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including the right to development**

Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

Summary

In the present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/187, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Najat Maalla M'jid, reviews the actions she took in 2025 at the global, regional and national levels and the results achieved in fulfilling her mandate. She highlights the ways in which the broad multi-stakeholder mobilization launched in 2024 and sustained throughout 2025 has generated unprecedented momentum, demonstrating through specific action the high return on investing in children's well-being. The report places particular emphasis on the growing concerns surrounding cyberbullying and underscores the urgent need to scale up efforts to ensure the highest standards of protection for children in the digital environment.



I. Introduction

1. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, guided by General Assembly resolution 62/141, is an independent global advocate for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. In its resolutions 76/147 and 78/187, the Assembly reaffirmed its support for the work of the Special Representative, recognizing the progress achieved and the role of her mandate in promoting further implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children¹ and in supporting States Members of the United Nations in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In December 2025, the Assembly renewed the mandate of the Special Representative for a four-year period.² It welcomed the efforts of the Special Representative and Member States and partners to follow up on the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children and recalled that 2026 marked the twentieth anniversary of the study. It noted the launch of the Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending Violence against Children during the first Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children, held in Bogotá on 8 November 2024, as a contribution to and accelerator of the prevention of violence against children and the protection of children from such violence. The Assembly also expressed appreciation for the leadership of the Special Representative in the follow-up to the United Nations global study on children deprived of liberty³ and encouraged her to continue her work in that area.

2. In the present report, the Special Representative reviews actions that she took in 2025 at the global, regional and national levels to fulfil her mandate. She summarizes the results achieved since her previous report through the multi-stakeholder mobilization efforts she led throughout the year.

3. In close consultation with Member States, partners and children, the Special Representative continues to identify key global challenges that are increasing children's exposure and vulnerability to violence. The present report is, therefore, focused on growing concerns surrounding cyberbullying and its complexities and the ways in which rapidly evolving technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), are amplifying risks. Stronger action and coordination at the international, regional and national levels are key imperatives to be undertaken with the full involvement of the technology industry.

4. The Special Representative invited Member States, civil society organizations and United Nations entities to inform the present report by submitting information on their actions to protect children from cyberbullying. She is grateful for the 37 contributions received.⁴ The report was also informed by inputs from other relevant partners and specialists in the area of child online protection and from children.

II. Wide momentum and multi-stakeholder actions

5. Over the reporting period, the Special Representative continued to lead wide-ranging mobilization efforts and the acceleration of actions with and between Member States, regional organizations, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society, faith-based organizations and academia, as well as with children and survivors of violence. This rapidly evolving and growing movement continues to demonstrate that it is possible to end violence against children.

¹ See [A/61/299](#).

² See General Assembly resolution 80/190.

³ [A/74/136](#).

⁴ Contributions were received from: Algeria, Andorra, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovenia, Togo and Uzbekistan. In addition, 31 submissions were received from civil society organizations and United Nations entities.

6. Such multi-stakeholder mobilization underpinned the Special Representative's landmark contributions to the follow-up of two critical and related processes: the first Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children, held on 7 and 8 November 2024 in Bogotá,⁵ co-hosted by the Governments of Colombia and Sweden, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Special Representative; and the Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending Violence against Children, launched under her auspices at the Ministerial Conference.⁶

A. Increased Member State engagement

7. The Special Representative's country engagement has been integral to that mobilization. Since her last report to the Human Rights Council,⁷ the Special Representative has visited and engaged with national authorities in 16 Member States, namely: Angola, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. During her country visits and country engagement, the Special Representative met with nine Heads of State or Government or their deputies, as well as with 181 ministers and senior officials across all sectors concerned with addressing violence and its drivers. The sectors included economy, finance and planning, child protection, social protection, health, education, the interior and justice. She also engaged with chairpersons and presidents of key institutions, including parliaments and national human rights institutions. The Special Representative consistently followed up on her country visits and other high-level engagement with States, in close cooperation with United Nations country teams.

8. In addition, the Special Representative continued her systematic engagement with Member States that submit voluntary national reviews to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Special Representative's bilateral engagements included 38 meetings with permanent representatives in New York and Geneva and regular high-level bilateral briefings with the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals in New York and the Group of Friends of the Rights of the Child in Geneva.

9. The Special Representative's engagements with Member States built on and supported the unprecedented political commitments made through more than 400 specific pledges at the Global Ministerial Conference. By the time of the finalization of the present report, 48 Member States had joined the Pathfinding Global Alliance, with additional States expressing their interest to join.⁸ That renewed platform brings States together to share experiences and support each other in the translation of commitments into effective action to tackle violence against children and its drivers.

10. The Special Representative, together with UNICEF, WHO and regional organizations, held discussions with Member States in Africa, Europe and Central Asia, the Americas and the Middle East and North Africa on the Ministerial Conference and its follow-up. Over the reporting period, the Special Representative also convened dedicated regional multi-stakeholder meetings at the ministerial and technical levels with members of the Pathfinding Global Alliance and with States interested in joining. They included meetings for Pathfinding countries in Europe (Strasbourg, France, on 2 April and Bucharest on 14 October), Africa (Abuja on 7 and 8 May), the Americas (Mexico City on 10 and 11 July) and in the Asia-Pacific region (Manila on 12 and 13 November). The first global meeting of all members of the Pathfinding Global Alliance is expected to be held in early 2026. Building on the regional meetings, it will provide an opportunity to share progress made by States and the results of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between members of the Pathfinding Global Alliance and to determine next steps.

11. The Special Representative is particularly motivated by the large number of ongoing actions and the increasing connections and cooperation between States and their willingness

⁵ See <https://endviolenceagainstchildrenconference.org>.

⁶ See <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/pathfinding-global-alliance>.

⁷ A/HRC/58/19.

⁸ See <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/pathfinding-global-alliance>.

to share and complement efforts facilitated through those processes.⁹ States are increasingly adopting whole-of-government approaches to addressing violence against children and its drivers under the leadership of the Head of State or Government. Costed national plans to prevent and respond to violence against children are being developed or updated, underpinned by participatory and multi-stakeholder approaches. There are further examples of strengthened legal frameworks that encompass the prevention, prohibition and prosecution of and protection from various forms of violence against children. In addition, national legal frameworks are being updated to address evolving threats and crimes against children, including violence online, trafficking and enrolment in criminal or armed groups. States are assessing the overall economic costs of violence against children and the return on investment in comprehensive national plans to address it, and they are devoting more resources to social and child protection. States are also increasingly embedding child protection and well-being into their national and local development plans and as a cross-cutting dimension of their planning and budget processes.

