the Child has provided detailed guidance on children’s rights in the digital environment, emphasizing its potential to enable and enhance children’s right to education and the steps to respect, protect and fulfil their rights online.²⁴

26. The right to education is enshrined in numerous human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,²⁵ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,²⁶ the Convention on the Rights of the Child,²⁷ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,²⁸ the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,²⁹ the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families³⁰ and the Convention against

¹⁹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/youth/hr75/hr-75-youth-declaration.pdf>.

²⁰ A/HRC/39/33, paras. 13–15.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., para. 16.

²³ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/10/children-have-specific-rights-and-should-be-protected-all-times-un-experts>.

²⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 25 (2021).

²⁵ Art. 26.

²⁶ Arts. 13 and 14.

²⁷ Arts. 28 and 29.

²⁸ Art. 10.

²⁹ Art. 24.

³⁰ Arts. 30 and 43.

Discrimination in Education. The core elements of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability of education³¹ apply to digital education.

27. Education should be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity and strengthen respect for human rights. Furthermore, education is essential for effective participation in a free society, promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship for all, and peace.³²

28. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights requires States to take steps to the maximum of their available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right to education, by all appropriate means, both individually and through international assistance and cooperation.³³ States have a core obligation to ensure, at the very least, the minimum essential levels of each Covenant right, including the most basic forms of education.³⁴ The Covenant further imposes various obligations of immediate effect.³⁵

29. Young people's right to education is indispensable for and inherently linked to the realization of a broad range of rights, including to: equality and non-discrimination; privacy; participation; freedom of expression; freedom to seek, receive and impart information; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of peaceful assembly and association; health; and decent work.

V. Institutional framework related to young people and digital spaces

30. OHCHR and the Human Rights Council have considered matters relevant to digital education and youth rights online.³⁶ The Special Rapporteur on the right to education issued a report on digitalization of education, establishing that introducing digital technologies in education should be framed in line with the right of every person to free, quality, public education.³⁷

31. Under Sustainable Development Goal 4, States committed to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Relevant targets to ensure inclusive and equitable quality digital education for young people include: ensuring equal access to affordable technical, vocational and higher education; increasing the number of people with relevant skills for employment; eliminating discrimination in and ensuring equal access to education; ensuring universal literacy and numeracy for young people; and ensuring all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education.³⁸ Goal 9 on resilient infrastructure, particularly target 9.c to significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020, is central to ensuring young people can access digital education. Education is integral for other Goals, especially good health and well-being, gender equality, reducing poverty and inequalities, and decent work and economic growth.

32. Education is one of the best financial investments States can make.³⁹ The High Commissioner has called for a human rights economy that promotes the application of the

³¹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13 (1999), para. 6.

³² International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, art. 2.

³⁴ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13 (1999), paras. 10 and 57; and general comment No. 3 (1990), para. 10.

³⁵ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13 (1999), para. 43; and general comment No. 3 (1990), para. 1.

³⁶ See A/HRC/54/49 and

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/panel-discussions/CN_RoC_annual-day_23-03-02.docx.

³⁷ A/HRC/50/32.

³⁸ Targets 4.3–4.7.

³⁹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13 (1999), para. 1.

human rights obligations of States in their economic policymaking. Human rights provide useful guardrails in economic policies, investment decisions, consumer choices and business models to ensure that people and the planet are at the centre of policymaking and other decision-making processes.

33. The digitalization of education involves private actors, especially technology companies. The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights elaborate on the responsibility of companies to respect human rights. They should avoid infringing on the human rights of others and address adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved.⁴⁰ In order to meet that responsibility, all companies, including technology companies, are expected to conduct human rights due diligence, which is crucial to know and show that technology products, policies, practices and terms of service respect human rights law.⁴¹ The Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education provide additional guidance.⁴²

34. Growing momentum and an institutional prioritization of young people and digital technologies have led to multiple initiatives, frameworks and policy guidance. Those include the United Nations Youth Strategy,⁴³ the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights,⁴⁴ Our Common Agenda⁴⁵ and the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation.⁴⁶ The fifth phase (2025–2029) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education will be dedicated to children and young people, with special emphasis on human rights and digital technologies, the environment and climate change, and gender equality.⁴⁷ That framework underlines the principles of human rights as a catalyst for change; working with and for young people by building trust, inclusion and meaningful engagement; and digital technologies as a means to advocate for, defend and exercise rights.⁴⁸

