

Make digital world safer for children, increase online access to benefit most disadvantaged – UNICEF

11 December 2017 – Governments and the private sector have not kept up with the game-changing pace of digital technologies, exposing children to new risks and harms – both on and offline – and leaving millions of the most disadvantaged behind, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said Monday in a new report.

Pointing out that one in three Internet users worldwide is a child, the agency in its *State of the World’s Children 2017: [Children in a Digital World](#) report, highlights digital divides and explores current debates about the impact of the Internet and social media on children’s safety and well-being.*

“For better and for worse, digital technology is now an irreversible fact of our lives,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake. “In a digital world, our dual challenge is how to mitigate the harms while maximizing the benefits of the internet for every child.”

The report presents UNICEF’s first comprehensive look at the various ways in which digital technology is affecting children’s lives and life chances – identifying dangers as well as opportunities.

It argues that governments and the private sector have not kept up with the pace of change, leaving children exposed to new risks and harms, and leaving behind millions of the most disadvantaged children.

The report explores the benefits that digital technology can offer the most disadvantaged children, including by increasing their access to information; building skills for the digital workplace; and giving them a platform to connect and communicate their views.

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“The Internet was designed for adults, but it is increasingly used by children and young people – and digital technology increasingly affects their lives and futures,” maintained Mr. Lake.

However, the report shows that millions of children are missing out. Around one third of the world’s youth, or 346 million young people, are not online – exacerbating inequities and reducing children’s ability to participate in an increasingly digital economy.

The report also examines how the internet increases children’s vulnerability

to risks and harms, including by misusing their private information, accessing harmful content, and cyberbullying.

The report notes that the ubiquitous presence of mobile devices has made online access for many children less supervised and potentially more dangerous.

Moreover, digital networks, like the 'Dark Web' and cryptocurrencies, are enabling the worst forms of exploitation and abuse, such as trafficking and 'made to order' online child sexual abuse.

The report presents current data and analysis about: children's online usage; the impact of digital technology on their wellbeing; digital "addiction" and the possible effect of screen time on brain development.

According to the report, young people are the most connected age group. Worldwide, they have a 71 per cent presence online compared with 48 per cent of the total population.

However, African youth are the least connected, with around three out of five not online, compared to just one in 25 in Europe.

Approximately 56 per cent of all websites are in English and many children cannot find content they understand or that is culturally relevant.

It also reveals that more than nine in 10 child sexual abuse URLs are hosted in Canada, France, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation and the United States.

The report says that only collective action by governments, the private sector, families and children themselves can help level the digital playing field and make the internet safer and more accessible for children.

Practical recommendations include safeguarding children's privacy and identities online and

putting children at the centre of digital policy.

"Digital policies, practices, and products should better reflect children's needs, children's perspectives and children's voices," Mr. Lake concluded.

[Human Rights Day: UN launches campaign for 70th anniversary of Universal](#)

Declaration

10 December 2017 – The United Nations on Sunday kicked off in Paris, France, a year-long campaign to honor the foundational human rights document, which next year marks its 70th anniversary.

Since the proclamation of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) in 1948, human rights have been one of the three pillars of the United Nations, along with peace and development, said [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres in his message for [Human Rights Day](#), annually observed on 10 December.

As one of the world's most profound and far-reaching international agreements, the Universal Declaration proclaimed the inalienable rights of every human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is the most translated document in the world, available in more than 500 languages.

Mr. Guterres noted that while human rights abuses did not end when the Universal Declaration was adopted, the instrument has helped countless people to gain greater freedom and security, and has also helped to prevent violations, obtain justice for wrongs, and strengthen national and international human rights laws and safeguards.

Despite these advances, the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration are being tested in all regions, he said, citing rising hostility towards human rights and those who defend them by people who want to profit from exploitation and division.

We see hatred, intolerance, atrocities and other crimes. These actions imperil us all, he said, urging people and leaders everywhere to stand up for all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – and for the values that underpin hopes for a fairer, safer and better world for all.

The [year-long campaign](#) started at Palais de Chaillot in Paris on Sunday, with an event also to be held on Monday at UN Headquarters in New York. UN Information Centres around the world will also launch commemorative activities.

VIDEO: In his annual Human Rights Day message, Secretary-General António Guterres calls for translating the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into action.