12. There has been progress in mapping services at the local and municipal levels through a bottom-up approach. That has allowed for the establishment of a chain of integrated and context-specific prevention and protection services accessible to all children and their caregivers. States are increasingly providing one-stop integrated services for child victims of violence, which are often co-located with services for women, given the intersectionality of violence against children and violence against women. States are also strengthening their social services workforces and front-line workers, including the police, and within the justice, education, health, social welfare sectors, enhancing the skills of professionals working with children and families and ensuring that mandatory child safeguarding standards are in place within services and in boarding schools and institutions for the care and protection of children.

13. States are employing alternatives to deprivation of liberty, such as the use of diversion and restorative approaches. In addition, many States have made substantial investments in child-sensitive social protection, including cash transfers and basic services for children and their families. There is growing momentum in efforts to deliver social care reform aimed at preventing family separation, advancing de-institutionalization and ensuring family-based alternative care. In that regard, the Special Representative supported the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the Global Campaign on Children's Care Reform, promoting the Global Charter on Children's Care Reform across regions. The charter, which was launched at the General Assembly in September 2025 and has been signed by more than 30 States, is aimed at ensuring that every child grows up in a safe, nurturing family environment rather than in an institution.¹⁰

14. Monitoring, oversight and accountability in delivering cross-sectoral services for children and their families were also strengthened. More States have been putting in place or enhancing information management systems to inform, orient and measure the impact of their actions. In addition, dedicated parliamentary structures have been established to monitor progress, and the mandates and capacities of national human rights institutions have been enhanced.

15. More States have been including children and young people in decision-making processes at all levels, ensuring that their views and experiences can shape the design, delivery and evaluation of social services. Important steps forward have been taken to involve children in decision-making processes through formal participation mechanisms at the

⁹ Powerful examples of action to address violence against children and its drivers exist across Member States that have joined the Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending Violence against Children and that the Special Representative visited or engaged with through bilateral meetings during the reporting period. They include: Angola, Armenia, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, United Republic of Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

¹⁰ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-charter-on-childrens-care-reform>.

municipal and national levels, such as in children's parliaments, national child assemblies and child and youth advisory councils, in consultation processes on implementing the 2030 Agenda and in the preparation of voluntary national reviews. Children's views also informed the Global Ministerial Conference and the Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending Violence against Children.

B. Wider cooperation with regional organizations and initiatives

16. The Special Representative significantly expanded her engagement with regional and subregional organizations, participating in high-level processes with the African Union Commission, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the regional economic communities of the African Union, including the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the League of Arab States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Pacific Islands Forum, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The engagements advanced the development and updating of regional frameworks on protecting children from violence and ensured follow-up to commitments made at the Global Ministerial Conference.

17. Across Africa, collaboration deepened, including through technical support to the fourth African Girls' Summit, continued engagement in the Technical Working Group on Harmful Practices of the African Union Commission, support to the African Union Child Participation Platform and participation in major continental meetings, such as the tenth International Policy Conference on the African Child, which was focused on adolescent rights and well-being in Africa, and the ARISE Africa conference on advancing the Bogotá commitments to end violence against children. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Special Representative supported ASEAN in reviewing the implementation of its Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children and in shaping the next regional plan. She took part in the Pacific Islands Forum's first Child Well-Being Summit, highlighting child protection and well-being as key dimensions of implementing the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. In addition, the Special Representative joined SAARC discussions on progress achieved, remaining challenges and key actions needed to address violence against children in the region.

18. In Europe, the Special Representative contributed to the midterm review of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027). She continued her cooperation with the European Union on its upcoming strategy on cyberbullying and the implementation of the European Child Guarantee, particularly on child poverty, and participated in the fifteenth European Forum on the Rights of the Child. She strengthened her collaboration with OSCE on combating orphanage trafficking and also expanded her engagement with the League of Arab States and the Arab committees on children's rights and on violence against children, addressing priority issues for children in the Middle East and North Africa. Activities included participation in the Arab High-Level Conference on Child Labour and Social Protection Policies in Arab States in Cairo, which stressed the criticality of ensuring that social protection was duly child-sensitive.

C. Expanded engagement with parliaments, national human rights institutions and ombudspersons

19. Parliaments, parliamentarians and national human rights institutions play a central role in advancing child protection and well-being. They shape the legislative, policy, budget and accountability frameworks that safeguard children's rights. The Special Representative engaged systematically with all of them as part of her wide mobilization effort. She met with parliamentarians and addressed parliaments during her country visits, holding high-level discussions with a number of Presidents of parliaments. She addressed the 150th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in April 2025, which was attended by nearly 740 members of parliament from 130 countries. The Special Representative also engaged with national human rights institutions and ombudspersons or

their equivalent in 11 Member States, highlighting their key role in monitoring the implementation of child rights obligations and in providing child-friendly complaint-handling mechanisms. Working closely with United Nations country teams, the Special Representative advocated for strengthening the mandate and independence of national human rights institutions to ensure that they were in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and general comments No. 2 (2002) and No. 5 (2003) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

D. Integrated United Nations support

20. The Special Representative continued to mobilize the United Nations system as one in advancing the protection and well-being of children, including through her roles as Chair of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children and Chair of the United Nations task force on children deprived of liberty, as well as in her member capacity within the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

21. Within the context of the task force, the Special Representative supported progress by States in ensuring child-friendly justice and alternatives to deprivation of liberty. She did so through key advocacy and peer learning opportunities, bringing together ministers from all regions to share experiences and connect with each other, including at the regional conference “Reimagining Child Justice: Placing Diversion and Restorative Approaches at the Centre”, held in Istanbul in April 2025, and the high-level ministerial round-table on the margins of the fifth World Congress on Justice with Children, held in Madrid in June 2025. The Special Representative continued to work with the task force to document and share good practices.¹¹

22. As a member of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, the Special Representative ensured that child protection remained a priority in advancing commitments at all levels to combat trafficking in children. That included promoting the implementation of the Group’s Call for Accelerated Action by 2025 to Prevent and End Child Trafficking, launched under her leadership.¹² The Special Representative also led the development of the Group’s policy guidance on engaging with children in preventing and responding to trafficking in children and contributed to other joint actions, including those addressing links between trafficking in persons and other serious crimes. She also contributed to sharing promising practices and lessons learned from Greece and Poland to strengthen cross-border cooperation and empower front-line professionals and judicial authorities in combating trafficking in children, as part of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference in October 2025.

23. The Special Representative coordinated closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Development Coordination Office and met with 41 United Nations regional and country teams, including during her country visits. Through that engagement, the Special Representative worked to ensure integrated United Nations support to States in embedding child protection as a cross-cutting dimension of 2030 Agenda implementation, in line with the Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Child Rights Mainstreaming.¹³ The Special Representative facilitated the inclusion of child protection and well-being into the development and review of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, highlighting the intersectionality between violence against children and violence against women.

24. In addition, through regular engagements, memorandums of understanding and agreed joint actions and workplans, the Special Representative deepened her collaboration and coordination with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Adviser to the

¹¹ See, for example, <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/media/586>.