VI. Challenges faced by young people in the context of digital education

35. Young people worldwide face complex and multifaceted challenges in accessing and engaging with digital education, limiting their potential and rights to education, participation, freedom of expression, information, livelihood, privacy and non-discrimination, among others. The long-term consequences of unequal access to digital education and educational exclusion are far-reaching, including disruption, loss of and failure to complete learning and deepening educational inequalities, in turn resulting in increased rates of young people not in employment. That adversely affects young people's social and behavioural development and mental health and has long-term social and economic costs for young people and society, as well as the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

36. The digital divide – the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and connection and those who do not – is a primary cause of young people's unequal access to digital education. Those technologies and infrastructure can exclude those without economic means, including due to cost and market-based pricing. One in four people in Latin America and nearly one in three in Africa cite affordability as a primary barrier to Internet

⁴⁰ See

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf.

⁴¹ See https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/assets/pdf/Roadmap_for_Digital_Cooperation_EN.pdf.

⁴² See <https://www.abidjanprinciples.org>.

⁴³ See https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf.

⁴⁴ See <https://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/index.shtml>.

⁴⁵ [A/75/982](https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap).

⁴⁶ See <https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap>.

⁴⁷ Human Rights Council resolution 54/7.

⁴⁸ [A/75/982](https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap).

use.⁴⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic further widened that divide, when educational institutions were forced to shift rapidly to online learning, resulting in major learning losses worldwide.⁵⁰

37. Despite being the most connected age group,⁵¹ many young people worldwide lack devices, such as laptops, computers, tablets and smartphones, and access to reliable and affordable electricity and Internet coverage and connectivity, which are all essential for digital education. The situation is exacerbated in rural or remote areas, communities affected by poverty or conflict-affected settings. For example, only 5 per cent of people under 25 in Western and Central Africa and 13 per cent in Eastern and Southern Africa have Internet access at home.⁵²

38. Significant digital disparities exist between and within countries, urban and rural populations, and low, middle- and high-income households, meaning young people do not experience the digital world equally. Six per cent of young people in low-income countries have home Internet access compared with 87 per cent in high-income countries.⁵³ Even within low-, middle- and high-income countries, some educational institutions do not always have equal access to digital technologies, which affects educational disparities and equal opportunities to innovations in and through digital education domestically.⁵⁴ Furthermore, in some countries, government-imposed shutdowns of digital communications channels disrupt the right to education.⁵⁵

39. Some young people are disproportionately affected, including young persons with disabilities, young people living in rural or remote areas, young women, young people in street situations, Indigenous young people, asylum-seeking, internally-displaced, migrant and refugee youth, and young people affected by poverty, conflict and natural disasters.

40. The intersection of digital and structural inequalities further increases inequities for young people. That places them at a disadvantage compared with their peers, threatens to deepen educational and social inequalities, and affects their full and equal participation in society. A lack of quality, disaggregated data and understanding of the scale of exclusion hinders the realization of the commitment to leave no one behind in striving for universal digital access and universal quality education.

41. The absence of a comprehensive, disability-inclusive approach to digital education in design and implementation continues to undermine the rights of young persons with disabilities, placing them at risk of exclusion from inclusive digital education. Barriers include a lack of individualized support, inaccessible digital platforms and content, insufficient or unaffordable assistive technologies, incompatibility of digital educational platforms and resources with assistive technologies, a lack of educators trained in the use of accessible digital tools and inclusive education, and insufficient reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and their specific learning needs.⁵⁶

42. Significant gender disparities in access to and use of digital education persist for young women, including in the form of harmful gender stereotypes and cultural practices. The gender digital divide is stark and increasing – in two out of three countries, more men use the Internet than women.⁵⁷ Consequently, women and girls have less access to digital education and lower digital literacy skills. They also face disproportionately higher threats to

⁴⁹ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>, p. 57.

⁵⁰ See <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/416991638768297704/the-state-of-the-global-education-crisis-a-path-to-recovery>.

⁵¹ See <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2023/10/10/ff23-youth-internet-use>.

⁵² See https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/UNICEF/How-many-children-and-young-people-have-internet-access-at-home-2020_v2final.pdf.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Submissions by Croatia and Romania.

⁵⁵ A/HRC/50/55, paras. 35 and 36.

⁵⁶ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>; [https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP\(2023\)14/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP(2023)14/en/pdf); and submissions by the Republic of Moldova, Norway, Digital Opportunity Trust and Students for Global Democracy Uganda.

