



Statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children on the

Safer Internet Day (11 February 2025)

Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh

Special Rapporteur calls for immediate action towards a safer internet

Geneva (11 February 2025) – In commemorating the Safer Internet Day, the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh, calls for immediate action from all stakeholders towards shaping a safer internet, while centering child and youth voices.

Children today are spending more time in the digital environment than ever before. One in three Internet users worldwide are estimated to be children, with a child going online for the first time every half a second.

“Existing and emerging forms of technology, including the internet, offer a wide array of opportunities to protect and uphold children’s rights. Children now have access to a wide array of information from a plurality of local, national and international sources. They can more easily express their ideas and opinions. They can meet, exchange and deliberate with peers, decision makers and others who share their interests,” Singhateh said.

In her latest [report](#) to the General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur examines how the misuse of technologies exacerbates and amplifies children’s exposure to risks, harms and all forms of sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. It is estimated that approximately 302 million children worldwide have been victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse in the past year.

“If all the rapid technological advancements and sophisticated criminal activities are left unchecked, this can have long-lasting consequences, damage reputations and result to a permanent record of the abuse and violation of the dignity, privacy and sexual integrity of child victims and survivors,” Singhateh warned. “Immediate action is needed towards more effective regulation, product safety and implementation of comprehensive public health approaches.”

“In responding to this problem, all stakeholders – governments, law enforcement agencies, civil society and technology companies – must put children and youth at the centre of all decision-making and technical standard setting processes,” the expert highlighted.

Children and youth voices are paramount to shaping a safer internet. They must be empowered to share their ideas and knowledge about harmful behaviours and ways to report and prevent them. Their opinions must be taken into consideration, especially in the design, deployment and operation of technological products and services.

“Children have the right to feel safe in all spaces, wherever they are, offline and online. It is important to ensure that children and young people become agents of their own lives and have the means to protect themselves and their peers,” Singhateh added.

“The 2025 theme for today ‘Together for a Better Internet’ is a good reminder that safer internet starts from all of us – children, young people and adults alike,” Singhateh concluded.

ENDS

Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh (The Gambia) is [the UN Special Rapporteur on sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.](#)

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