



WSIS
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Session Outcome Document

Children First: An Intergenerational Policy Dialogue on AI Governance, Social Media, and the Future of Childhood

eWorldwide Group

Monday, 6th July 2026 at 15.00 - 15.45

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2026/Agenda/Session/170>

Key Issues discussed:

- The impact of technology on childhood development: The discussion examined how social media, AI and digital technologies are influencing children's behaviour, concentration, cognitive development, emotional wellbeing and relationships.
- The changing ways in which children learn and influence one another: Children increasingly learn how to navigate the digital world from their peers, often without sufficient adult guidance or understanding of the risks and harms they may encounter.
- The digital knowledge gap among parents and caregivers: Many parents remain insufficiently aware of the dangers children face online, highlighting the need for greater awareness, education and support to help families navigate the digital age.
- The evolving nature of online risks and the limitations of current regulation: Existing laws, policies and regulatory frameworks are not always sufficiently robust, up to date or effectively implemented to address rapidly evolving challenges, including AI-enabled harms.
- The absence of children's experiences from policy and governance: The discussion highlighted the importance of ensuring that children and young people's lived experiences and perspectives are meaningfully reflected in the policies and governance frameworks that shape their digital lives.
- The accountability and responsibility of technology companies: Concerns were raised about whether existing mechanisms are sufficient to hold technology companies accountable when the design or operation of their platforms contributes to serious harm, including harm to children's mental and physical wellbeing.
- The commercialisation of children's attention and vulnerability: The discussion questioned business models that can incentivise the maximisation of children's engagement, attention and

data for commercial gain, raising fundamental questions about corporate responsibility and the need for a genuine duty of care.

- The relationship between online and offline harms: The dialogue explored the connections between cyberbullying, online abuse and real-world physical and psychological harm, including concerns about AI systems and chatbots potentially reinforcing harmful behaviour or encouraging children to harm themselves or others.
- The inability of regulation and policy to keep pace with a rapidly evolving threat landscape: The discussion highlighted the growing gap between the speed at which AI, social media and other digital technologies are evolving and the ability of governments, regulators and policymakers to respond. New forms of online harm and increasingly complex threats are emerging faster than policies and regulatory frameworks can be developed, updated and implemented.
- Policy recommendations to address the impact of AI on children's health, safety, and development governments, regulators, and international bodies should adopt a holistic framework that i) Embeds child-centered governance and regulation; ii) Mandates safe and age-appropriate AI design; iii) Enforces privacy, data protection, and transparency'; iv) Prioritizes mental health, cognitive, and emotional development and v) Expands education, digital literacy, and caregiver support

Key Outcomes of the session

Key Insights and Findings:

- Children's wellbeing must be placed at the centre of digital governance. Technology, AI and social media must be designed and governed with the safety, dignity, development and wellbeing of children as a fundamental priority.
- Children's voices must be meaningfully included in policymaking. Children and young people should not simply be the subjects of policies that affect them; their lived experiences, perspectives and insights must inform the development of policies, regulations and governance frameworks.
- Parents and caregivers need greater support to raise children in the digital age. There is an urgent need for accessible information, digital literacy and practical guidance to help parents understand online risks and support their children in navigating increasingly complex digital environments.
- Regulation and policy must become more agile and responsive. Governments and regulators need mechanisms that enable policies, standards and legislation to evolve at the pace of technological change and respond effectively to new and emerging forms of harm.

- Technology companies must be subject to stronger accountability and a genuine duty of care. Companies should be responsible for understanding and mitigating foreseeable risks arising from the design, development and deployment of their technologies, particularly where children are involved.
- Children must not be treated as a source of revenue through the exploitation of their attention, data or vulnerabilities. Business models and platform designs must be challenged where commercial incentives may conflict with children's safety, healthy development and wellbeing.
- Online and offline harms must be addressed as interconnected. Cyberbullying, online abuse, algorithmic amplification and AI-enabled harms can have serious real-world consequences. Effective prevention and intervention therefore require a more holistic understanding of the relationship between digital experiences and physical and psychological harm.
- A whole-of-society approach is essential. Protecting children in the digital age requires collaboration between children and young people, parents, educators, technology companies, governments, regulators, law enforcement, civil society and international organisations.