¹² The Special Representative was Co-Chair of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons for the period 2023–2024.

¹³ See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Guidance-Note-Secretary-General-Child-Rights-Mainstreaming-July-2023.pdf>.

Secretary-General on Africa, the Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies, the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations System Staff College, among other entities.

E. Expanded civil society networks

25. The Special Representative engaged directly with over 600 civil society organizations during the reporting period at the global, regional and national levels, including with survivor-led organizations. She expanded her civil society networking to broaden the geographical and thematic range of her engagement, focusing particularly on organizations working at the national and grass-roots levels, including those led by children, young people and survivors. In collaboration with the Civil Society Forum to End Violence against Children, she built connections between civil society organizations within and across regions, while also ensuring that they were engaged as key stakeholders in the Pathfinding Global Alliance and in the Special Representative's country visits.

26. In addition, the Special Representative engaged systematically with religious and traditional leaders and faith-based organizations at the regional, national and local levels, who serve as key partners in promoting positive social norms and child safeguarding. She continued to document and share positive examples of efforts by religious and traditional leaders and organizations to advance the protection of children from violence, including the activities of the Adyan Foundation (Lebanon), Rabita Mohamadia des Oulémas (Morocco), the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, the Gambia Supreme Islamic Council, the Conseil National des Eglises Pentecôtistes Evangéliques et de Réveil, the Alliance Chrétienne and the Conseil Supérieur des Affaires Islamiques (Gabon), the House of Chiefs (Zambia), the Association of Wives of Traditional Rulers (Nigeria), the traditional leaders of 42 villages led by Kgosi Gaboilelwe Moroka (South Africa), the Pacific Conference of Churches (Fiji) and the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (Holy See).

27. The Special Representative's partnership with cultural and sports organizations also resulted in important progress. Such organizations play a key role in empowering children, promoting social inclusion and providing safe spaces and reporting channels for them at the local level, particularly in vulnerable communities. They support children's education, physical and mental health, socialization and development, while preventing various forms of violence, including enrolment in armed gangs. Partnerships with World Scouting and the International Olympic Committee strengthened child safeguarding and support for the development of community-based initiatives.

F. Deepened collaboration and engagement with the private sector

28. The Special Representative continued to catalyse private-sector action to tackle violence against children. Following her 2023 annual report to the General Assembly on the protection of children in travel and tourism,¹⁴ the Special Representative engaged with the World Travel and Tourism Council, the Bicester Collection, Carlson Wagonlit Travel and other travel and tourism companies to put child protection at the core of the sector's sustainability agenda. She supported the creation of a working group of the Council, travel and tourism industry representatives and ECPAT International¹⁵ to identify and share good practices and develop a joint advocacy strategy. The ongoing process of engaging the travel, tourism and entertainment industry achieved an important milestone at the World Travel and Tourism Council Summit in September 2025, with a commitment made by participating chief executive officers to incorporate child protection as a key dimension in their companies' sustainability strategies.

¹⁴ [A/78/214](#).

¹⁵ End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes.

29. The Special Representative continued to advance collaboration with the technology sector, including through the “Protection through Online Participation” initiative,¹⁶ co-led with the International Telecommunication Union and involving over 30 partners from industry, civil society, the United Nations and academia. In 2025, the initiative partners launched the five guiding principles: protect, progress, partner, participate, push. The principles were intended to inspire and guide technology companies, policymakers and child helplines to advance on facilitating children’s safe access to protection and support through digital means. That cooperation prompted participating companies to involve children in advisory groups, link users to protection and mental health services and develop tools to prevent cyberbullying. The Special Representative also used global platforms, including the Global Cybersecurity Forum in Riyadh and the Family Online Safety Institute conference in Washington, D.C., to promote child protection as a core element of the global cybersecurity agenda, in line with the Global Digital Compact. The Special Representative continued her strong engagement with the WeProtect Global Alliance, encouraging additional Member States to join and to use its model national response to address violence against children in the digital environment.

G. More child- and youth-led initiatives

30. The meaningful and inclusive participation of children is a cross-cutting priority for the Special Representative. During the reporting period, she engaged directly with 4,230 children and young people from every region of the world, including through direct interactions during country visits and regional consultations, during the preparation of her reports and through collaboration with child- and youth-led organizations around key events and processes.

31. During the reporting period, the Special Representative hosted seven focus group discussions with children from 19 countries across regions on the ways in which child poverty was a driver of violence against children, which was also the main theme of her annual report to the General Assembly in 2025.¹⁷ She engaged with children living in poverty, working children, children in street situations, children with disabilities, children on the move, Indigenous children and those belonging to minorities, among others. By means of an online survey on child poverty, the Special Representative collected the views of children from 68 countries in all regions.

32. The Special Representative continued to support key stakeholders to expand the culture of meaningful participation by children, including through the provision of inputs for the production of child-friendly materials, regular consultations with children and the dissemination of child and youth-led initiatives.

H. Building bridges, strengthening multilateralism and widening outreach

33. The wide multi-stakeholder mobilization strengthened peer learning, the exchange of good practices and bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The Special Representative facilitated the assessment of common and cross-border challenges, the identification and dissemination of solutions and the building of trust between stakeholders.

34. To further facilitate peer learning across different countries and regions, the Special Representative is leading the development of a marketplace for knowledge-sharing under the auspices of the Pathfinding Global Alliance. The marketplace, which is supported by the United Nations System Staff College, is a secure digital platform where States and all key stakeholders can share expertise, have access to practical resources and connect with and learn from one another. It provides a platform for documenting actions taken by various stakeholders that have led to concrete changes, showcasing context-specific initiatives that turn ideas into action. The platform already features the toolkit *Building the Investment Case for Ending Violence against Children*, published by the Special Representative in May

¹⁶ See <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/COP/POP.aspx>.

¹⁷ [A/80/258](#).

2025.¹⁸ The toolkit was developed in close collaboration with States, including ministers of finance and other stakeholders, to make the case for greater investment in child protection and well-being. It provides a step-by-step guide to assess the economic costs of violence against children and the return on investing in violence prevention. It sets out a road map for the ways in which countries can systematically analyse, cost and advocate for interventions that matter. Many workshops and consultations were undertaken at the national, regional and global levels to ensure strong ownership and implementation of the toolkit. Among other signs of practical application, more and more countries are using evidence generated from investment case processes to drive increased allocations for social protection and workforce strengthening, with the aim of developing integrated and cross-sectoral budgets that span planning and finance ministries.

