



## JOINT STATEMENT

# International Policy and Practice Exchange on Child Protection in the Digital Environment

Ankara, Republic of Türkiye  
21 – 22 April 2026

- ▶ Ministers, heads of delegations and representatives of governments, international organizations, private sector, academia, civil society and children, gathered in Ankara on 21–22 April 2026 at the *International Policy and Practice Exchange on Child Protection in the Digital Environment*. This high-level round table, hosted by the Ministry of Family and Social Services of the Republic of Türkiye, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and UNICEF Türkiye as a crucial opportunity to advance multistakeholder collaboration across sector, countries and regions.
- ▶ The digital environment and technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for learning, participation and development. At the same time, the digital environment exposes children to diverse forms of violence and harm, with devastating and long-lasting consequences. These include online sexual exploitation and abuse; exposure to violent and sexual content; cyberbullying; promotion of suicide and self-harm; radicalization and hate speech; fake news; trafficking and smuggling; recruitment into criminal, armed or violent extremist groups; privacy violations; fraud and identity theft, among others.
- ▶ The threats to children online are increasing, both in scale and complexity, though the true extent of the problem remains unknown. In particular, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence is reshaping online harm to children.
- ▶ Globally, children may experience a continuum of violence across multiple platforms and between online and offline spaces. Moreover, most online crimes against children are not reported and the victims and survivors remain unidentified and unsupported.
- ▶ **There is a need to put children and young people at the heart of the response.** Acknowledging the powerful contribution made by child and youth representatives through this roundtable, children and young people must be meaningfully included in decisions that affect their digital lives.
- ▶ Many actions have been undertaken to address the multiple concerns at global, regional and national levels, and that legislative and judicial developments are strengthening accountability for perpetrators and for digital service providers who play a critical role in shaping children’s digital experiences. However, efforts to date have not yielded the results

that are needed. Responses are lagging behind the rapid changes in the digital environment and in children's access to it.

- ▶ A number of countries around the world are considering age-based restrictions as a tool to protect the children in digital environment. Yet, these efforts must be complemented by a comprehensive and rights-based package that prioritizes children's safety and wellbeing including by addressing harmful design features.
- ▶ The urgent need to seize all opportunities requires identifying concrete steps to further advance the protection of children and their rights in the digital environment. In this regard, it is essential to ensure well-coordinated and child-centered approaches that bridge legislation, policy and practice.
- ▶ To this end, every state, business, civil society, communities, children and young people themselves must act together and continue supporting:
  - **More robust rights-based legal frameworks**, that address all forms of online violence and crimes against children, including through appropriate measures for digital service providers to make their platforms and services safe for children.
  - **Sound governance of industry**, including requiring digital service providers to implement robust and rights-respecting measures to ensure respect for children's safety and privacy by design and default. In addition, technology companies should be encouraged to develop and share digital tools that can enhance children's safety in the digital environment.
  - **Strengthening integrated child protection systems to reinforce families, schools and child protection services**, ensuring child victims, survivors of online violence, to have access to integrated, child-friendly support services, to complaint and reporting mechanisms, and to justice.
  - **Expanded digital literacy and awareness-raising measures**, strengthening children's online safety skills, promoting critical thinking and responsible digital engagement, while also building the capacity of parents, caregivers, educators and other professionals.
  - **Including children as part of the solution**, ensuring their meaningful participation in decisions affecting their digital lives by providing pathways that are safe, inclusive and respectful of their evolving capacities.
  - **International cooperation**, especially in the context of the law enforcement, justice sectors and victim support and which includes support for knowledge sharing, peer exchange and training.
- ▶ The risks children face in digital spaces are real, but so is the momentum for change. This roundtable created a momentum to move decisively from reactive measures toward preventive, rights based action, and to ensure that the digital world works for every child.