⁵⁷ A/74/821, para. 26.

their safety online.⁵⁸ That gender divide perpetuates long-term gender inequalities and hinders education access and employment opportunities for young women.

43. Linguistic and cultural barriers can limit access to and engagement with digital education by, among others, Indigenous young people and minorities. Digital education platforms and resources are not always available in Indigenous or minority languages nor is their content always designed in a culturally sensitive, relevant and inclusive manner.⁵⁹ That in turn affects youth engagement with curricula, the effectiveness of their learning and their sense of inclusion in education. The commodification and design of digital education can also hinder the inclusion of local languages and diverse world views,⁶⁰ limiting its cultural relevance and the realization of the right to education.

44. The use of digital technologies in education can also raise human rights concerns, including violations of the right to privacy, for example, when there are inadequate legal and regulatory measures to ensure safe handling of personal data. The commodification and monetization of users' data by companies through online social and economic interactions and transactions can also pose threats to youth rights, both online and offline.⁶¹ Trends and concerns in privacy interferences have been documented in various OHCHR reports.⁶²

45. In the rapidly evolving digital realm, digital skills have become the new digital inclusion frontier. Disparities in digital, media and information literacy exist between and within countries and communities.⁶³ A lack of digital, media and information literacy is a significant barrier to digital access: approximately one third of people in Africa, Latin America, and East and South Asia report it as their primary barrier.⁶⁴

46. Digital, media and information literacy is linked to young people's online safety, as young people with no or limited digital literacy are less likely to be informed about online risks and threats, such as cyberbullying, harassment, privacy violations and security threats. That increases their vulnerability to those risks, as well as to misinformation and disinformation.

47. The training gap for teachers in digital skills limits the quality of students' learning and understanding.⁶⁵ Only half of countries currently have standards for developing teachers' information and communications technology (ICT) skills.⁶⁶ In most cases, teachers require further training on e-learning methodologies, effectively integrating and using technologies to enhance teaching and supporting young people to navigate digital spaces, including online privacy and safety measures.⁶⁷

VII. Challenges to youth rights in the context of online protection

48. The digital space has broadened the horizons of young persons, giving access to new and different spaces to learn, connect, work, engage and mobilize. It has the potential to allow some, especially marginalized young people, to express themselves, overcome barriers to inclusion and engage in a manner that is not always possible offline. For others, such as those in rural or remote areas, it increases their opportunities to learn and to work.

49. However, young people face significant barriers to realizing their human rights online in a safe, empowering and inclusive manner. Those challenges run contrary to their aspirations, and to the digital world's potential to help young people's long-term prospects.

⁵⁸ Ibid., para. 51.

⁵⁹ See [https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP\(2023\)14/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP(2023)14/en/pdf), pp. 17, 23 and 24.

⁶⁰ A/HRC/50/32, para. 79.

⁶¹ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723>, pp. 143–160.

⁶² On trends and concerns surrounding privacy interferences in the digital age, see A/HRC/39/29.

⁶³ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723>, pp. 86–108.

⁶⁴ See <https://www.broadbandcommission.org/insight/education-skills-mobile-infrastructure>; and <https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GSMA-State-of-Mobile-Internet-Connectivity-Report-2019.pdf>.

⁶⁵ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723>, pp. 163–178.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

In many cases, the legal and policy frameworks required to respect, protect and fulfil youth rights online do not exist, are not sufficient or comprehensive enough or are not consistently enforced to ensure youth online protection.

50. Young people experience multiple threats to their safety and well-being online, including through their exposure to cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, hate speech, abuse and violence, among other negative behaviours. That negatively affects their rights to privacy, participation and freedom of expression, and mental health and deters them from engaging fully online. The effects of online attacks may be more profound for young people because of their age, less-developed support networks and lack of or limited capacity-building and experience in effectively managing such challenges. In a survey, conducted in 2019, of online hate speech among young people, the Deputy Ombudswoman (Croatia) found that 96 per cent had seen negative comments online – mostly on the grounds of discrimination, such as national or ethnic affiliation, religion, or gender and sexual orientation. Some 64 per cent believe that intolerance is becoming normalized among young people. Young people often do not report such interactions, despite knowing the negative impacts.⁶⁸

51. Digital spaces also provide a platform for the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation.⁶⁹ That is a priority concern for young people requiring digital, media and information literacy to navigate the parallel realities perpetuated through misinformation and disinformation.⁷⁰

52. Data, privacy, censorship and surveillance concerns – including the use of personal data for targeted advertising – also form a barrier to enjoying youth rights online more broadly. For example, social media platforms' financing model incentivizes the collection of personal data for commercial purposes to tailor content and advertisements to users' preferences.⁷¹ In some cases, young people do not fully understand or are not fully informed of the extent of personal data collection and the implications of sharing data online. The processes and policies around data collection and privacy can be complex, requiring heightened awareness and the digital literacy training that young people often lack.