35. Overall, throughout the reporting period, the Special Representative expanded the reach of her Office's advocacy efforts through her in-person and online participation in 53 high-level conferences and other events. On 1 July 2025, the Office launched its revamped website in all six United Nations official languages, which has resulted in a substantial increase in users estimated at 193,000 globally. In addition, her Office engaged over 901,000 individuals through diverse platforms by using strategic digital and media outreach. Social media activity accumulated approximately 708,000 impressions, and collaborations with United Nations News, the Department of Global Communications and other United Nations organizations guaranteed a global reach and scale for core messages.

III. Cyberbullying: a rapidly growing and evolving threat

36. Cyberbullying is increasing and has become a complex cross-platform, cross-border challenge as more children go online and at an earlier age. Its nature has evolved rapidly, with AI amplifying harmful behaviours and creating links to criminal forms of violence. Cyberbullying is consistently identified as a significant concern in the Special Representative's multiple consultations and engagements with Member States, children and the technology sector, as highlighted previously in her 2023 report to the Human Rights Council on violence against children in the digital environment.¹⁹

37. The General Assembly²⁰ and Human Rights Council²¹ have reaffirmed the need to address cyberbullying, underlining the commitment of Member States to address the phenomenon in all its forms. Efforts to date, however, have not been sufficient to match the scale of the challenge. A comprehensive, coordinated multi-stakeholder response across many fronts is urgently needed to address that growing threat to children's safety and well-being online.

A. Cyberbullying: scope and trends

38. Cyberbullying typically refers to bullying among children and young people carried out through digital technologies, such as social media, messaging applications, gaming platforms and mobile phones.²² It involves repeated actions intended to intimidate, embarrass or harm the target. Common examples include spreading false information, sharing humiliating content, sending abusive or threatening messages, impersonating others and using AI tools for harassment.

39. Cyberbullying is intrinsically intertwined with bullying. They are not two different phenomena. They often occur together and share patterns of repeated aggression; cyberbullying frequently represents a continuation of in-person bullying,²³ extending the harm beyond physical spaces into the digital environment. In that way, victims of bullying

¹⁸ See <http://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/our-work/investment-case>.

¹⁹ A/HRC/52/61.

²⁰ See General Assembly resolution 77/201.

²¹ See Human Rights Council resolution 57/6.

²² See <https://www.unicef.org/stories/how-to-stop-cyberbullying>.

²³ Ibid.

can be followed everywhere, at all times. Bullying and cyberbullying feed into one another, forming a continuum of violence that often starts at home, extends into school and enters the communities in which children live.

40. The traditional elements of bullying – intentional acts, repeated behaviours and power imbalances – take different forms in the digital environment. Online, a single post can reach large audiences and cause harm without being repeated. Power imbalances may arise from factors such as follower counts, digital literacy or online anonymity. The lasting and, at times, permanent nature of online content can intensify harm, distinguishing cyberbullying from in-person interactions.²⁴

41. Cyberbullying reflects a dynamic cycle where multiple roles – victim, bully and bystander – constantly shift and where children may experience both victimization and aggression.²⁵ Many children play more than one role in bullying over time. They may be directly involved as the bully targeting others or as the victim being bullied. In other cases, they may witness bullying as passive outsiders or play an assisting or defending role. Children who bully others are often themselves victims of violence, including bullying, in other settings. Some children are both bullied and bully others. It is important to understand the multiple roles that children play to effectively prevent and respond to bullying. It is equally important to recall that there are no good or bad children. Every child involved in bullying – as a target, a bystander or a bully – is affected and must benefit from support.

42. The children most vulnerable to cyberbullying are those perceived as “different” or marginalized. Most often, children report being bullied because of their physical appearance, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, health, weight or socioeconomic status. Risk peaks at ages 12–15 years with greater social media use, although younger children are increasingly exposed as device ownership rises across age groups. Those with special educational needs, mental health challenges or weak peer or family support are disproportionately targeted. Such patterns underline that cyberbullying exploits existing vulnerabilities and amplifies inequalities in digital spaces.²⁶

43. Specific characteristics of cyberbullying make it particularly challenging to address. It is a cross-platform and cross-border phenomenon that spans social media, messaging applications, gaming environments and educational platforms.²⁷ The global nature of online interactions means that harmful behaviour can originate in one country and affect individuals in another, often bypassing national legal frameworks and institutional safeguards.²⁸ Its reach across digital spaces and jurisdictions makes it difficult to monitor, regulate and respond to effectively.²⁹ Cyberbullying is also difficult to track and respond to due to a lack of understanding and capacity to recognize it and the fact that cyberbullying material often comes from anonymous, multiple or fake profiles, including those using AI-generated profile photos or avatars.

44. Cyberbullying is a pervasive global threat. While comprehensive worldwide statistics remain elusive, recent data underscore the alarming scale and severity of the issue. The WHO Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey of 2021/22³⁰ found that 15 to 16 per cent of 11–15-year-olds in Europe, Central Asia and Canada had been cyberbullied in previous months. Microsoft’s 2025 *Global Online Safety Survey* reported that 21 per cent of children had been cyberbullied in the previous year and 37 per cent considered it to be their top online safety concern.³¹ Nationally representative survey data from the Disrupting Harm project,³² used to estimate exposure to cyberbullying across 22 countries between 2021 and 2025,

²⁴ See <https://www.unicef.org/parenting/child-care/what-to-do-if-your-child-is-experiencing-cyberbullying>.

²⁵ See <https://www.unicef.org/documents/behind-numbers-ending-school-violence-and-bullying>.

²⁶ See <https://www.unicef.org/media/66496/file/behind-the-numbers.pdf>.

²⁷ See <https://www.unicef.org/stories/how-to-stop-cyberbullying>.

²⁸ See <https://www.unicef.org/documents/protecting-children-violence-and-exploitation-relation-digital-environment>.

²⁹ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374365/PDF/374365eng.pdf.multi>.

³⁰ See <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/379486>.

³¹ See <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/digitalsafety/research/global-online-safety-survey>.

³² See <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/projects/disrupting-harm>.

showed that approximately 20 per cent of children aged 12–17 years reported that they had experienced cyberbullying.

