**The Netherlands’ submission with regard to a General Comment on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment**

The Netherlands welcomes the intention of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to draft a General Comment on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment. Further to its invitation to submit ‘relevant research evidence; knowledge of the sector; findings from consultations with children; examples of laws, policies or programmes; or evidence of good practice that would contribute to the drafting process’, the following observations and examples of good practice are submitted.

Dutch policy on children in a digital environment addresses not only the rights of the child but also restrictions on children’s behaviour on the internet. In the digital environment children can be offenders as well as victims. The legal framework applies to children too, and they must abide by the law. In regard to awareness-raising campaigns, education and digital literacy, research has shown that, to be most effective, a combination of victim- and offender-orientated elements should be addressed.

*Halt* is a Dutch organisation that aims to prevent and combat juvenile crime. The local authorities to which the Halt team is linked are responsible for preventive tasks such as advisory services, educational programmes (e.g. on digital awareness for schoolchildren, parents and teachers) and customised projects. *Halt* is also responsible for the enforcement of alternative punishments imposed on young people up to the age of 18. When relatively minor offences are committed, the police and Public Prosecution Service can refer a young person to *Halt*. If the individual in question successfully completes the *Halt* intervention programme, he or she is spared further criminal proceedings. Training orders for juvenile offenders are supplemented with modules on online crime. A pilot programme for alternative punishment called ‘Hack Right’ is also currently under way, dealing with sexting, mild forms of hacking and other online criminal offences.

Using a dedicated national screening and risk assessment instrument for juvenile offences (*Landelijk Instrumentarium Jeugd*; LIJ) data is collected on adolescents who have committed an offence. This data helps to identify risk factors and profiles, which can be of use in correctly assessing adolescent behaviour and deciding on the right punishment or measures, both in general terms and in individual cases. Screenings and risk assessments of young people who commit crimes online are also being conducted. Recently a study was carried out on the impact on victims of online crime in the Netherlands, victims’ needs and the responsibilities of the police, the judiciary and other authorities in dealing with such crimes (‘*Slachtofferschap van online criminaliteit*’; summary in English: ‘Online crime victimization’, WODC, 2018).

With regard to shelters and reception centres for asylum seekers and refugees where children are housed, protected shelters and family refuges, special attention is being paid to children’s digital development. Reception centres and secure family facilities (*gesloten gezinsvoorzieningen*) have specifically allocated spaces where children can use a computer to do their homework or play games. The content is filtered by the centre or the Custodial Institutions Agency (Dienst Justitiele Inrichtingen; DJI) to ensure that unsuitable content is blocked. Children in reception centres also have access to ‘myCoa.nl’ and ‘Tell-me.nl’, special websites containing relevant information for children in refugee reception centres. Staff of the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers are trained to pay special attention to digital literacy, skills and safety, and the safe use of social media (on computers and mobile phones) by children. Depending on the centre and the age of the target group, extra education on sexting and online safety is offered.

The Netherlands took part in the drafting group of the Council of Europe’s Ad Hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child. This group consisted of specialists on children and the digital environment. The group’s task was to draft a Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Member States on Guidelines to promote, protect and fulfil children’s rights in the digital environment. This Recommendation was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 July 2018 (CM/Rec(2018)7).

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations teamed up with the *Donald Duck* comic book and educational media agency EDG Media to develop a special edition that discusses fundamental rights and new technologies such as artificial intelligence. The special edition, *Donald Duck Dives into the Digital World* is available to schools free of charge and includes a package of teaching materials. In addition, all *Donald Duck* subscribers received the special edition as a supplement with the regular weekly publication.