Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child

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We, the signing parties, supporting the respect, protection and fulfilment of child rights in the context of artificial intelligence (AI), urge States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child ("the Convention") and its Optional Protocols, United Nations (UN) bodies, international organizations, business enterprises[1], civil society and other relevant stakeholders to take action to ensure that AI is designed, developed, deployed and governed in a way that respects, protects and promotes child rights, particularly by ensuring the recommendations set forth below.

We come together to address the urgent need for a child rights-based approach[2] to the design, development, deployment and governance of AI and to recall the Convention and its Optional Protocols, CRC general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, and all other relevant documents[3].

A child means every human being below the age of 18 years, and children constitute a group of distinct rights holders under international law, whose physical, social, emotional and cognitive development underpins their evolving capacities, namely the fact that they are gradually gaining maturity and the capacity to exercise their rights independently from adults[4].

AI refers to a diverse set of technologies and techniques that enable computer systems to perform tasks typically associated with human intelligence.

The rapid advancements in information and communication technology (ICT), including AI, are fundamentally changing the world and affecting present and future generations of children[5]. They have created unprecedented opportunities for children and for the realization of their rights as enshrined in the Convention and its Optional Protocols.

At the same time, AI can pose profound challenges to the realization of the rights of the child. Risks extend both to direct interactions between children and AI systems and to the ways in which AI systems impact children indirectly.

Another challenge in the rapidly evolving field of AI is the lack of training and capacity building tailored to each stakeholder involved in the design, development, deployment and governance of AI. This includes the lack of AI literacy among children, teachers, parents and caregivers, as well as the need for technical training for policy-makers and governments on AI frameworks, data protection methods and child rights impact assessments.

Most AI-supported tools and applications, along with their underlying models, techniques and systems, are not designed with children and their well-being in mind. The responsibility of technology companies to respect the rights of the child is a vital bridge towards achieving better outcomes for children in relation to the digital environment.

The Convention and its Optional Protocols are a framework for the protection of children's rights regardless of the technology involved, but they do not directly address AI in relation to the rights of the child. CRC general comment No. 25 (2021) acknowledges AI as part of the digital environment in which the rights of the child apply, and many of its provisions are relevant to AI. There is nonetheless a need to consolidate existing guidance and to provide further guidance, where needed, to inform effective regulation on the part of States, to ensure full respect of and protection for the rights of the child in relation to the specific challenges and opportunities related to AI.

Recommendations

1   Child rights-based AI governance[6] by States[7]

States are urged to:

a)   Undertake all necessary legislative, administrative and other measures, including policies and programmes at international, national and local levels, to guarantee the effective governance of AI with the aim of promoting the child as a rights holder[8], as well as to respect, protect and promote the rights of the child in the context of AI.

b)   Define the relevant governmental entities with a clear authority to protect and promote the rights of the child in the context of AI.

c)   Use the legislative[9], oversight, budgetary and public relations functions of parliaments in order to promote and protect the rights of the child in the context of AI.

d)   Collect appropriate data, and disaggregate, analyse and use such data in the planning of policies and programmes with regard to AI and the rights of the child.

e)   Put in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to identify, assess, prevent and mitigate risks posed by AI systems[10], including child rights impact assessments[11], and ensure that assessments are accessible to the wider public, including children, in age-appropriate manner and in a language they understand.

f)   Allocate sufficient budget for activities relevant to the realization of the rights of the child in the context of AI.

g)   Enhance coordination and cooperation between all relevant public and private stakeholders, including by fostering collaboration between governments, international organizations, technical standard-setting bodies, business enterprises, civil society, academia and children at local, national and international levels, focusing on developing common norms and standards, including consistent and contextualized recognized norms for AI.

h)   Ensure that AI systems, tools and platforms that may be used by children are designed, developed, deployed and governed with the rights of the child at their core, including children's dignity and best interests and the principle of non-discrimination throughout the lifecycle of AI.

i)   Guarantee access to child-friendly justice[12] and effective remedies for violations of the rights of the child resulting from activities within the lifecycle of AI systems[13], tools and platforms.

j)   Regularly review policies and technical standards, ensuring that they remain responsive to critical existing and new AI architectures.

2   Child rights-based AI governance by UN bodies and other international and regional organizations in accordance with international law[14]

UN bodies and other international and regional organizations are urged to:

a)   Integrate the rights of the child in an explicit, systematic and sustained manner in all related internal and external policies, strategies, plans and approaches concerning AI.

b)   Create or capacitate specifically dedicated units or focal points responsible for coordination, protection and promotion of the rights of the child in the AI context within the organization.

c)   Elaborate further child rights-based guidance and standards, and establish ethical AI practices to ensure that AI systems, tools and platforms are designed, developed, deployed and governed in a way that respects and promotes the rights of the child.