53. Furthermore, the way certain social media platforms moderate content repeatedly exposes young people to content in line with their existing interests and beliefs, perpetuating biases and limiting their understanding on diverse perspectives.⁷² By optimizing content for each user, recommender systems can create filter bubbles through which users are less likely to encounter diverse content and perspectives, ultimately limiting their access to information. Research has shown that algorithmic recommender systems for media platforms risk exacerbating existing mental health challenges for young users. For instance, when young users initially engage with harmful content, such as suicidal, self-harm and extremist material, those systems tend to repeatedly expose them to similar harmful content, thereby amplifying its negative impact.⁷³

54. Some young people face disproportionately higher risks online. Young women and LGBTIQ+ young people, for example, face an increased risk of discrimination, violence, abuse, harassment and other negative behaviours online.⁷⁴

55. Young people who engage in public affairs, including youth human rights defenders, face significant online threats. Some 78 per cent of respondents to a survey conducted by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth reported having experienced some form

⁶⁸ Submission by the Deputy Ombudswoman (Croatia).

⁶⁹ See <https://www.un.org/en/countering-disinformation>.

⁷⁰ See <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/tackling-inequality-new-social-contract-new-era>.

⁷¹ A/74/821, para. 45.

⁷² A/73/348, para. 12; and A/HRC/48/31, paras. 34–36.

⁷³ Submission by Amnesty International. See also <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/POL40/7350/2023/en>; <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1460458220972750>; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1740144522000638?via%3Dihub>; and https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CCDH-Deadly-by-Design_120922.pdf.

⁷⁴ See <https://plan-international.org/publications/free-to-be-online>; <https://plan-international.org/publications/the-truth-gap>; and https://ilga.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Accessing_connection_bridging_LGBTI_digital_divide.pdf#page=17.

of digital threats, while 18 per cent experienced them constantly. Those include cyberbullying, hate speech, sexist comments on social media, suspension of social media accounts and pressure from different stakeholders to delete content.⁷⁵ Young human rights defenders, in particular, often experience slander, propaganda, cyberbullying and defamation online, as well as negative coverage in traditional media. Those threatening actions serve to deter their work and minimize their human rights impact. Female youth human rights defenders face additional gendered attacks online.⁷⁶

56. The absence of and a lack of awareness of effective channels, where they exist, for reporting attacks and seeking remedy, and accountability frameworks exacerbate the risks of young people falling victim to online attacks and contribute to exclusion from online spaces, undermining their ability to claim their rights and act as agents of change.

VIII. Realizing youth rights online in a safe, empowering and inclusive way through digital education

57. Adopting a youth rights-based approach is essential to realize young people's human rights in digital spaces in a safe, empowering and inclusive manner, and digital education is a central part of this. States and the private sector should implement a youth rights-based approach in all relevant educational and digital legislative and policy frameworks, practices and programmes. The role of digital education, including the promotion of digital, media and information literacy and human rights education, has become integral to youth rights and their full participation in society. It has the potential to equip all learners with the skills and competencies to exercise their rights and uphold others' rights online, as well as effectively access and critically engage online and with information, including on social media. While digital education systems are adapted to the specific social, economic, cultural and political contexts of each country and community, the core elements of a youth rights-based approach apply to all States and settings.