45. Despite variations in data collection, evidence clearly shows that cyberbullying is increasing worldwide, with studies spanning Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, North America, Latin America and Central Asia.³³ Where Member States have been tracking data on trends, they have consistently found a rise in the prevalence of cyberbullying. For example, lifetime victimization rates among students in the United States of America rose from 33 per cent in 2016 to 58 per cent in 2025.³⁴ In Japan, the number of reported cases increased by approximately 168 per cent from 2015 to 2023³⁵ and severe cases in Colombia surged by 500 per cent in the past year.³⁶

46. Cyberbullying is persistently underreported.³⁷ Children who are bullied do not report it easily because they may fear being seen as weak, may already feel socially isolated or may fear being rejected by their peers and judged by adults. Fear of punishment and loss of Internet access, and distrust in adults or institutions, also deter disclosure.³⁸ Findings from Global Kids Online confirm that children rarely turn to formal channels, often choosing to block offenders or seek peer support instead.³⁹ The private nature of digital spaces means that incidents frequently go unnoticed by caregivers and educators, which limits timely intervention. Complex reporting processes and low digital literacy among caregivers and other trusted adults compound the problem.⁴⁰

B. Evolving frontiers of cyberbullying

47. Cyberbullying often overlaps and coexists with other forms of violence online. It can include or be linked with cyberharassment (persistent and targeted online abuse), cyberstalking (repeated, intrusive and threatening behaviour that invades personal privacy), doxxing (publishing private or identifying information about someone online, often to intimidate or harm) and flaming (sending hostile or insulting messages, typically in public forums). Cyberbullying also often coexists with sexual extortion, grooming and image-based abuse. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received over 20 million reports of child sexual exploitation in 2024,⁴¹ many involving sexual extortion, which often begins as cyberbullying or coercion. The Center has also warned that violent online groups use bullying-like behaviours, such as humiliation and coercion to control victims, sometimes forcing self-harm or abuse on live streams. Research reveals patterns of organized criminal exploitation of cyberbullying tactics for profit and trafficking, and a link between cyberbullying and recruitment by extremist groups.⁴² Resolver's research⁴³ has shown that online-harm ecosystems increasingly normalize cyberbullying as an entry point to more complex harm. They progressively incentivize vulnerable participants to escalate from minor harassment to severe acts of violence and exploitation, with social clout being the primary currency for status and influence. That constitutes a new hybrid threat that fuses cyberbullying with child abuse, grooming, graphic violence and self-harm.

48. AI is reshaping cyberbullying in a profound way, increasing and accelerating its complexity. Generative AI technologies, such as deepfake creation, “nudification” tools and voice cloning, are increasingly weaponized to humiliate, harass and coerce children. According to the Cyberbullying Research Center,⁴⁴ such tools are allowing perpetrators to fabricate sexually explicit or compromising images from innocent photos, disseminate

³³ Based on contributions from Member States.

³⁴ See <https://cyberbullying.org/summary-of-our-cyberbullying-research>.

³⁵ Contribution from Japan.

³⁶ Contribution from Colombia.

³⁷ See <https://www.unicef.org/media/134131/file>.

³⁸ See <https://www.unicef.org/media/134121/file>.

³⁹ See <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/7011/file/GKO-Comparative-Report-2019.pdf>.

⁴⁰ See <https://www.unicef.org/media/48601/file>.

⁴¹ See <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline/cybertiplinedata>.

⁴² See <https://ncmec.org/blog/2025/spike-in-online-crimes-against-children-a-wake-up-call>.

⁴³ Resolver, “Weaponized Loneliness”, *Critical Harm Intelligence Briefing* (forthcoming).

⁴⁴ See <https://cyberbullying.org/generative-ai-as-a-vector-for-harassment-and-harm>.

manipulated videos and impersonate victims online, amplifying psychological harm and reputational damage. Such AI-driven attacks can link cyberbullying incidents with sexual extortion, grooming and image-based sexual abuse, creating new vectors for exploitation. Findings from Microsoft and Internet Matters have highlighted the rising number of cases of harassment through AI, including substantial increases in self-generated sexual abuse imagery between 2020 and 2025, often coerced through bullying tactics. In addition, the line between virtual and real images is increasingly unclear, so that it is more difficult even for well-trained law enforcement officials to identify and track.

49. AI is increasingly used for profiling and predictive targeting.⁴⁵ Research has led to warnings that AI systems embedded in social platforms and gaming environments can analyse behavioural data to identify vulnerable children, enabling micro-targeted harassment or exploitation.⁴⁶ Machine learning models can also predict bullying victimization by analysing such risk factors as social isolation and family conflict.⁴⁷

50. AI-driven phishing and impersonation attacks are reportedly more effective at deceiving people into sharing sensitive information.⁴⁸ The Center for Humane Technology has warned that persuasive AI design and anthropomorphic chatbots (AI-driven conversational agents designed to mimic human behaviour and emotions) can exacerbate psychological harm, normalize abusive interactions and even encourage self-harm among vulnerable teens.⁴⁹

51. Adult involvement adds significant complexity. Alarming, some adults actively perpetrate abuse – harassing minors, orchestrating online attacks or exploiting anonymity to intimidate. In extreme cases, they recruit children into criminal activities such as coordinated cyberattacks, sexual extortion schemes or the distribution of harmful content. Such dynamics underscore that cyberbullying is not merely a peer issue. It is part of a broader sociotechnical ecosystem intertwined with organized crime that demands focused and systemic intervention.

C. From screens to scars

52. The consequences of cyberbullying on children's educational outcomes, long-term health and well-being are well documented. Children who are bullied and those who bully others may have serious, lasting problems that can persist in adulthood. UNICEF has noted that victims are more likely to skip school and perform poorly,⁵⁰ while WHO has linked cyberbullying to disrupted sleep, eating disorders, addiction and the problematic use of social media and gaming. These can end in harassment, sexting, scamming and oversharing.⁵¹ Chronic online harassment triggers sustained stress responses, impairing emotional regulation and executive functioning during critical developmental stages.⁵²

53. Evidence also points to severe mental health consequences. Victims exhibit significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-harm and suicide, with younger adolescents particularly vulnerable due to ongoing cognitive and emotional maturation.⁵³ Reports from Child Helpline International have revealed that children seeking support often describe distress, fear, social withdrawal and profound loneliness following sustained online harassment.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ See <https://safeonline.global/safe-online-report-2024>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ See https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA3930-5.html.

⁴⁸ See <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/security/security-insider/threat-landscape/microsoft-digital-defense-report-2025>.

⁴⁹ See <https://www.humanetech.com/ai-society>.

⁵⁰ See <https://www.unicef.org/stories/how-to-stop-cyberbullying>.

⁵¹ See <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/25-09-2024-teens--screens-and-mental-health>.

⁵² See <https://netpsychology.org/cyberbullying-mental-health-consequences-adolescents>.

⁵³ See <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00787-022-02128-x>.

⁵⁴ Contribution from Child Helpline International.

D. Wide-ranging actions but still not enough

Global and regional standards

54. An extensive range of international and regional instruments guide and support action to combat violence against children online, including cyberbullying. In its general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, the Committee on the Rights of the Child outlined key elements of a comprehensive response. They included aligning national legislation with international human rights standards, integrating children's online protection within national child protection policies, ensuring appropriate awareness-raising and training initiatives, ensuring that businesses met their responsibilities to respect children's rights and prevent and remedy the abuse of their rights, ensuring the investigation of online crimes against children, support for victims and access to justice and ensuring that the mandates of national human rights institutions and other appropriate independent institutions covered children's rights in the digital environment.