3   Responsibility, accountability and transparency

a)   States should protect against child rights violations in the context of AI within their territory and/or jurisdiction by third parties, including business enterprises. States should also set out clearly the expectation that all business enterprises domiciled in their territory and/or jurisdiction respect children's rights, throughout their operations with respect to the development and deployment of AI[15].

b)   States put legal frameworks in place in order to ensure the appropriate civil, administrative and criminal responsibility of individuals and of public and private legal entities, proportional to the nature and severity of actions or omissions, to prevent and mitigate harm caused to children through AI systems, tools and platforms.[16]

c)   States and business enterprises that design, develop, deploy and govern AI should ensure transparency about how their AI systems, tools and platforms work at each stage of the lifecycle of AI[17].

d)   States and business enterprises that design, develop, deploy or govern AI should establish accountability mechanisms for any violation of the rights of the child caused by their AI systems resulting from activities within the lifecycle of AI systems[18], tools and platforms. This includes providing child-friendly mechanisms for child users, their parents or other caregivers to report issues and taking responsibility for addressing such issues[19].

e)   Business enterprises that design, develop and deploy AI shall conduct regular audits and child rights impact assessments of their AI systems, tools and platforms to prevent, identify and mitigate any actual and potential

impacts on the rights of the child, in line with their responsibilities under the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights[20]. This can refer to embedding safeguards to ensure age-appropriate inputs and outputs, deploying classifiers for harmful content and testing against specific use cases for children, including through adversarial testing[21].

f) Civil society organizations are encouraged to be actively involved in oversight and accountability processes, including through participation in advisory bodies, AI ethics committees and regulatory consultations to advocate child rights-based AI governance.

4 Child safety

a) Prevent and address all forms of violence against children and child exploitation committed through or with the support of AI systems, tools and platforms. This refers to physical, sexual and mental violence, including gender-based violence, cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content and exploitation, AI-generated content that propagates hate speech, incites violence or promotes child labour, child-trafficking, recruitment and use of children, and killing and maiming *inter alia* in armed conflict situations. Harmful content may include deepfakes and other AI-generated deceptive media, hate speech, violent graphic material, child sexual abuse content, forced child begging, misinformation or disinformation targeting children, and content promoting self-harm, eating disorders, use of drugs or other harmful substances, gambling or other algorithmically amplified harmful narratives.

b) States explicitly criminalize, investigate, appropriately sanction and bring to justice perpetrators of all forms of online child sexual abuse or exploitation committed through or with the support of AI systems, tools and platforms, including those related to AI-generated or AI-modified child sexual abuse material, child labour, including commercial sexual exploitation of children or for the production of child sexual exploitation material or for sexual performances, and solicitation or grooming for the purpose of committing a sexual offence against a child as defined in the legislation. Any measure to protect children from exposure to certain types of content, including content that may damage children's mental or physical health, must be in line with the conditions for restricting the right to freedom of expression under international human rights law and designed in accordance with children's evolving capacities.

c) States can consider requiring business enterprises, particularly for AI-driven platforms, including social media, educational technologies, video streaming and gaming, to adopt age assurance mechanisms, consistent with data protection and safeguarding requirements, where such mechanisms are necessary and proportionate to ensure children are protected from online harms related to AI.

d) AI-based systems, tools and platforms likely to impact children must embed privacy-by-design and safety approaches that limit the exposure of children to inappropriate or harmful content, contact, conduct or contract, including by incorporating child safety filters that restrict access to violent or harmful material. Any restriction on the right of the child to freedom of expression and information should be lawful, necessary and proportionate and should not be used to restrict children's access to age-appropriate information in the digital environment.

e) AI-powered marketing tools or recommendation algorithms must be designed, developed and deployed in a way that does not target children with harmful or illegal content.

f) AI that mimics human interaction must include specific in-design safeguards to prevent unhealthy emotional attachment by children.

g) AI models that proactively address child safety risks, including by responsibly sourcing training datasets, are those that are accessible and adaptable and that are developed, built and trained incorporating iterative stress-testing strategies and proactive safeguards against adversarial misuse in the development process.

h) Appropriate safeguards are implemented to prevent harm to children through the use of AI in the military domain in line with international humanitarian and human rights law, including by ensuring that AI systems are subject to strict human oversight and control in all decisions involving hostilities or the use of force, that human judgement remains central in the decision-making process and that AI technologies cannot be weaponized or misused in ways that disproportionately affect children, such as through the use of autonomous weapons in conflict zones where children may be at risk.