A. Availability and affordability

58. Bridging the digital divide requires reducing or eliminating affordability and access barriers for young people. Universal and equitable access to digital devices, such as computers, tablets and smartphones, and robust infrastructure are central to ensuring all young people can access digital education in a manner respectful of their human rights. Internet access is an essential enabler for human rights, including education,⁷⁷ meaning access to reliable, affordable, open and safe electricity and Internet connectivity – particularly in rural and remote areas – is critical. Investment in digital infrastructure, educational institutions and affordable technology is essential to address digital disparities.⁷⁸

59. Initiatives that remove affordability and access barriers include subsidizing or providing free access to digital resources, devices and Internet connectivity, creating affordable/subsidized data plans, community Internet access points or device-lending programmes. According to the Human Rights Commission of Mexico City, the 2023 Decree to Guarantee Free-of-Charge and Free Access to the Internet in Mexico City aims to safeguard universal, free-of-charge and free access to broadband Internet services in public spaces in Mexico City. Currently, there are more than 30,000 free and secure Internet points. Those actions seek to contribute to the development of digital inclusion.⁷⁹ By liberalizing telecommunications, Ghana has increased competition and reduced prices, which resulted in

⁷⁵ See <https://unoy.org/downloads/if-i-disappear-global-report-on-protecting-young-people-in-civic-space>.

⁷⁶ A/HRC/55/50, paras. 41–44.

⁷⁷ A/HRC/50/55, para. 7.

⁷⁸ See https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-pref-ef-2021-eco_fin.

⁷⁹ Submission by the Human Rights Commission of Mexico City (in Spanish).

increased access to the Internet. Some 70 per cent of the country's population are mobile subscribers, thereby enabling young people greater access to digital resources.⁸⁰

B. Empowering young people with knowledge and skills

60. Digital, media and information literacy has emerged as an essential pillar of democratic, transparent, accountable and inclusive societies. The aims of education include the full development of the human personality, dignity and strengthening respect for human rights.⁸¹ Digital, media and information literacy is a gateway to these aims and the realization of youth rights online, allowing young people to harness the educational, social and economic opportunities of digital spaces, while also learning how to navigate online threats and harms.

61. Digital, media and information literacy programmes should be included in formal education school curricula, thereby empowering young people with the knowledge, skills and agency to navigate digital environments safely, respectfully and effectively.⁸² Such programmes equip young people to make informed decisions, develop critical thinking skills, advocate for rights and actively participate online.⁸³ They rely on multi-stakeholder partnerships, involving States, international and regional organizations, businesses, the media, educational institutions and civil society.⁸⁴

62. Digital, media and information literacy also builds societal resilience and counters disinformation⁸⁵ by understanding how information is created, shared and consumed online, and identifying attempts to advance specific agendas at the expense of accuracy. It empowers young people to be responsible consumers and producers of information, contribute to information integrity and building safe and inclusive digital spaces, and combat the spread of misinformation and parallel realities that can undermine truth and social cohesion.

63. Digital, media and information literacy can also raise awareness of the risks associated with digital products and services, including the risk of interference with the right to privacy.⁸⁶ That includes risk awareness, digital security and self-protection training and guidance, and measures to address the gender digital divide by enhancing women and girls' equal access to ICT.⁸⁷ States and companies should follow UNESCO guidelines – the Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curricula Development Guidelines and *Media and Information Literate Citizens: Think Critically, Click Wisely*⁸⁸ – in the development and integration of digital, media and information literacy into quality education.

64. Human rights education is also central to empowering young people on human rights in digital environments and to promoting positive behaviour that addresses all forms of discrimination and violence that occur, or are amplified, by using technology. It allows young people to be aware of their rights and those of others and fosters their skills to leverage digital technologies to promote and protect human rights.

⁸⁰ Submission by the UNESCO SDG4 Youth and Student Network.

⁸¹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 13.

⁸² A/HRC/54/49, para. 9.

⁸³ Human Rights Council resolution 50/15, para. 8 (k).

⁸⁴ See A/HRC/54/49, para. 9; and <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386080>.

⁸⁵ See <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/tackling-inequality-new-social-contract-new-era>.

⁸⁶ A/HRC/54/49, para. 49.

⁸⁷ Human Rights Council resolution 50/15, fifteenth preambular paragraph and operative paragraphs 7 and 8 (c).

⁸⁸ See

https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/files/2022/02/Global%20Standards%20for%20Media%20and%20Information%20Literacy%20Curricula%20Development%20Guidelines_EN.pdf; and <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377068>.

C. Supporting teachers to empower young people through digital education

65. Teachers require digital skills training and resources to effectively integrate digital tools into their teaching, which is inclusive of young persons with disabilities, and guide young people in using these tools. Necessary measures include providing digital training for teachers and strengthening their digital competencies and agency; enabling them to adapt ICT use in their teaching, to support students and to reflect local context and cultures.⁸⁹ The UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers provides guidelines for teachers with the aim of supporting – and not replacing – teachers.⁹⁰

D. Ensuring inclusivity and accessibility

66. The principle of non-discrimination should guide the design and implementation of digital education: young people in all their diversity should have equal access to digital education.⁹¹ Education platforms that are inclusive, equitable, adaptable and tailored to young people's specific needs remove barriers to youth rights and increase access for all young people, including the most marginalized.