55. Considering the growing connection between AI and cyberbullying, the Global Digital Compact⁵⁵ (adopted in 2024) emphasizes the need for international cooperation to ensure that emerging technologies are developed and deployed responsibly. It outlines a global road map to protect children and vulnerable users from online harm, calling for strong governance, safety-by-design principles and accountability for digital platforms and AI systems to prevent misuse, including deepfake harassment and automated bullying.

56. As cross-border phenomena, cyberbullying and online violence must be addressed through global collaboration. There has been strong mobilization worldwide to address that challenge and to support States and other stakeholders in their efforts. The Child Online Protection initiative, led by the International Telecommunication Union, has developed key recommendations and guidance, particularly through the *Guidelines on Child Online Protection 2020*, devised for children, parents, educators, industry and policymakers.⁵⁶ Multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as the World Anti Bullying Forum,⁵⁷ the WeProtect Global Alliance,⁵⁸ the Global Cybersecurity Forum⁵⁹ and the Virtual Global Taskforce⁶⁰ are bringing together partners to identify and share solutions for tackling online violence, including cyberbullying.

57. Regional organizations are also providing guidance and taking action to address cyberbullying. The Council of Europe's Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027)⁶¹ prioritizes eliminating violence against children, including cyberbullying, supported by practical guidance for policymakers. The European Union has combined legislation and new initiatives, including: the Digital Services Act,⁶² which came into force in 2024 and mandates safety by design and child protection; the Artificial Intelligence Act,⁶³ which came into force in 2025 and is aimed at preventing the misuse of emerging technologies; and the Action Plan against Cyberbullying, slated for 2026,⁶⁴ which is aimed at harmonizing definitions and establishing stronger reporting and victim support and was informed by consultations with over 6,000 children.

58. Similar progress is under way in other regions. In 2024, the African Union adopted the Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy, calling for legal reforms, digital literacy, capacity-building and strong corporate accountability, alongside cross-border cooperation.⁶⁵ Building on the policy, the African Union is also developing a model law on child online

⁵⁵ See <https://www.un.org/global-digital-compact/en>.

⁵⁶ See <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/pr10-2020-Guidelines-Child-Online-Protection.aspx>.

⁵⁷ See <https://worldantibullyingforum.com>.

⁵⁸ See <https://www.weprotect.org>.

⁵⁹ See <https://gcforum.org/en>.

⁶⁰ See <https://www.afp.gov.au/virtual-global-taskforce>.

⁶¹ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/strategy-for-the-rights-of-the-child>.

⁶² See <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package>.

⁶³ See <https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/the-act>.

⁶⁴ See <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/cyberbullying>.

⁶⁵ See <https://au.int/en/documents/20240521/african-union-child-online-safety-and-empowerment-policy>.

safety to harmonize national legislation and strengthen prevention and redress mechanisms, expected for adoption in 2026.⁶⁶ The 2021 ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Bullying of Children⁶⁷ and Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN 2021–2025⁶⁸ explicitly recognize cyberbullying as online violence and outline steps to address it. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Policy and Strategic Framework for Child Online Protection⁶⁹ also offers a unified approach to tackling online violence, including cyberbullying, through awareness-raising, legal measures and regional cooperation.

59. While there is a solid normative framework, it is necessary to ensure greater coherence and harmonization of regulations at the global level. That is particularly critical in the context of emerging technologies such as AI, where inconsistent approaches and widening protection gaps are exposing children to significant harm. Many data gaps also persist that prevent better measurement of the dimensions and the impact of responses.

Legal and policy frameworks at the national level

60. Member States are increasingly turning their attention to the digital environment, where emerging threats demand new forms of protection. Some States have adopted legislation and national strategies that specifically target cyberbullying, while others embed online safety within broader child protection or education frameworks. There is considerable variation across States in legislative approaches to addressing cyberbullying and other forms of violence online. Some are adopting comprehensive approaches, while others are addressing the criminal, civil and regulatory dimensions separately.⁷⁰

61. States have introduced amendments to criminal legislation to address cyberbullying, cyberharassment and other related offences specifically. Age-verification or estimation requirements and increases in the minimum age to use online platforms have been introduced in some States to protect younger children from exposure to risks online. Other legal measures include placing obligations on technology platforms to assess the risks that their services pose to children, ensuring privacy and safety by design, implementing appropriate safeguards, tackling the algorithmic amplification of harmful content and providing reporting tools. In some instances, the industry is fined for failing to comply. Legal provisions have also been introduced to provide for the rapid removal of cyberbullying material. Some States have established provisions for special protection for groups at heightened risk. Legislation has also been introduced by States to underpin preventive measures, including in the fields of education and awareness-raising. Emerging challenges and opportunities lie in aligning cyberbullying protection and legislation with AI governance to create integrated, child-centred digital policies.

62. An important recent development has been the establishment of dedicated regulatory bodies to address online safety and the expansion of the mandate of existing regulatory bodies to include those functions, such as those in the Global Online Safety Regulators Network.⁷¹ The Network fosters regulatory coherence and rights-based standards through information-sharing and technical cooperation, underscoring the need for coordinated action beyond borders. Current members include independent regulators from Australia, Fiji, France, Ireland, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, South Africa and the United Kingdom. The mandates and functions of those bodies vary but they include educational and awareness-raising measures, standard-setting and codes of practice

⁶⁶ See <https://nwgnetwork.org/global-legislation-and-policy-changes-keeping-children-safe-online>.

⁶⁷ See <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/14.-Declaration-on-the-Elimination-of-Bullying-of-Children.pdf>.

⁶⁸ See https://acwc.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/4.-ASEAN-RPA-on-COEA_Final.pdf.

⁶⁹ See <https://oecs.int/en/our-work/knowledge/library/education/oecs-policy-and-strategic-framework-for-child-online-protection-cop-in-the-oecs>.

⁷⁰ States that address some or all of those dimensions in their legislative framework include Australia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, El Salvador, Fiji, France, Guatemala, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Spain, Togo, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan.

⁷¹ See <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/international-work/gosrn>.

for industry, the removal of harmful content and the use of enforcement powers for non-compliance by industry.

63. While there has been important progress, there is still a need to address the disparities and lack of harmonization in laws related to the protection of children from cyberbullying. They continue to lag behind technological developments, underlining the need for a more proactive approach to introducing and enforcing robust legal frameworks.

Law enforcement and justice

64. Law enforcement and justice systems have a crucial role to play in delivering on the obligations set out in law. Multiple efforts have been made globally to train law enforcement agencies on addressing cyberbullying in recognition of its growing impact on public safety and mental health. India, for example, launched its National Cybercrime Training Centre⁷² in 2022, offering certification courses for officers in digital forensics and online harassment response. Similarly, the European Cybercrime Centre⁷³ of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation updated its capacity-building programmes in 2025 to strengthen police skills in handling cyberbullying cases and preserving digital evidence. In the United Arab Emirates, a dedicated training diploma in anti-bullying and aggression prevention⁷⁴ is in force, which includes law enforcement training, and in 2020 the Dubai Police integrated cyberbullying awareness into its National Bullying Prevention Week campaign.⁷⁵ In Malaysia, the Legal Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department organized inter-agency workshops and training programmes⁷⁶ to build the capacity of law enforcement officers on the legal and ethical dimensions of bullying and cyberbullying.