i) AI systems, tools and platforms must be leveraged with a proactive approach to child safety, including early detection of harmful content coupled with human oversight. Online platforms or social networks should detect harmful behaviours related to AI, such as cyberbullying, exploitation and grooming, ensuring that users causing harm to children are identified at an earlier stage and prevented from causing damage. Human oversight is indispensable, and all restrictions should be considered in light of the protection of children's rights to freedom of expression and privacy.

j) States provide child-friendly and confidential reporting mechanisms specifically capacitated in the context of AI for children.

k) States ensure multisectoral and multidisciplinary services specifically capacitated to the AI context, including quality and specialized psychology and social work services for child victims of violence.

l) States ensure specialized services for children in conflict with the law who are affected by AI systems, tools and platforms.

5 Data protection and privacy

a) Legislative, administrative and other policy measures on fair, rights-based and age-appropriate privacy should be adopted to ensure data protection in design standards and to guarantee that children's privacy is respected and protected by all organizations and in all environments that process their data. Such policies and legislation should be communicated transparently and in a child-friendly manner and should include strong safeguards, independent oversight and access to remedies.

b) AI systems, tools and platforms collect and process only necessary data, adhering to the principle of data minimization, and obtain informed consent from parents or other caregivers before collecting or processing children's personal data. This includes providing clear, understandable information about how data will be used.

c) Children's personal data, including biometric data, should be protected from unauthorized access, leaks or misuse through the use of stringent security measures, such as encryption, secure storage practices and regular data audits.

d) Children must be protected from commercial exploitation, including in the context of the prevailing digital business model that monetizes children's data, attention and digital activity. This also refers to the collection and use of children's data to train AI systems and large language models without consent.

6 Best interests of the child

a) In all actions or decisions that concern the child and that involve the design, development, deployment or governance of AI in both the public and private sphere, the best interests of every child must be assessed, determined and taken into account by the state as a primary consideration. In situations where rights of the child seemingly compete, States should follow due process to assess and determine what is in the child's best interests[22].

b) The best interests of the child are aimed at ensuring both the full and effective enjoyment of all the rights recognized in the Convention and the holistic development of the child[23], embracing the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development[24] in all matters concerning AI, ensuring the meaningful participation of children and giving their opinion due weight.

c) AI systems, tools and platforms should be age-appropriate[25], communicated in language that children, their parents or other caregivers can understand, and developed according to a multidisciplinary and multistakeholder approach[26], particularly in collaboration with those working with and for children, including psychologists, child rights lawyers, educators, social workers, researchers and other relevant professionals.

7 Non-discrimination and inclusion

a) AI systems, tools and platforms are accessible to all children, including children with disabilities, girls, indigenous children, children in vulnerable or disadvantaged situations and children living in remote and rural areas are available in multiple languages[27] and tailored to diverse cultural contexts[28], ensuring equitable opportunities to benefit from AI-driven services.

b) Digital divides are addressed by promoting equitable and meaningful access to the Internet and capacity-building opportunities to ensure that all children can develop skills in using AI and apply such skills equally.

c) AI systems, tools and platforms, including assistive AI technologies that enhance learning, communication and accessibility, should incorporate universal design principles to ensure that they are usable by children with diverse abilities and needs.

d) Human rights due diligence is undertaken to prevent and mitigate algorithmic biases to ensure that AI systems, tools and platforms do not perpetuate or amplify biases related to gender, ethnicity, race, disability, belief, language or other factors, protecting the rights of all children.

8 Child participation

a) The right of children to be heard in relation to all decisions that affect them is ensured by fostering the meaningful and safe participation of a diverse group of children at all stages of AI policy development and in the design, development, deployment and review of AI models.

b) Support the design, development, deployment and governance of AI systems, tools and products that contribute to children's growth as active participants in democratic societies.

9 AI and the environment, including climate change

a) AI is harnessed to combat climate change by enhancing climate modelling, optimizing energy efficiency and resource management and supporting sustainable practices that safeguard the rights and well-being of children and future generations, including their right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment[29].

b) The environmental impact of AI, including its carbon footprint, energy consumption and the environmental impact of raw material extraction to support the manufacturing of AI technologies[30], must be carefully assessed and

mitigated in relation to the rights of the child to prevent harm to children and ensure that AI development supports the realization of their rights.

