UNICEF

Topic A: "Digital Vulnerabilities: Protecting Children in the Age of Social Media"

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Welcoming letter

Welcome delegates to the CFMUN.

We as your moderator and chair are very happy to have you as a delegate in the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Committee (UNICEF).

The committee will focus on finding solutions for problems that affect children's and youth rights and their way of living globally.

We encourage each of you as delegates to present the ideas and perspectives of your nations, and to remember that this should contribute by bringing positive changes on a global scale. It is important that as a committee, all the focus goes into the well being of children and youth everywhere, making sure the solutions lead to meaningful results.

Sincerely,
Lourdes Rosales and Valentina Orendain
Moderator and Chair of UNICEF

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I. Committee Background

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was created on December 11th, 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly.
Created with the purpose of providing emergency support, like food and healthcare to mothers and children that were affected by World War II.

UNICEF's purpose nowadays, besides working on long-term projects such as looking forward to the protection of children's rights and well-being from more than 190 countries, is also to work in emergencies for the most vulnerable children who suffer from natural disasters, wars or poverty. (UNICEF., 2018).

II. Introduction to the Topic

Social media is a great way to communicate, get access to several information, new ideas, etc. But, as it has positive effects at the society, it is also having a serious negative impact at young people.

It offers a type of appearance, which supposes to be attractive, but that at the end where it leads, is to constant comparisons. Getting to the point that social media such as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook are causing an increase on loneliness feelings, and low self-esteem in young people.

Increase of cyberbullying is also talking place, a significant amount of teenagers have reported that they have been harassed online.

Another problem of the inadequate usage of it is that it can bring sleep issues, due to the fact that at night a lot of adolescents spend time using social media, without resting as they should.

III. Evolution of the Topic

The relation that children and adolescents have with social media, and the content they see changes rapidly, being a matter of weeks or even days...

The availability of smartphones impulsed the situation of children and youth being present on a social media world. Because now it is not just a computer, but several screens, that can be easily taken anywhere, that can be of them, friends, adults, etc., where they can be exposed to inappropriate content for them.

Another factor that puts children and adolescents at risk, are the familiar situation, lack of time, the work of the parents or other situations, that allow them to be present on social media without the supervision of an adult who takes care of them online.

III. Evolution of the Topic

Which expose them to very dangerous situations, since seeing inappropriate content to being in contact with dangerous strangers that may want to harm them in several aspects.

Another risk that they are exposed to suffer is cyberbullying, which is a situation where the victim is harassed, abused, and harmed continuoulsy by another person through online media over a period of time.

According to the statistics of a government:
- 61% of the children uses a phone to surf in the internet.
- Their favorite content are musical videos. (Sistema Nacional de Protección de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes., 2019).

IV. Relevant Events

A. Panorama

The COVID-19 pandemic provoked people, including children, a significant increase on the technology usage.

According to a study, children and adolescents probably used them to face the challenges that this hard times brought with, such as depression or anxiety.

At the same time, it was something important for them to be supervised by their parents and it existed the necessity of doing other things as well at the outside for example as well. (Cerniglia, L., Cimino, S., Mesce, M., & Ragona, A., 2022).

B. Points of View

United States: They see it as an important topic, and are at the process of making a law that prohibits children under 16 years old to have social media, meanwhile some people argue that it must be the parents' decision.

IV. Relevant Events

As well, they suggest that all the information that this apps collected from underages must be eliminated. (Voz de América., 2024).

China: This country is taking care, not only of social media, but of internet usage of children and teenagers in general, China is proposing the "minors mode", which involves time limiting depending one the age, and availability restrictions of the hours internet can be used. (Dobberstein, L., 2024).

United Kingdom: The UK is advocating also for children's safety, at this country it is currently in consideration to ban children under 16 years the use of social media, as well, the technology secretary announced that an study to know the impact technology is provoking on young people is going to take place. (BBC., 2024).

France: French's "digital majority" is of 15 years old, which means that before that age social media can not be used.

IV. Relevant Events

The Education Minister says all the European Union must follow Australia's example, where people under 16 years are not allowed to have social media. (Haeck, P., 2024).

Russia: At Russia, there still not an official restriction of age to have social media, but there has been a proposal, and there is a possibility they prohibit it for children under 14 years old. (Hüseynzadə, C., 2024).

V. UN and External Actions

The United Nations is currently working through different programmes and initiatives on all this topics, paying special attention on cybersecurity, cyberbullying, human trafficking, and internet for trust, in order to look for the protection and well-being of children all around the world.

UNICEF committee plays an important role, especially on topics of cyberbullying, the committee has even teamed up with social media companies. (United Nations., n.d.).

- Some countries have improved their legislative and policy frameworks, services and infrastructure to avoid online harms.
- INHOPE hotlines processed 18,684 reports in 2023, from which 12,416 were discovered as illegal.

V. UN and External Actions

- Tech Matters improved their child helpline, where childhood and youth can easily receive help in 15 countries around the world. (Safe Online., 2023).

VI. Conclusion

As it can be analyzed, at this social media age, there are a lot of topics to be discussed, and a lot of matter to be solved. Due to the fact that as it can be seen, it is not just about Instagram or TikTok hours, but this age comes with a lot of challenges for the children and youth.

It it the use of a screen, of internet, technology, plus social media.

And the risks that children and youth run nowadays are several, and some of them really dangerous, it is not just about the sleeping problems that the introduction talked about, but this can get even to kidnappings.

It is a matter where parents need to be involved, but what happens if parents do not know or can not get involved?

It is a challengeful topic that needs to be addressed immediately!

VII. Committee Focus

- What factors are causing the issues?
- Who are the most affected ones?
- What is the most important thing to solve immediately?
- Who needs to be involved in the solutions?
- Are age restrictions for social media usage important? How to deal with freedom of decisions?
- How can the committee get to an integral solution for protecting children comprehensively?
- Should the solutions be the same worldwide?

VIII. Participation List

- Dominican Republic
- French Republic
- Islamic Republic of Iran
- Islamic Republic of Mauritania
- Japan
- Kingdom of Spain
- Lao People's Democratic Republic
- People's Republic of China
- Plurinational State of Bolivia
- Republic of Colombia
- Republic of Ecuador
- Republic of El Salvador
- Republic of Equatorial Guinea
- Republic of India
- Republic of Mozambique
- Russian Federation
- State of Eritrea
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- United Republic of Tanzania
- United States of America

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