

**Children's Rights  
in the Digital World  
– For and by  
Young People**

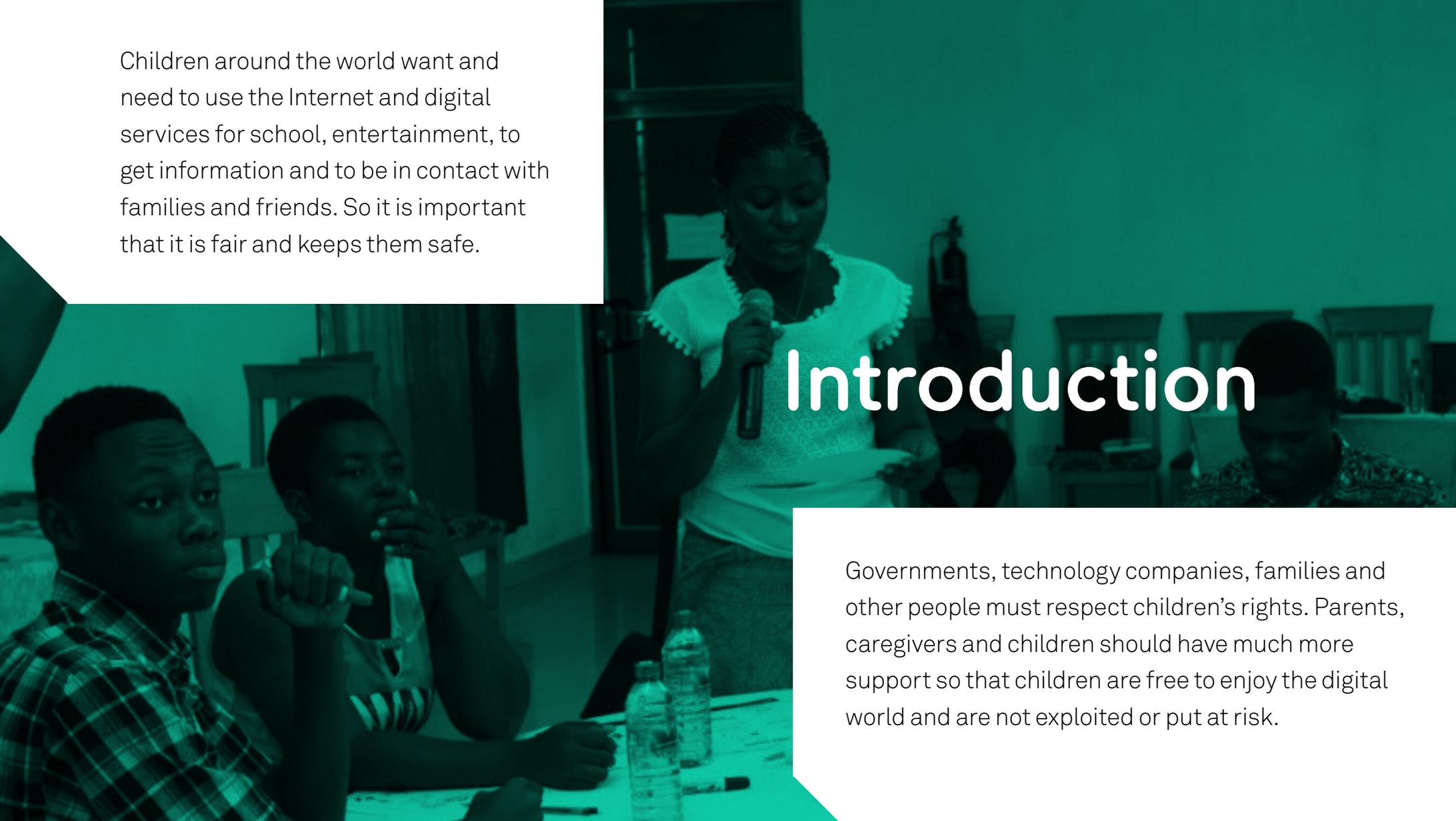
Over **30 years ago (1989)** the United Nations wrote the Convention on the Rights of the Child to set out in writing the freedoms and protections that countries must give children and young people under 18 years old. **That was the same year the internet was invented.** This means that **the people who wrote the Convention had no idea of the changes that digital technology would bring to young people's lives.**

Now, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who look after the Convention, have written down **how children should be treated in the digital world.** This shorter version was written by young people between the ages of 11-17 to make it easier for other young people to understand.

When the word child is used it includes any person between the age of 0–17.

