**SINGAPORE’S COMMENTS TO THE DRAFT GENERAL COMMENT NO. 25 ON**

**CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN RELATION TO THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**

Singapore appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (“the Committee”) on its draft General Comment on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment.

**General Interpretation**

1. Singapore notes that the General Comment serves to provide guidance to States to ensure full compliance with obligations under the Convention and its Optional Protocols in light of the opportunities, risks, and challenges for children’s rights in the digital environment (paragraph 8 of the General Comment). Singapore will interpret the General Comment by taking into consideration Singapore’s reservations and declarations made under the Convention. Specifically, Singapore will consider that a child’s rights as defined in the Convention, in particular the rights defined in Articles 12-17 (including right to freedom of expression and right to privacy), shall in accordance to Articles 3 and 5 be exercised with respect for the authority of parents, schools, and other persons who are entrusted with the care of the child and in the best interests of the child and in accordance with the customs, values, and religions of Singapore’s multi-racial and multi-religious society regarding the place of the child within and outside the family.

**Comments and Suggestions**

1. The Singapore Government is fully committed to safeguarding the interests and well-being of children in the digital realm. Even as Singapore agrees with the Committee that a broad range of legislative, administrative and other measures is required (paragraph 23 of the draft General Comment), we wish to raise specific comments and suggestions for the Committee’s consideration.

***Part V. General measures of implementation***

1. Paragraph 45: Singapore notes the Committee’s draft recommendation that “States should also provide for collective complaints, including class action and public interest litigation”. As collective complaint mechanisms may not necessarily provide effective recourse for violation of children’s rights relating to the digital environment, Singapore suggests amendments in *italics*: “…*Where appropriate,* States should also *consider providing* for collective complaints, including class action and public interest litigation...”.
2. Paragraph 48: Singapore suggests amendments in *italics*, as the specified groups of persons may handle different aspects of implementation and/or enforcement of the law regarding violations of rights relating to the digital environment: “States should provide specialized training, *as appropriate*, for law enforcement officers, lawyers, prosecutors and judges that would specifically include issues related to the digital environment to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of law regarding such violations.”
3. Paragraph 49: In Singapore’s view, the use of "reasonable link" is vague, and "well-established principles of international law" would provide a firmer basis of what such "links" may be. It will be beneficial to States if the Committee could elaborate on what “remedy” and “measures” States should consider, and what “a reasonable link” entails in the context of the established principles of extra-territoriality under international law. Should Singapore consider making provisions allowing for extra-territorial jurisdiction, such provisions must be in accordance with the laws of Singapore, and well-established principles of extra-territoriality under international law. Singapore therefore suggests amendments in *italics*: “Children can face particular difficulties in obtaining remedy when their rights have been violated in the digital environment by business enterprises, in particular in the context of their global operations. States should consider *suitable* measures to allow for extra-territorial jurisdiction, *where appropriate and* *in accordance with established principles under international law*.”

***Part IV. Civil rights and freedoms***

1. Paragraph 55: For clarity, the Committee may wish to consider the following amendment in italics: “States should require *relevant* businesses and other providers of digital content to develop and implement guidelines to enable children to safely access a diversity of content while protecting them from such harmful material…”. In Singapore, providers of digital content are required to adhere to the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) Content Code, including rating all content on their services and presenting the rating prominently such that consumers are aware of the programme’s rating before deciding to view or purchase it. The IMDA also requires Internet Access Service Providers to offer Internet parental control services to their subscribers. Parents may subscribe to such services to manage their children’s access to websites and online services.
2. Paragraph 58: Singapore agrees with the Committee that relevant organisations should provide information to parents and children about the associated opportunities and risks. The Singapore Government and the Media Literacy Council have been promoting safe and responsible online behaviour to create a better internet. For example, the 2020 Better Internet Campaign highlights the need to protect children from online harm and risks arising from the increased time spent online. The campaign also encourages online users to exercise judgment about the content that they come across online.
3. Paragraph 81: In view of Singapore’s reservation made on Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Singapore reserves the right to apply legislation and conditions to the acquisition and possession of citizenship, as deemed necessary and in accordance with national law. Singapore therefore suggests amendments in *italics*: “States shall respect the right of every child to preserve his or her identity, in particular, refugee children and children in situations of migration, and act to prevent or resolve statelessness, *in accordance with national legislation*. It is the duty of the States parties to provide appropriate assistance and protection with regard to re-establishing the child’s identity, where the child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity.”

***Part XI. Education, leisure and cultural activities***

1. Paragraph 110: The term ‘home schooling’ may mean the educating of one’s child at home instead of being enrolled in a school. Singapore therefore suggests amendments in *italics*: “States should ensure that schools have sufficient resources to provide parents with guidance on online *learning from* home *~~schooling and learning environments~~*.”
2. Paragraph 112: As it is not clear how digital education technologies can always enhance children’s rights, the Committee may wish to consider replacing the word “enhance” with “safeguard”: “These standards for digital educational technology should ensure that uses of these technologies *safeguard* children’s rights and do not expose children to violence, discrimination, misuse of their personal data, commercial exploitation or other infringements of their rights, including the use of digital technology to document a child’s activity and share it with parents without the child’s knowledge or consent.”
3. Paragraph 113: Singapore notes the Committee’s guidance on specific aspects on digital literacy that States should include in their basic education curricula. Singapore’s view is that the paragraph may be overly prescriptive for States, and suggest the amendments in *italics*: “It should include the critical understanding needed to find trusted sources of information and to identify misinformation and other forms of biased or false content; sexual and reproductive health issues relevant to the digital environment; knowledge about human rights, including the rights of the child and of others in the digital environment, and available forms of support and remedy, *as appropriate*.”

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