For his part, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said that thanks to the Universal Declaration, the daily life of millions has been improved, untold human suffering has been prevented and the foundations for a more just world have been laid.

“While its promise is yet to be fulfilled, the very fact that it has stood [the test of time](#) is testament to the enduring universality of its perennial values of equality, justice and human dignity,” he said.

The period leading up to 10 December 2018, the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, will be a year of intense and profound reflection on the continuing and vital importance of each and every one of the 30 articles contained in this extraordinary document.

Today, as World War II and the Holocaust grow distant, that awareness appears to be evaporating at an alarming rate, and the enormous progress that has been achieved through progressive enactment of human rights principles, as laid out in the Universal Declaration, is being increasingly forgotten or willfully ignored, Mr. Zeid said.

He said it is right to honour its achievements and pay tribute to its inspired architects on the 70th anniversary year, but “we should be under no illusions: the legacy of the Universal Declaration is facing threats on many fronts.”

“We must organize and mobilize in defence of human decency, in defence of a better common future... We must take a robust and determined stand: by resolutely supporting the human rights of others, we also stand up for our own rights and those of generations to come,” he said.

[Not enough being done to shield civilians from violence in Somalia – UN report](#)

10 December 2017 – The armed conflict in Somalia continues to exact a heavy toll on civilians, damaging infrastructure and livelihoods, displacing millions of people, and impeding access to humanitarian relief for communities in need, according to a United Nations report launched today in the country’s capital, Mogadishu.

“Ultimately, civilians are paying the price for failure to resolve Somalia’s conflicts through political means,” said the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Somalia, Michael Keating. “And parties to the conflict are simply not doing enough to shield civilians from the violence. This is shameful.”

The [report](#) “Protection of Civilians: Building the Foundation for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Somalia” covers the period from 1 January 2016 to 14 October 2017, and was produced by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) and the UN Assistance Mission

in Somalia ([UNSOM](#)), which Mr. Keating also heads.

During this reporting period, UNSOM documented a total of 2,078 civilian deaths and 2,507 injuries, with 60 per cent of the casualties attributed to Al Shabaab militants, 13 per cent to clan militias, 11 per cent to State actors, including the army and the police, four per cent to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), and 12 per cent to unidentified or undetermined attackers.

Civilians were the victims of unlawful attacks – by being directly targeted and through the use of indiscriminate bomb and suicide attacks – by non-State groups. Such attacks, which are prohibited under international human rights and humanitarian laws, are, in most cases, likely to constitute war crimes, and it is imperative that perpetrators are identified and held accountable, the report notes.

Ultimately, civilians are paying the price for failure to resolve Somalia's conflicts through political means. UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia

The worst incident on a single day was the twin bomb blasts in Mogadishu on 14 October, attributed to Al-Shabaab by Somali government officials and in which at least 512 people are officially recorded to have died as of 1 December, along with 316 injured. The attack received widespread condemnation, including from UNSOM and [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres.

“This barbaric act was the deadliest attack with an improved explosive device in Somalia's history and surely one of the worst ever on the continent, if not the world,” said Special Representative Keating at the report's launch. “Sadly, its impact will be felt for a long time.”

A significant number of recorded civilian casualties – 251 killed and 343 injured – was attributed to clan militias, in areas where federal or state security forces are largely absent. “The drought has intensified clan conflict due to competition over resources. These conflicts are exploited by anti-government elements to further destabilize areas, diminish prospects for lasting peace and weaken civilian protection,” the report states.

Casualties attributed to State actors and AMISOM

It goes on to note that the number of casualties attributed to the Somali National Army and Police, as well as to AMISOM, was significantly smaller than those attributed to Al Shabaab militants.

“Nevertheless, such casualties are of utmost concern as they undermine the Somali population's trust in the Government and the international community, which in turn expands the space in which anti-government elements continue to operate,” said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

While achieving the balance between human rights and security is challenging, he added, the respect of human rights and the protection of civilians are essential as the foundation of a strong, legitimate State that works for the benefit of all its people.

Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency routinely disregards international human rights law when carrying out arrests and detentions, according to the report, which adds that journalists and people suspected of belonging to Al Shabaab are often detained without charge.

The report also flags that information on the conditions of people living under Al Shabaab control is scant. Verifying human rights violations and abuses in those areas remains problematic due to the lack of access and fear of reprisals.