Announcements, Launches, or New Initiatives Presented During the Session

- Expansion of the Children First network: The Children First intergenerational network will expand to include more children and young people from across the Nordic countries and Switzerland, strengthening the diversity and reach of youth voices in discussions on AI governance, social media and the future of childhood.
- Closer collaboration with schools: A new initiative will focus on working more closely with schools to raise awareness among children, teachers and educators about emerging digital harms, online safety and the impact of AI and social media. The initial work will begin in Switzerland and England, with the ambition to expand internationally.
- Launch of the Digital Code of Conduct for Young People: The Digital Code of Conduct, co-created by young people from different countries, will be made available online for young people to access, use and share. The initiative provides a youth-informed framework for encouraging safer, more respectful and ethical behaviour in digital spaces.
- Launch of Parenting in the Age of Digital Anxiety: Raising Resilient and Confident Children in an AI-Driven World: The book will provide parents and caregivers with practical insights and guidance to help them understand the rapidly changing digital environment and support children in developing resilience, confidence and healthy relationships with technology.
- Commitment to further research on toxic gaming and its impact on young people: Further research will be undertaken to better understand how toxic gaming environments may influence

young people's attitudes, behaviour, emotional development and social interactions, including potential impacts on developing brains.

- Further research into the impact of technology on child development: Additional research will explore how exposure to digital technologies and online content may influence child development, particularly in relation to hostility, anger, aggression, desensitisation to violence, and the potential normalisation or addictive consumption of abuse and graphic content.
- Establish a new collaboration with Kenya to strengthen regional partnerships and advance shared objectives.
- Expand youth-focused collaboration with Ghana through eWWG initiatives, ensuring continuity of ongoing efforts.
- Prioritize resilience-building for children in the evolving landscape of AI-related risks.
- Safeguard young people as artificial intelligence becomes increasingly sophisticated, by promoting awareness, protection, and proactive engagement.

Agreements, Collaborations, or Commitments Made

- Continued expansion of the Children First network: The network will continue to grow, with a commitment to engage more children and young people from additional countries and regions, including Ghana, Kenya and Türkiye, while strengthening participation from the Nordic countries and Switzerland.
- Strengthened collaboration with the Mothers' Network: The Children First initiative will work closely with the Mothers' Network (professional women in AI, cyber, resilience, risk and law) established in parallel, recognising the important role of parents and caregivers in understanding and responding to the challenges children face in the digital age. Particular efforts will be made to deepen collaboration with the networks around the world.
- Expansion of international partnerships and collaborations: New collaborations will be developed with organisations, schools, educators, researchers, policymakers and youth networks in additional countries, creating a broader international community focused on children, AI governance and digital wellbeing.
- Continued commitment from eWorldwide Group: eWorldwide Group will continue to support the engagement and empowerment of young people as active contributors to the digital future. This includes supporting young people to co-create initiatives, programmes, knowledge resources and practical solutions that strengthen their capabilities and influence in shaping the technologies that affect their lives.
- Formal documentation of recommendations for policymakers: The recommendations emerging from the Children First dialogue will be formally documented and shared with policymakers and

other relevant stakeholders, with a particular focus on ensuring that policies and governance frameworks address the impact of AI on child development, wellbeing and mental health.

- **Commitment to further research on technology and children's mental health:** The participants committed to expanding research and understanding of the impact of technology particularly AI on children's mental health, emotional wellbeing, cognitive development and social behaviour.
- **Development of a longer-term research and knowledge agenda:** Further collaboration will explore the relationship between AI, social media, online harms and child development, including the effects of exposure to hostility, aggression, violence, abuse and other harmful content, with the aim of generating evidence to inform better policy, education and prevention.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Actions (outlining practical and actionable recommendations to support WSIS implementation towards 2035)

- **Embed Children's Wellbeing in Digital Governance** Ensure that all AI and digital policies prioritize the safety, dignity, and healthy development of children, making their wellbeing a central pillar of governance frameworks.
- **Institutionalize Youth Participation in Policymaking** Establish formal mechanisms for children and young people to contribute their lived experiences and perspectives to WSIS-related policy processes, ensuring inclusivity and relevance.
- **Strengthen Global and Regional Collaborations** Expand partnerships with countries such as Kenya and Ghana, alongside broader international networks, to build resilience against AI-enabled harms and foster collective action across regions.
- **Accelerate Agile Regulation and Accountability** Develop adaptive regulatory frameworks that evolve at the pace of technological change, while enforcing stronger accountability and a genuine duty of care from technology companies to protect children.