**52nd session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child**

**Theme: Rights of the child and the digital environment**

*Concept note (as of 8 March 2023)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Friday, 10 March 2022, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 to 5 p.m.**  **Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva and online platform (Zoom)**  *(broadcast live and archived on* [*https://media.un.org/en/webtv*](https://media.un.org/en/webtv)*)* |
| **Objectives:** | The annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child will identify the implications of a child rights approach to the digital environment. It will be an opportunity to:   * Build on the Committee on the Rights of the Child general comment No. 25 (2021) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment and assess its implementation. * Assess the gaps and barriers to realizing the rights of the child in the digital environment, paying particular attention to how children can be empowered and protected in this context. * Hear children’s views and experiences of the opportunities and challenges that they face in the digital environment as well as their recommendations to decision-makers, including on how they may take advantage of digital tools in a safe and empowering way. * Clarify how to strengthen accountability for situations in which the rights of the child are not being upheld in the digital environment, particularly considering the implications for legal and policy frameworks. * Define the implications of applying a child rights approach with respect to digital tools and technologies, particularly children’s right to be protected from harm in the digital environment, having their best interests taken as a priority, the right to non-discrimination, and the right to be heard and have their views taken into account, including by the developers of digital platforms used by children and by governmental regulators. * Inform and bring a child rights approach to related United Nations processes on the digital environment, including the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on child rights, General Assembly resolution on the rights of the child, and the development of the Global Digital Compact. |
| **Morning  11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** | ***The challenges and opportunities for the full exercise by children of their rights in the digital environment*** |
| **Chair:** | **H.E. Mr. Václav Bálek**, President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Moderator:** | **Mr. Philip Jaffé**, member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Director of the Centre for Children’s Rights Studies at the University of Geneva |
| **Panellists:** | * **Mr. Volker Türk**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights * **Mariana** (12 years), human rights defender, Colombia * **Kidus** (17 years), child rights advocate, Ethiopia * **Nidhi** (14 years), youth advocate, author and podcaster, India |
| **Afternoon  3 to 5 p.m.** | ***How legal and policy frameworks for upholding children’s rights in the digital environment can be strengthened*** |
| **Chair:** | **H.E. Mr. Marc Bichler**, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening remarks:** | * **Mariana** (12 years), human rights defender, Colombia * **Nidhi** (14 years), youth advocate, author and podcaster, India |
| **Panellists and themes:** | * **Mr. Philip Jaffé**, member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Director of the Centre for Children’s Rights Studies at the University of Geneva * **Baroness Beeban Kidron**,Crossbench Peer in the UK House of Lords and Chair of 5Rights Foundation * **Mr. Konstantinos Karachalios**, Managing Director of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Standards Association * **Ms. Julie Inman Grant**,eSafety Commissioner of Australia *(video message)* |
| **Outcome:** | The discussion will lead to an improved understanding of the barriers to realizing children’s rights in the digital environment, and the implications of applying child rights principles to ensure that children can be empowered and protected online, particularly with the support of strengthened legal and policy frameworks for accountability in this regard. The conversation between diverse participants from industry, civil society, and the United Nations system, as well as children themselves, will facilitate sharing perspectives across generations and among all stakeholders, with a view to identifying priorities to strengthen children’s protection and empowerment in the digital environment. |
| **Mandate:** | In its resolution 7/29 on the rights of the child adopted in March 2008, the Human Rights Council affirmed “its commitment to effectively integrate the rights of the child in its work and that of its mechanisms in a regular, systematic and transparent manner, taking into account specific needs of boys and girls” and “to incorporate into its programme of work sufficient time, at a minimum an annual full-day meeting, to discuss different specific themes on the rights of the child.” Pursuant to its resolution 49/20, the Human Rights Council will focus its 2023 annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child on the theme “the rights of the child in the digital environment”. |
| **Format:** | The duration of the annual full-day meeting will be limited to two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. For both panels, the presentations by the panellists will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two segments. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statement, panellists’ presentations, their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 12 States or observers, 1 national human rights institution and 2 non-governmental organizations.  The list of speakers for both discussions will be established through the online registration system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. |
| **Accessibility:** | In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to promote their full participation in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, both panel discussions will be webcast and made accessible. International sign interpretation and real-time captioning in English will be provided and webcast. During the meetings, participants can access live English captioning on the web page (<https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=CFI-UNOG>). Hearing loops are available for collection from the Secretariat desk. Oral statements may be embossed in Braille from any of the six official languages of the United Nations, upon request and following the procedure described in *The accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities* (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/accessibility>). |
| **Background:** | More children are connecting in the digital environment today than ever before and digital technologies are integral to their lives in low and high-income countries alike. Digital tools are having a definitive impact on how children can exercise their rights, as the explosion of digital technologies creates unprecedented opportunities for them to be informed of their rights and to express themselves, including through social media. Children can use digital technology as a tool for their empowerment by accessing instant information and using it to forge their identity, organize groups contributing to social movements and to express their views widely in a way that has a real global impact. Yet greater access to digital technology also poses real challenges to children’s rights: the digital environment is also the locus of bullying, harassment, censorship, misinformation, screen addiction, harmful marketing targeting children, exclusion, violence, abuse and exploitation of children, and illicit use of children's personal data. With more reliance on digital technologies since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, including for remote schooling, these existing risks for children online have been significantly aggravated.  The rights of every child must be respected, protected and fulfilled in the digital environment, which should support, promote and protect their safe and equitable engagement. Moreover, due to the vulnerabilities associated with their age and developing level of maturity, children need much stronger protection in the digital environment than is presently in place. The multifaceted challenges posed by digital technologies require closer, more decisive cooperation among all stakeholders on the basis of children’s rights – including the right to be protected from harm and have their best interest taken as a priority, the right to non-discrimination, and the right to be heard and have their views taken into account, including by the developers of digital platforms used by children and by governmental regulators. As has been specified by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its general comment No. 25, in all actions regarding the provision, regulation, design, management and use of the digital environment, the best interests of every child must be a primary consideration. |
| **Background documents:** | * [Human Rights Council resolution 49/20](http://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/49/20) of 1 April 2022 on rights of the child: realizing the rights of the child and family reunification * Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 25 (2021) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment ([CRC/C/GC/25](https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-25-2021-childrens-rights-relation)) * 5Rights Foundation, [Our Rights in a Digital Word: A snapshot of children’s views](https://5rightsfoundation.com/uploads/Our%20Rights%20in%20a%20Digital%20World.pdf) * Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the right to privacy in the digital age ([A/HRC/48/31](http://undocs.org/A/HRC/48/31)) * UNICEF (2022), [Legislating for the digital age - Global guide on improving legislative frameworks to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unicef.org%2Freports%2Flegislating-digital-age&data=05%7C01%7Cgina.bergh%40un.org%7Cc342c49d433e4c133d3a08dad43fc788%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638055667668990071%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=y0aa7rlOydmGxq93a9mmX6O0DKJ8CE%2Bt4HN0DIo0fNk%3D&reserved=0) * UNICEF (2020), [Children’s rights-by-design: a new standard for data use by tech companies](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unicef.org%2Fglobalinsight%2Freports%2Fchildrens-rights-design-new-standard-data-use-tech-companies&data=05%7C01%7Cgina.bergh%40un.org%7Cc342c49d433e4c133d3a08dad43fc788%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638055667668990071%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=tzshcwiR8BR1knHeeHhhSovrfErT94S0DQQncqUSiqY%3D&reserved=0) (Issue brief on the duties of tech companies under the Convention on the Rights of the Child) |