Somalia has been plagued by armed violence for decades, as well as poverty, marginalization, natural hazards, insecurity and political instability. UNSOM is working with the East African country's authorities to support national reconciliation, provide strategic and policy advice on various aspects of peacebuilding and state-building, monitor and report on the human rights situation, and help coordinate the efforts of the international community.

[Peaceful conduct of elections](#) ['historic moment' for Nepal, says UN](#) [chief](#)

9 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has welcomed the holding of the two-phased State and Federal elections and congratulates the people of Nepal for the peaceful conduct of the polls.

These elections mark [a historic moment](#) for Nepal in implementing its federal structure as enshrined in the 2015 Constitution, said a statement issued Friday by Mr. Guterres' Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric, following Thursday's completion of the second phase of voting.

Media reports said elections were intended to complete the Himalayan country's transition to democracy under the 2015 Constitution, which declared Nepal a federal state.

The Secretary-General hopes that all parties will maintain the same spirit in the next stages of the electoral process, the statement added.

The Secretary-General encouraged the Government, political parties and civil society leaders to continue their efforts towards furthering inclusive and

representative governance, the statement said, expressing the UN's readiness to support such efforts.

According to UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 22 November 2006 signaled [the end of a conflict](#) which had claimed over 16,000 lives, displaced large numbers of Nepalese and further strained the economy of one of the world's poorest nations.

From 2007 to early 2011, DPA provided oversight and support to the UN Mission in Nepal ([UNMIN](#)), which assisted the Himalayan nation's transition to peace following a decade of armed conflict.

UNMIN played an important support role in the successful holding, in April 2008, of an historic Constituent Assembly election that was a major milestone in the peace process. UNMIN withdrew from Nepal on 15 January 2011.

['Genocide should not be part of our present or our future,' UN adviser says on day to honour victims](#)

9 December 2017 – The United Nations office that coordinates efforts on genocide prevention has launched an appeal for Member States to ratify the 1948 genocide convention by the end of 2018 if they haven't done so.

“Genocide [does not happen by accident](#); it is deliberate, with warning signs and precursors,” UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Saturday in his message for the International Day of [Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide](#) and of the Prevention of this Crime.

“Often it is the culmination of years of exclusion, denial of human rights and other wrongs. Since genocide can take place in times of war and in times of peace, we must be ever-vigilant,” he added.

The [International Day](#), which was established by the UN General Assembly in 2015, has since been observed annually on 9 December, the day when back in 1948 the [Convention](#) for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted.

To date, a total of 149 States, including one non-UN Member State, have ratified the treaty. With 2018 being the 70th anniversary year of the Convention, the appeal invites the remaining 45 States to ratify the Convention by the end of next year.

The Convention defines genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, including killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Despite the clear definition of genocide in the Convention, as well as improved understanding of the risks, genocide has recurred, multiple times, Mr. Guterres said.

We are still reacting rather than preventing, and acting only when it is often too late. We must do more to respond early and keep violence from escalating. This is the obligation of the State parties to the Convention, one and all, the UN chief stated, calling upon all States to ratify the Genocide Convention by its 70th anniversary in 2018 and, in so doing, help liberate humanity from this cruel and odious crime.

In New York on Friday, the UN [Office on the Prevention of Genocide](#) and the Responsibility to Protect held an event on the eve of the sixty-ninth anniversary of the Genocide Convention.

Genocide should not be part of our present or our future. It is not an accident, nor is it inevitable. It is our inaction, or our ineffectiveness in addressing the warning signs, that allows it to become a reality, Adama Dieng, the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, said in his keynote speech to the event, which was held at UN Headquarters.

A reality where people are dehumanized and persecuted for who they are, or who they represent. A reality of great suffering, cruelty and of inhumane acts that have at the basis unacceptable motivations the thirst for power or resources, distorted views of identity supremacy, extremist ideologies, selfish interests, he added.

The crime of genocide did not start with the Genocide Convention and, unfortunately, it also did not end with it, Mr. Dieng said.

Throughout history there have been many events that could have been qualified as genocide [...] and even now we are confronted with some situations that, if put to the test in a court of law, could also be labelled as such, he said, urging 20 States from Africa, 18 from Asia, and seven from the Americas to ratify the convention so that he will have good news to report at next year's event.