65. Some justice systems are prioritizing restorative, educational and supportive measures, rather than punitive approaches, when responding to peer-to-peer cases. That is to ensure that both victims and perpetrators receive guidance, protection and pathways to rehabilitation, safeguarding both parties since their roles often overlap. For example, Belgium and Finland apply victim-offender mediation and family group conferencing within child justice and protection frameworks, while Indonesia incorporates diversion processes within its child criminal justice system to resolve cyberbullying cases through reconciliation rather than formal trials. There is still a need, however, to ensure that violence is addressed in line with the principles of children's rights, through diversion combined with restorative justice that centres the needs of victims and encourages children to take responsibility for the harm caused in ways that rehabilitate them and reintegrate them into society.

66. Cross-border cooperation is growing through regional anti-cybercrime networks and hotlines, enabling evidence-sharing and victim protection in cases spanning multiple jurisdictions. Such efforts are helping to address disparities in capacity and means within the justice system and law enforcement agencies when dealing with complex cross-border cybercrimes. Challenges remain, however, with ensuring the exchange of information and evidence across borders between law enforcement and justice authorities. In addition, law enforcement agencies still face challenges in securing the full cooperation of technology companies.

Child-sensitive counselling and reporting mechanisms

67. In many countries, helplines and hotlines provide children with access to safe counselling and reporting mechanisms. They include platforms established by Governments or civil society organizations or by partnerships between them. Such platforms are providing children with confidential assistance, legal guidance and referral to mental health, child protection and other services. The mechanisms often address violence against children or online harms more generally or focus specifically on combating online sexual violence.

⁷² See <https://cytrain.ncrb.gov.in>.

⁷³ See <https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol/european-cybercrime-centre-ec3>.

⁷⁴ See <https://almithaqinstitute.com/en/courses/psychology/training-diploma-in-anti-bullying-and-aggression-prevention>.

⁷⁵ See <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/dubai-police-warn-students-in-uae-to-watch-out-for-cyberbullying-1.75326851>.

⁷⁶ Contribution from Malaysia.

Cyberbullying, however, is clearly a major concern for children, who contact helplines worldwide. Indeed, Child Helpline International, a global network with members in over 130 States, reports that bullying, including cyberbullying, currently represents 15 per cent of violence-related contacts worldwide.⁷⁷ Although most States have some kind of helpline or hotline in place, there is still a need to ensure that such platforms are sustainable and have properly institutionalized links with child protection and other services for children.

School-based interventions

68. Governments are reinforcing school-based measures against cyberbullying through laws, curricula, prevention and awareness-raising, including in Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Romania, Serbia, South Africa and Uzbekistan. In some instances, specific legal provisions have been introduced that require schools to implement anti-bullying measures and to provide counselling and other support to students. Anti-bullying content, digital literacy and digital citizenship are also increasingly being included in school curricula alongside critical thinking and socioemotional learning.

69. Whole-school approaches are vital to ensure that bullying and cyberbullying are tackled effectively. The KiVa programme⁷⁸ and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program⁷⁹ are evidence-based, whole-school approaches that address cyberbullying within broader anti-bullying strategies. Both emphasize a positive school climate, clear norms for online behaviour and structured interventions supported by staff training and parental engagement. Evaluations across multiple countries show measurable reductions in bullying, including online harassment, and improvements in school climate.⁸⁰

70. Schools also have a responsibility to report cyberbullying, in line with institutional policies on tackling bullying and child safeguarding. For its part, industry has a role to play in supporting schools to ensure that cyberbullying cases are duly reported. For example, Meta is piloting a school partnerships programme⁸¹ on Instagram to strengthen the reporting of child safety concerns, including cyberbullying.

71. Further efforts, building on those important developments, are still needed to ensure that effective, whole-school approaches are established at scale. Teachers and other staff in educational settings must be trained to recognize the signs of cyberbullying and respond appropriately. Children must also be involved in school-based measures to prevent and respond to cyberbullying, including through peer-led initiatives.

Prevention and awareness-raising

72. Parents and caregivers have a crucial role to play. Research from the United Kingdom has revealed that most children would turn to a parent or carer if they were a victim of or witness to cyberbullying.⁸² There has been progress in ensuring that parents and caregivers are empowered to support cyberbullying prevention, detection and response. They are being equipped to use privacy settings, monitor online activities age-appropriately and use other online protection tools. They are being supported to have open dialogues with their children. Such measures build the trust needed for children to share concerns if they experience harm online, rather than hiding it due to stigma or shame. More broadly, parents and other trusted adults in a child's life are being supported to identify warning signs that may indicate that a child is affected by bullying – as a victim, bystander or perpetrator.

73. Wide-ranging measures are being implemented worldwide by States, civil society, the United Nations and other stakeholders to prevent cyberbullying through awareness-raising, digital literacy and cybercitizenship. The initiatives include such national campaigns as “Tous différents, jamais indifférents” in France, National Anti-Bullying Week in Seychelles and “Together for a Safer Internet for Our Children” in the United Arab Emirates. Civil

⁷⁷ Contribution from Child Helpline International.

⁷⁸ See <https://www.kivaprogram.net>.

⁷⁹ See <https://www.olweusprogram.com>.

⁸⁰ See <https://www.kivaprogram.net/kiva-is-effective>.

⁸¹ See <https://about.fb.com/news/2025/03/instagram-partnership-schools-teachers-address-bullying>.

⁸² Contribution from UK Safer Internet Centre.

society initiatives include the Safer Internet Centre's Safer Internet Day, cyber safe spaces in the Philippines, the Web Rangers in South Africa and the Webfala initiative on digital citizenship and online safety in Nigeria. Child-led initiatives are also strengthening adult capacities through workshops, videos and interactive tools, for example in Mexico.⁸³

74. There is a need for more investment in sustainable prevention to reduce the incidence of cyberbullying. It is crucial to ensure that the digital literacy of parents, caregivers, teachers, front-line professionals and children is further strengthened to equip them with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate digital spaces safely, recognize risks and ensure early detection and appropriate support.