67. Inclusive digital education for young persons with disabilities means equal access to all components, including developing accessible digital resources and platforms. That enables and promotes inclusion and participation. Assistive devices can include adapted keyboards, screen readers and assistive listening systems, among others.⁹² Young persons with disabilities may require strengthened access to further disability-specific support and/or reasonable accommodation.⁹³

68. Digital education content and platforms should be linguistically accessible, culturally responsive and relevant and developed in partnership with Indigenous and minority representatives to preserve and promote cultural and linguistic identities.⁹⁴ That strengthens trust, promotes inclusion and non-discrimination, and encourages solidarity.

69. Transparent and disaggregated data on young people, covering all grounds of discrimination prohibited under human rights law, are fundamental in establishing comprehensive and transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to analyse digital education systems, identify gaps and inform evidence-based legislation and policymaking.

70. Digital technology can support the adaptability of education, enabling education systems to adjust quickly and respond effectively to the needs of students, including in emergencies, while prioritizing inclusion.⁹⁵ The use of generative artificial intelligence creates benefits, such as personalized learning and increased accessibility, while also posing the risks of reinforcing biases and exacerbating digital divides. Conducting human rights due diligence is critical to mitigating the harms from generative artificial intelligence applications in the education sector, as elsewhere, while realizing their benefits.

E. Facilitating meaningful participation

71. Meaningful youth participation has long-term economic, political and social benefits and strengthens social cohesion and trust.⁹⁶ The design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislation, policies and programmes of digital education initiatives require that

⁸⁹ A/HRC/50/32, para. 98 (b).

⁹⁰ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265721>.

⁹¹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, arts. 2 (2), 13 and 14.

⁹² See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>.

⁹³ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, arts. 5 (3) and 24 (2) (c).

⁹⁴ A/HRC/50/32, para. 81.

⁹⁵ Ibid., para. 33.

⁹⁶ A/75/982, para. 44.

the lived experiences, needs, views and recommendations of young people are reflected therein.

72. A safe and enabling human rights environment in which participation, freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association and the freedom to seek, receive and impart information are respected is integral to meaningful, inclusive and safe youth participation. Realizing young people's right to participate⁹⁷ requires establishing well-resourced, permanent youth participation structures at all levels and in legislative, policy and budgetary measures. It also includes providing targeted capacity-building and financial and other support to ensure that youth organizations can build sustainable structures. The Our Common Agenda policy brief on meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes provides further guidance.⁹⁸

F. Accountability

73. Accountability of all stakeholders – Governments, educational institutions and businesses – is essential for upholding youth rights in digital education and addressing any violations or failures to fully realize their rights. Effective, accessible and available complaints, appeals and redress mechanisms⁹⁹ are instrumental in digital education and online protection for young people. OHCHR has developed guidance on applying the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to the activities of technology companies.¹⁰⁰

G. Creating a safe online space and promoting human rights

74. Human rights provide a clear framework for the transformation of the digital realm into safe, accessible human rights-enabling spaces, particularly through the principles of participation, protection, privacy, non-discrimination, freedom of expression and access to information, and through the provision of resources to support safe, inclusive and empowering youth engagement online.

75. Robust legislative and policy frameworks addressing digital protection and security that are grounded in human rights are essential to ensure that digital spaces are safe and inclusive.¹⁰¹ Those should aim to prevent and protect young people from online attacks, such as cyberbullying and online harassment and violence. Effective awareness-raising campaigns are also essential. Improved content moderation practices by platforms, empowering individuals to navigate autonomously and in an informed manner, are critical to prevent the spread of disinformation and other potentially harmful content online.¹⁰²

76. Effective data protection and privacy frameworks are integral to safeguarding youth rights and supporting their transition to autonomy online.¹⁰³ Ensuring that data protection and privacy laws and systems are consistent with human rights is essential, particularly in digital and educational settings.¹⁰⁴ Such frameworks should be proportionate and ensure that

⁹⁷ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 21; and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 25.

⁹⁸ See <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-youth-engagement-en.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 8; and www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/business/access-to-remedy-bhr-interpretive-guide-advance-version.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ A/HRC/50/56; and <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Business/B-Tech/key-characteristics-business-respect.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ A/74/821, para. 25; and Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 25 (2021).