By the way, the UN Convention on the Rights of the child is the most signed agreement in history: 196 countries at last count.

Children around the world want and need to use the Internet and digital services for school, entertainment, to get information and to be in contact with families and friends. So it is important that it is fair and keeps them safe.

A woman in a white top is speaking into a microphone at a meeting. In the foreground, two men are seated at a table, looking towards her. The scene is dimly lit with a teal tint.

# Introduction

Governments, technology companies, families and other people must respect children's rights. Parents, caregivers and children should have much more support so that children are free to enjoy the digital world and are not exploited or put at risk.

# General Principles

There are four principles of children's rights:

Not all children are the same. At different ages children need different support and freedoms\*. The digital world must take account of this.

\*as children get older they have more understanding and experience so should be able to do and see a broader range of things – experts call this evolving capacities.



## Non-discrimination

Children must be protected from discrimination, and treated fairly whoever they are.



## Best interests of the child

When making any decision, adults – including governments and businesses – must do what is best for children rather than themselves.



## Survival and Development

Children must be supported to grow up into what they want to be without harmful interference.



## Respect for children's views

Children have opinions that must be taken into account in all the things they care about.

# How this should be done:

Make **rules** that make it clear that children's rights are protected online.

Make sure that those rules are put into **action** and that what is promised really happens.

Make sure everyone **understands** the rules, including government officials, businesses, parents, teachers and children themselves.

Make sure that everyone **acts** according to the rules, and that children are able to complain and have things put right if there's a problem.

Make sure that businesses do not put making money above children's **rights**.

Make sure that there are **consequences** for organisations or people who break the rules and that children understand what action has been taken.

# Getting information, freedom and being private

Children want and need to be in the digital world and they have the right to:

→ **access information** information that children find online should be true, relevant and unlimited, unless it is likely to cause them harm.

→ **freedom of expression** children should be able to say what they think, but children, organisations or individuals should not spread untrue information and cause harm to children.

→ **freedom of thought** companies and other people must not push children to do or think things for money or at the request of others.

→ **freedom of association** children want to spend time with other people and participate in their community. Governments or businesses should not interfere with that, except for reasons of safety.

→ **privacy** children must have privacy to act and grow in the way that they wish; this includes some privacy from parents, school, governments, businesses and each other.

→ **birth registration and right to identity** children may need to prove who they are, so digital identity should be available, but not used in ways that are unfair or attack a child's privacy or other rights.



## Violence against children

Children have the right to protection from violence. The digital world should protect children from violence, including violence for political reasons, acts encouraging self-harm (suicide and eating disorders), and images of sexual violence or sexual contact with adults. Children need to have safe places to go to complain or to get help when they need it. Governments and businesses should ensure that children have places in the digital world where they can explore freely knowing they will be treated fairly for their age.



## Family life

Most children live with their family, some are in places without families, but they all have the right to be looked after until they are 18. Families can use technology to keep in touch and to get advice, but governments and business should not assume that all children have family support or families that can access digital advice so they should make sure that the digital world looks after children's needs carefully and that families and caregivers have the information they need.



## Children with disabilities

Government and business should make sure that children with disabilities are able to join the digital world. Subtitles and voice support, and any other help they might need, should be the normal settings so they can be used or switched off, rather than children with disabilities having to find them and turn them on.



## Health and wellbeing

Health information must be true and health services and advice for children must be private and confidential. No digital service should be allowed that interferes with a child's wellbeing, and all health services that engage with children must be checked by governments to make sure that they put children first.



## Education, play and rest

Education can be made more fun and effective by using digital tools, but it is important that no-one is left out.

Businesses that offer education tools must respect children's privacy. Governments and schools should check that the tools are as good as they claim to be.



Children need to understand the digital world but this must include more than e-safety. Children want to understand how the digital world works and who decides what they see as well as what they can do on their phones and computers. This should be taught in school alongside technical skills. Having free time is important, and parents should be encouraged to understand better what children want to do and see in their free time online. It is important to explore and engage with the digital world, but it is also important to see people face to face.

## Businesses and governments

The rules for businesses should be the same in the digital world as everywhere else. If you cannot sell something to a child in a shop, you should not do that online. If you are lying or cheating, if you bully or hurt, governments must make the same punishment online and offline. Children should not have their personal information, including their photos, private conversations, or videos and comments, used to make money.



## Digital rights for all children

Children all over the world deserve the same protections. Digital services should be accessible to all children and available in all the languages that children speak, and there should be more stuff designed especially for children of different ages and living in different situations. All children and adults should know about children's rights in the digital world.

