NEWS RELEASE

SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

French and Spanish version below

BANJUL / GENEVA / VIENNA / WASHINGTON D.C. (1 June 2026) – The freedom of expression mandate holders of the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) have adopted a **Joint Declaration on the Right to Freedom of Expression and Access to Information of Children in the Digital Age**. They also issued the following statement:

"The digital environment plays a central role in enabling children's participation, education, development and democratic engagement.

We reaffirm that children are independent rights-holders and the right to freedom of expression and access to information applies fully to children, online and offline, in line with their evolving capacities.

Today, one in three users of the digital environment worldwide is a child. Digital inclusion is vital for all children, and stakeholders, particularly States and digital technology companies, should work together to minimize challenges to access, particularly for children belonging to the Global Majority.

Engagement with digital technologies is increasingly indispensable for the realisation of children's rights, including the rights to education, health, association, peaceful assembly, privacy and non-discrimination. At the same time, it exposes them to serious risks. Children face widespread harms online, including cyberbullying, hate speech, sexual violence, gendered disinformation, addictive design practices, data protection violations and the amplification of harmful content.

We stress that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in the design, development, deployment and governance of digital platforms and services. Measures aimed at protection must not unduly restrict children's freedom of expression or access to information. Blanket bans or overly restrictive regulatory approaches may disproportionately interfere with children's rights and undermine their wellbeing.

We call on States to adopt rights-based approaches to regulating the digital environment, in full compliance with international human rights law standards, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. States must ensure that digital spaces are safe, accessible and inclusive for all children, address structural inequalities that limit access, and promote digital literacy and human rights education.

We also emphasise the responsibility of digital technology companies to respect children's rights across the lifecycle of their products and services, including through safety and privacy by design, impact assessments, transparency, and effective remedies.

We highlight the growing impact of artificial intelligence, including generative AI, which poses heightened risks to children's rights. We condemn the creation of sexualised images of children through AI tools and call for robust safeguards and accountability.

We underscore the vital role of independent and pluralistic media in providing quality, age-appropriate content and supporting children's participation in public discourse. We call on States, the private sector, media and civil society to take coordinated and urgent action to ensure that the digital environment enables, rather than undermines, children's right to freedom of expression and access to information."

ENDS

For the 2026 Joint Declaration on the Right to Freedom of Exression and Access to Information of Children in the Digital Age, please see here.

The freedom of expression mandate holders: Irene Khan, **UN Special Rapporteur on the Protection and Promotion of Freedom of Opinion and Expression**; Jan Braathu, **OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**; Pedro Vaca Villarreal, **OAS Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression**; Ourveena Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo, **ACHPR Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information**.