¹⁰² See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Press/Regulating-online-content-the-way-forward.pdf>.

¹⁰³ A/HRC/48/31, para. 7.

¹⁰⁴ A/74/821, para. 25.

personal data are collected, processed and stored securely, lawfully, with appropriate consent, and only for the necessary purposes and time.¹⁰⁵

IX. Promising practices

77. In many ways, there is a long delay in creating the regulatory framework and business practices to create a safe, empowering and inclusive environment online for young people. However, there have been many efforts to address some of those issues. The examples presented herein showcase the practices that have been shared by States, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and other actors.

A. Member States

78. Argentina is acting to guarantee students' right to quality education promoting youth digital literacy and inclusion and the development and use of digital technologies.

79. In Azerbaijan, the Digital Skills pilot project aims to equip students with comprehensive ICT skills.

80. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has an annual plan for providing Internet access in educational institutions and public libraries.

81. Cameroon introduced measures to ensure that the development of communications technology consists, in particular, in serving rural areas not covered by standard operators and in reducing the coverage deficit, including through subsidies.

82. In 2023, Cyprus allocated funding to ensure a transition to the e-classroom environment at all educational levels, including tertiary.

83. The Dominican Republic has delivered thousands of technological devices and educational material to students, including prisoners and young persons with disabilities.

84. Initiatives by Luxembourg to ensure that young people can realize their human rights online in a safe, empowering and inclusive way include the Bee Secure and Digital4education initiatives and the National Action Plan for Digital Inclusion.

85. Malaysia created the TVET Digital initiative to integrate digitalization into technical and vocational education and training.

86. In Mexico, the National Youth Programme (2021–2024) aims to expand and strengthen non-formal educational services for young people, including virtual and distance education, and to implement programmes to promote young people's safe and responsible use of ICT, especially by addressing digital harassment and privacy concerns.

87. In Morocco, the national digital training programme includes training young people in digital competences and professions and promoting the use of digital tools and culture.

88. The Portuguese Charter of Human Rights in the Digital Age, which was adopted in 2021, enshrines several rights, including the right to access the digital environment, develop digital skills, and acquire and develop digital skills in line with the right to education.

89. Qatar invests in advanced technological infrastructure countrywide, including remote areas, to improve access to digital education and provide a suitable environment for young people's online learning.

90. In the Republic of Moldova, digital education initiatives include digital learning resources and teacher manuals such as the *Digital Competence Standards for Education Teachers*.

91. In the United Arab Emirates, the Digital Education Strategy focuses on the utilization of digital technologies, digital skills development and inclusivity.

¹⁰⁵ [A/77/196](#).

B. United Nations

92. Generation Connect, an initiative of the International Telecommunication Union, aims to engage young people worldwide and encourage their participation as equal partners alongside the leaders of today's digital change, empowering young people with the skills and opportunities to advance their vision of a connected future. The International Telecommunication Union Youth Strategy aims to reduce the youth digital divide and has a focus on digital skills development for young people.¹⁰⁶

93. OHCHR, with support from Fondation Botnar, launched a research project focused on human rights and youth participation in the context of the digitalization of cities, which is to be informed by the lived experiences of young people in various sociopolitical contexts.

94. UNESCO works to ensure that digital education is inclusive and accessible for all young people, including by integrating media and information literacy into digital education initiatives. UNESCO has developed and published *Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms Safeguarding Freedom of Expression and Access to Information through a Multi-stakeholder Approach*.¹⁰⁷

95. The United Nations Children's Fund and the International Telecommunication Union have created Giga: a global initiative to connect every school to the Internet by 2030.

C. Other actors

96. In the Human Rights 75 youth declaration, young people commit to "responsibly leverage the power of new technologies and social media to create and amplify our voices, share information, and mobilize communities for collective action to support human rights".¹⁰⁸

97. Meta reports that it has resources designed to empower and keep young people safe online, including regionally adapted digital literacy resources for young people, parents and educators.

98. NetMission.Asia is a youth network in the Asia-Pacific region dedicated to engaging and empowering young people on Internet governance, including through research and by organizing the annual regional Youth Internet Governance Forum.

99. More than 200 young leaders at Amnesty International's Global Youth Summit on Digital Rights¹⁰⁹ committed, among others, to: build a global community committed to advancing child and youth rights online; harness the Internet's reach and power to ensure children and young people are heard and respected; and call upon Governments to guarantee a safe, rights-respecting digital environment and ensure equal access to the Internet.

