

**COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT  
(CSTD)**

**Eighteenth Session  
Geneva, 9 to 13 May 2016**

**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on  
their efforts in 2015 to implement the outcome of the WSIS**

**Submission by**

ECPAT

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

## **Follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society**

*Part One: An executive summary (half a page) of activities undertaken by all stakeholders, progress made, and any obstacles encountered*

If the WSIS Action Lines were being written today doubtless they would be expressed differently in order, *inter alia*, to give sharper definition to the position of children in the context of cyberspace.

Today a child without internet access is a child at a disadvantage. The disadvantage could be evident in terms of a child's relationship with other children in the same country or in relation to children across the world.

We are not far from the point where internet access will be seen as being integral to and inseparable from the delivery of the full panoply of children's rights as expressed in the UN CRC and other important legal instruments. In particular access to the internet will be seen as an essential component of a child's right to education. Promoting greater access to the internet for children across the world therefore must be made an urgent priority but this has to go hand in hand with the twin accompanying goals of ensuring greater media literacy and ensuring the internet is a much safer and more secure environment.

ECPAT International's principal area of activity in the WSIS process has revolved around the implementation of Action Line C5 "Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs".

Under that heading we have been active members of the ITU's COP initiative from the very outset and were a contributing partner to each of the four guides to online child safety that the ITU has published, most recently in conjunction with UNICEF.

ECPAT International has been active in promoting the ITU's COP guides and the principles which they enunciate in a broad range of

activities undertaken across our membership in all parts of the world. ECPAT values very highly its engagement with the COP which it sees as being a highly influential neutral platform which allows for all stakeholders to collaborate in the development of policies and initiatives which are aimed at making the internet a better and safer place for children.

The COP should be strengthened by the provision of additional staffing and other resources. At the moment there is an over reliance on securing the co-operation of private sector actors and NGOs with resources which permit their participation. This means too many groups are excluded from participation purely on financial grounds.

### *Part Two*

*Part Two: A brief (1–2 pages) analytical overview of trends and experiences in implementation at the national, regional and international levels and by all stakeholders, highlighting achievements and obstacles since WSIS. This could include information on the facilitation process of implementation, monitoring and cooperation among stakeholders as well as activities which concern the preparations that were undertaken by your organization for the overall review of WSIS.*

Even in countries with comparatively well-developed social services, law enforcement and educational infrastructures, the authorities and civil society have been struggling to cope with the pace and nature of the changes which have been the result of the large-scale adoption of the internet. In countries with a less well-developed infrastructure the position is worse and this therefore opens up the possibility of them being disproportionately adversely affected as internet penetration rates and connection speeds increase.

It is apparent from intelligence gathered through our network that in all parts of the world initiatives are underway which are reaching out to parents, teachers and children themselves promoting a range of safety messages. However, there are two important points to make about that:

1. For the reasons given above the spread of activities is very uneven.
2. In general in most countries there is insufficient emphasis being given to the empowering and enabling aspects of the internet in terms of its ability to enhance children’s rights.

Having made the point about the differences between countries with greater or less well-developed infrastructures, it nevertheless needs to be said that even in high income countries, law enforcement agencies are currently facing overwhelming difficulties caused by the scale of criminal activities now known to be taking place over the internet.

The police services in England and Wales have been unusually open and frank about the problems they are confronting but anecdotally it is known that pretty much every police force is in a very similar position.

In October, 2012, the UK’s National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children published the results of a Freedom of Information enquiry they had made of the police. The police were asked to report the number of child abuse images they had seized in arrests made during the period March, 2010 to April, 2012. Within the allotted timeframe five forces replied reporting that they had seized 26 million images of child sexual abuse. The catchment area of the five forces contained 7.25% of the entire population of England and Wales. This allowed statisticians to calculate that in all likelihood the total volume of images could well be in excess of 300 million. Based on that projection it would not be difficult, in turn, to make

reasonable estimates of the likely volumes circulating globally on the internet as whole. The challenge this presents to law enforcement can hardly be overstated and as the volume of child abuse videos continues to grow the immediate prospects are far from encouraging.

What about the numbers of people engaging in the downloading or exchanging of illegal images of sexual abuse of children?

In October, 2014, Keith Bristow, Director General of the UK's National Crime Agency publicly confirmed that in a recent surveillance exercise the police had reason to believe upwards of 50,000 individuals were involving themselves with child sexual abuse images. Bristow added:

*I don't believe that all 50,000 will end up in the criminal justice system being brought to justice-*

On other occasions Bristow and other senior police officers have put it slightly differently

*We cannot arrest our way out of this problem.*

In other words, the historic or traditional ways of policing these issues are not fit for this modern purpose.

Increasingly we are going to have to look to the internet industry and high tech companies to help find answers. ECPAT International has observed that many of them appear to be more than willing so to do as part of a multi-stakeholder approach.

*Part Three: A brief description (1–2 pages) of:*

*(a) Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes. Where specific targets or strategies have been set, progress in achieving those targets and strategies should be reported.*

*(b) Future actions or initiatives to be taken, regionally and/or internationally, and by all stakeholders, to improve the facilitation and ensure full implementation in each of the action lines and themes, especially with regard to overcoming those obstacles identified in Part Two above. You are encouraged to indicate any new commitments made to further implement the outcomes.*

ECPAT International established a programme specifically focused on combating the sexual exploitation of children online. In the context of these modalities of exploitation, internet and associated technologies are used for illegal ends. Developing strategies to reduce crimes in digital environments in turn contributes to building confidence and trust in the use of ICTs among internet users and business oriented entities seeking to seize opportunities technologies offer for growth and development.

The three main action lines of the programme are: promoting adequate international and regional legal frameworks and a better implementation; promoting a positive use of technologies to combat exploitation, and finally supporting law enforcement agencies specialized in the field.

Those objectives are achieved through the execution of comprehensive research projects, high level advocacy at

international and regional levels, and building the capacity of our network members and partners.

ECPAT International is currently aiming to consolidate and expand the programme as a way of securing the sustainability of its impact.