10   Capacity building

a)   States should ensure capacity building of relevant State officials, including representatives of governments at the central, federal and local levels and parliamentarians[31], on the opportunities and threats related to AI in the realization of the rights of the child. This includes an understanding of the ethical, legal and social implications of AI, informed by evidence-based research and best practices, to enable the development and implementation of robust, child rights-based AI policies and frameworks.

b)   Professionals working with and for children, including teachers, social workers, psychologists, police officers, prosecutors and judges, are appropriately trained on AI and its consequences for children.

c)   Representatives of business enterprises, including leaders and AI designers, developers and deployers, must be appropriately trained on the rights of the child and the child rights impacts of their operations and services related to AI.

11   Education, science and awareness-raising

a)   AI should be integrated responsibly into education policies and programmes, when it is appropriate and based on evidence, to ensure that all children develop both technical and critical AI literacy.

b)   AI literacy should be integrated into school curricula[32] to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to understand how AI works and how it relates to their rights; special emphasis should be placed on supporting marginalized groups to enhance digital literacy to prevent the emergence of an AI divide among future generations.

c)   Non-formal educational programs for AI literacy should be put in place for children.

d)   States should leverage AI innovation for the rights of the child. They must support AI research, notably AI ethics research, including, for example, through investing in such research or creating incentives for the public and private sectors to invest in this area, recognizing that research contributes significantly to the further development and improvement of AI technologies[33] with a view to realizing the rights of the child.

e)   Parents, other caregivers and families have access to specialized educational services and guidance to help them understand AI, its risks and opportunities and guide their children towards safe and responsible use of AI.

f)   Awareness-raising campaigns should be carried out to help children, parents and the wider public understand the impact of AI on the rights of the child.

Co-signatories

Contributors

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Endnotes

1   See Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011).

2   A child rights-based approach helps translate the theory of the Convention into practical actions, steps and solutions.

3   ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); Geneva Conventions of 1949; The Pact for the Future, including the Global Digital Compact (2024); Governing AI for Humanity: Final Report (High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, 2024); CRC-IPU Joint Statement on the Role of Parliaments in the Implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols (2022); Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (UNESCO, 2021); Policy Guidance on AI for Children (UNICEF, 2021); UN General Assembly Resolution 78/187 on the rights of the child (2023); The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2021); UN General Assembly Resolution 79/239 on artificial intelligence in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security (2024); UN General Assembly Resolution 78/265 on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (2023); UN General Assembly Resolution 78/213 on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of digital technologies (2023); UN General Assembly Resolution 78/311 on enhancing international cooperation on capacity-building of artificial intelligence (2024); UN General Assembly Resolution 78/265 on seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development (2024); UN General Assembly Resolution 79/243 on the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime: Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes (2024); UN General Assembly Resolution 79/460 on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes (2024); The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age: Report (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2021); Report A/79/122 of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children (2024); Human Rights Council Resolution 56/6 on safety of the child in the digital environment (2024); Report A/79/520 of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education (2024).

4   Guidance Note of the Secretary General on Child Rights Mainstreaming (UN, 2023).

5   Policy Guidance on AI for Children (UNICEF, 2021, page 7).

6   Further building on the human-centric principles or human-centred approach established in Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (UNESCO, 2021).

7   See Civic Space & Tech Brief: Key Asks for State Regulation of AI (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2025).

8   Statement of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Article 5 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2023, para. 4).

9   IPU Resolution on the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law (2024, page 2).

10 See Article 16 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (2024).

11 See UNICEF Assessing child rights impacts in relation to the digital environment: Implementing the D-CRIA Toolbox (2025).

12 Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-Friendly Justice (Council of Europe, 2010).

13 Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (2024).

14 Further building on the Global Digital Compact (2024, para. 7.5).

15 See Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011).

16 See ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Endnotes

[17]   See Article 8 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (2024).

[18]   See Article 9 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (2024).

[19]   See Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011).

[20]   Ibid.

[21]   A method for systematically evaluating a machine learning model for the purpose of learning how it behaves when provided with input harmful to privacy, safety and the full range of children's rights.

[22]   See CRC general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1).

[23]   See CRC general comment No. 14 (2013, para. 4).

[24]   See CRC general comment No. 5 (2013, para. 12).

[25]   Governing AI for Humanity: Final Report (High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, 2024, page 32).

[26]   See the Global Digital Compact (2024, para. 54).

[27]   Governing AI for Humanity: Final Report (High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, 2024, page 32).

[28]   See Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (UNESCO, 2021, page 8).

[29]   See CRC general comment No. 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change (para. 63).

[30]   Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (UNESCO, 2021, page 15).

[31]   IPU Resolution on the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law (2024, page 3).

[32]   Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (UNESCO, 2021, page 17).

[33]   Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (UNESCO, 2021, page 17).