X. Conclusions

100. Digital devices, connectivity and skills contribute to the right to education. It is no longer a question of whether technology is used in education. The focus today is on determining how it is used in line with the aims of education and in a way that empowers young people and the realization of their rights. The potential benefits can include improving access to and the quality of education, implementing inclusive learning methodologies, enhancing learning experiences and opening lifelong learning opportunities for all through both formal and non-formal education.

¹⁰⁶ See <https://www.itu.int/generationconnect>; and

<https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/digital-inclusion-of-youth.aspx#gsc.tab=0>.

¹⁰⁷ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387339>.

¹⁰⁸ See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/youth/hr75/hr-75-youth-declaration.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/amnesty-international-hosts-global-youth-summit-on-digital-rights-in-buenos-aires-argentina>.

101. However, the digital divide remains a reality, leaving far too many young people around the world excluded from digital education and digital spaces, with large disparities within and among countries. Universal, equitable access to digital education for young people in all their diversity can empower them, enable them to live fulfilling lives and ensure that they are better placed to realize their rights online.

102. With a global youth population of 1.9 billion, human rights, sustainable development and peace and security should be realized with meaningful youth participation. Young people are change makers, knowledge holders and key partners in developing solutions. Their participation can ensure that solutions accurately reflect the realities that they face in exercising their human rights online. Meaningful engagement of young people is a prerequisite for realizing their rights, reducing inequalities and ensuring equitable and meaningful access to and engagement with digital education.

103. At the Summit of the Future in September 2024, at which world leaders will recommit to a vision of a fair and more equitable world for all, the multitude of human rights challenges faced by young people online must continue to be a priority for States and the international community. States should commit to an aspirational vision for universal, inclusive, quality digital education for young people – one that empowers them, ensures access to other rights and is adapted to the realities of all young people everywhere – and implement multisectoral strategies through multi-stakeholder and intergenerational approaches ensuring inclusivity, ownership and sustainable collaboration.

XI. Recommendations

104. Recognizing the potential of digital technologies to empower young people and support them to develop to their full potential and the importance of ensuring a human rights-based approach to the use of digital technologies, the High Commissioner invites Member States and other relevant actors:

(a) To enact and implement the necessary legal and policy frameworks, anchored in human rights obligations, to establish a comprehensive approach to promote digital education and to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of young people online;

(b) To ensure universal access to digital devices and reliable and affordable electricity and telephone services, and reliable, open, safe and affordable access to the Internet for students, families, communities and educational institutions;

(c) To develop and include digital, media and information literacy in formal education curricula at all levels for students and teachers alike, including outside the formal education system;

(d) To pay particular attention to young people in vulnerable situations and those facing multiple forms of discrimination, including developing an intersectional, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and culturally sensitive response to ensure that young people in all their diversity can enjoy their rights online;

(e) To engage young people meaningfully in the design, implementation and evaluation of legislation, policies, programmes and strategies affecting them, including in digital-related decision-making processes. That includes listening to young people and their lived experiences, views and recommendations. Special attention should be paid to engaging with young people facing intersecting barriers, including young women, LGBTIQ+ young people, young persons with disabilities and those affected by poverty, among others;

(f) To ensure that young people can enjoy the full range of their rights safely and without intimidation online, particularly on digital platforms, and can access justice and effective remedies when violations occur;

(g) To take specific actions, using the maximum available resources, including through taxation and international assistance and cooperation, to ensure the right to free quality public education, including integrating digital technology in a way that enhances learning and leaves no young person behind.

105. Recalling the important role that businesses play in digital spaces to respect human rights, the High Commissioner calls upon businesses:

(a) To assess how the price of digital devices and infrastructure affects the access and rights of young people and explore options to reduce barriers limiting access for those most in need;

(b) To adopt a public policy commitment that covers and establishes operational policies and procedures to respect young people's human rights online;

(c) To conduct human rights due diligence in order to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their adverse human rights impacts;

(d) To have in place processes to enable the remediation of any adverse human rights impacts that they cause or to which they contribute.

106. The High Commissioner invites United Nations human rights mechanisms, within the scope of their mandates, to mainstream the human rights of young people into their work, including in digital spaces.

107. The High Commissioner invites other United Nations funds and programmes to ensure the mainstreaming of youth rights in their work on digital education.