Technologies and platforms addressing cyberbullying

75. Technology companies are developing tools for preventing and responding to cyberbullying. They include gamified learning, which is being used increasingly to prevent cyberbullying and promote positive behaviour. Minecraft Education's CyberSafe: Good Game⁸⁴ immerses students in scenarios that teach responsible conduct, while Google's Be Internet Awesome⁸⁵ uses its Interland game to build empathy and to teach how to block, report and counter harmful behaviour. Real-time bullying detection features are also being used in video gaming communities, for example on Xbox.⁸⁶

76. AI is also helping to prevent and reduce online harm. Moderation technologies, for example, are transforming efforts to prevent cyberbullying, automatically checking online posts and messages for harmful or abusive content and helping to stop dissemination before those messages reach others. For example, Roost⁸⁷ enables real-time detection and case management, scanning billions of text and voice interactions daily. Amanda,⁸⁸ Maverick AI⁸⁹ and other similar multilingual tools detect toxicity and self-harm content, making advanced safety measures accessible globally. Filters that block derogatory language and restrict interactions from unfamiliar users enhance children's protection from cyberbullying.

77. While such efforts by industry are valuable, they are not enough. Strong regulatory frameworks, mandatory child safety and child privacy by design measures and rigorous child rights due diligence are needed to ensure that online products and services, including AI, uphold the highest standards of safety, ethics and privacy.

Children driving meaningful change

78. Children are leading initiatives to address cyberbullying, tackle stigma and break the silence surrounding cyberbullying. National children's parliaments have advanced cyberbullying reforms. In India, in 2020, children advocated for digital safety in school curricula and stricter cybercrime enforcement, boosting awareness among educators and students. In Uganda in 2023, child representatives helped to shape parliamentary action on child-friendly reporting channels, improving accessibility for victims and strengthening coordination with schools. Through such forums as the African Children's Summit, children have influenced continent-wide commitments, contributing to the African Union Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy (2024)⁹⁰ and initiatives such as the African Child Online Safety Alliance.⁹¹ In 16 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Cyberlite child ambassador programmes⁹² enable children to shape workshops and create interactive peer-learning sessions through role-play and gamified problem-solving, strengthening digital

⁸³ Contribution from Mexico.

⁸⁴ See <https://education.minecraft.net/en-us/lessons/cybersafe-----good-game>.

⁸⁵ See https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/en_us.

⁸⁶ See <https://www.xbox.com/en-US/legal/xbox-transparency-report>.

⁸⁷ See <https://roost.tools/#what-we-do>.

⁸⁸ See <https://aiba.ai/amanda-the-ai-driven-content-moderation-platform>.

⁸⁹ See <https://www.maverickai.org/#projects>.

⁹⁰ See <https://au.int/en/documents/20240521/african-union-child-online-safety-and-empowerment-policy>.

⁹¹ See <https://theacosa.com>.

⁹² See <https://www.cyberlite.org/impact>.

resilience and expanding reach. In Chile, Tremendas, a movement started by adolescent girls, created a set of evidence-based recommendations to address cyberbullying in schools.⁹³

79. Children are also shaping technology solutions, underscoring the need for child-centred design and governance in online safety from the outset. Such platforms as Snapchat,⁹⁴ Roblox⁹⁵ and TikTok⁹⁶ include youth advisory councils, influencing such features as TikTok's Well-being Mission and Snapchat's Digital Well-Being.⁹⁷ Children have also been able to shape reporting systems across platforms, making them more child-centred and emphasizing simplicity and confidentiality.

80. Children are also involved in developing technological solutions to address cyberbullying. In Poland, a girl developed a website for girls to report multiple forms of violence, disguised as an online cosmetics store.⁹⁸ In India, a 17-year-old used AI to develop CyBud,⁹⁹ an empathetic chatbot that acts as a student's confidante and adviser in cases of cyberbullying. In Finland, children designed an anti-bullying mobile application to detect and discourage harmful online behaviour.¹⁰⁰ Children in Ghana implemented the Bullying Reporting and Victim Empowerment in Ghanaian Schools project¹⁰¹ in 2024, including an application that enables the real-time reporting of cyberbullying incidents, offers educational modules on digital ethics and connects victims to trained peer counsellors for emotional support. Such solutions share common success factors: peer-led design, mental health integration and user-friendly reporting mechanisms.

81. While there has been an increase in children's involvement worldwide, children still need to be more systematically involved in efforts to prevent and respond to cyberbullying. There is also a need to document and disseminate their initiatives, ensuring that responses consider the actions that children and young people are taking.

E. The way forward: moving from reactive to proactive prevention and response

82. Cyberbullying is becoming more prolific. It is a matter of utmost concern for all Member States, partners and children across all regions of the world. Cyberbullying is evolving so rapidly that responses and preventive actions cannot wait any longer. AI is increasingly shaping the digital environment and amplifying such risks as cyberbullying. Building a safer digital environment for children is not an option; it is a must.

83. Numerous initiatives are being undertaken by Governments, civil society, industry and international organizations. Actions are not keeping pace, however, with the evolution of the digital environment and the growing access by children to connected technologies, including online platforms, smart devices and emerging AI-driven services.

84. Children's rights must therefore be embedded in the core of digital governance through child safety and privacy by design, due diligence and accountability frameworks. Given the role of AI in amplifying the risks of cyberbullying, ensuring child-centred principles in the development and deployment of AI systems is essential to prevent harm and uphold international and regional human rights standards.

⁹³ See <https://radio.uchile.cl/2022/03/03/tremendas-crea-decalogo-de-buenas-practicas-para-combatir-el-ciberacoso>.

⁹⁴ See <https://values.snap.com/safety/cdwb>.

⁹⁵ See <https://corp.roblox.com/newsroom/2025/09/2026-roblox-teen-council>.

⁹⁶ See <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/tiktok-youth-council-holds-first-meetings-as-new-research-shows-teens-want-to-work-directly-with-platforms?lang=en>.

⁹⁷ See <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/new-ways-to-help-our-community-build-balanced-digital-habits?lang=en>.

⁹⁸ See <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56172456?%27>.

⁹⁹ See <https://www.mid-day.com/mumbai-guide/things-to-do/article/mumbai-teen-creates-ai-chatbot-to-help-teens-adults-deal-with-cyberbullying-23599679>.

¹⁰⁰ See <http://frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2023.1112835/full>.

¹⁰¹ See <https://being-initiative.org/innovations/brave-gh-app>.

85. The role of education in digital literacy is crucial for preventing cyberbullying by empowering parents, caregivers, teachers, front-line professionals and children with knowledge and skills and promoting responsible online behaviour.

86. Children and young people must be empowered to shape solutions. It is crucial that their experiences be taken into account and that they be meaningfully involved in the design and implementation of responses to ensure the establishment of digital environments that truly protect and support them.

87. A comprehensive and coordinated response is urgently needed to address the full spectrum of online risks that children face, in line with child rights standards and the Global Digital Compact. That requires the wide expansion of already growing leadership and a stronger commitment and clear accountability from every actor in the digital ecosystem, from policymakers to technology companies and service providers.
