

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

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**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international
organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2021 to
implement the outcomes of the WSIS**

Submission by

ECPAT International

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 25th 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.

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Part One:

An executive summary of activities undertaken by all stakeholders, progress made, and any obstacles encountered.

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 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 International also contributed to the development of General Comment 25 in respect of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was finally adopted in February 2021, seeking to give advice and guidance on the UNCRC in relation to the online dimensions of children's rights, as set out in the substantive UNCRC.

2018 witnessed a marked increase in the range of actors becoming involved in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children on the internet. In part this is attributable to the increased flow of funds channeled both through the [We PROTECT Global Alliance](#) and [End Violence Against Children](#) both of which are ECPAT partners. We also maintain working links with the [Child Dignity Alliance](#).

ECPAT would like to continue to press the case for the ITU's COP initiative to 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, typically larger NGOs from richer countries, that have the resources which can facilitate their participation. This means too many groups are excluded purely on financial grounds.

One of the persistent problems which has hindered international and interagency co-operation at an international and regional level, and even interagency working within individual countries, has been the lack of an agreed taxonomy of online child exploitation and abuse.

To combat this 2016 saw the completion of a substantial project which was led by ECPAT International. It involved more than 20 international and regional bodies under the umbrella of an Interagency Working Group. The Working Group agreed a series of definitions and description of all currently known forms and manifestations of such abuse. The new guidelines are known, for convenience, as the "[Luxembourg Guidelines](#)". ECPAT continues to promote the taxonomy presented in the Guidelines.

In common with most organizations around the world ECPAT's work in 2019-and 2020 was severely hampered and limited by the Covid pandemic but it did not by any means bring our work to a halt.

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 and taking into account the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This could include information on the facilitation process of implementation, monitoring and cooperation among stakeholders.

The remit of ECPAT International is closely linked to SDGs 16.2, 5.3 and 8.7.

Even in countries with comparatively well-developed social services, law enforcement and educational infrastructures the authorities and civil society organizations have been struggling to cope with the pace and nature of the changes which have resulted from the large-scale adoption of the internet. In countries with less well-developed resources, typically lower income countries, the position can be a great deal worse. This opens up the possibility of disproportionate harms as being visited on children in those areas as the availability of high-speed connectivity increases. The major growth in internet usage worldwide is without doubt taking place in lower income countries. This should be ringing alarm bells.

It is apparent from intelligence gathered through the ECPAT International network that in all parts of the world initiatives are underway which are reaching out to parents, teachers and to children themselves, promoting a range of safety messages. However, for the reasons given above the spread of activities is far from uniform and frequently insufficient attention is given to the positive aspects of the technology and how it can be utilised as a tool of empowerment for children. This can be as true in higher income countries as it is in lower income countries.

Nevertheless, those positive dimensions notwithstanding, it remains the case that law enforcement agencies in all parts of the world are currently facing overwhelming difficulties caused by the scale of criminal activities directly affecting children.

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.

In the space available it would not be possible to summarise or do justice to the large number of initiatives ECPAT has engaged with in the online space in relation to its work around the SDGs and Action Line C5 since the last reporting period. Today, 122 ECPAT members and partners in over 100 countries are part of a dynamic and expanding network of organisations and individuals united in one common cause: the elimination of the sexual exploitation of children.

The ECPAT Network is now entering a new era. The adoption of the SDGs has given the ECPAT family a hard deadline of 14 years in which to put itself out of business, given that 2030 is the deadline for the elimination of child exploitation.

There has been a major shift from talking about the problem of SEC to concerted action and solutions – a shift motivated by the inclusion of child sexual exploitation within the SDGs. ECPAT members and partners have come together to develop a multi-year global campaign to end SEC, aiming to create public pressure on governments to meet their commitments, generate political space for stronger action, and change the ideas, values and beliefs that ‘permit’ SEC to flourish. The multi-year Global Campaign launched in 2016, and will be fully operational by 2018, with a strong focus on ECPAT members’ regional strategies to support the pursuit of the SDGs.

ECPAT works closely with the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC). In March 2016, ECPAT, SAIEVAC and UNICEF’s Regional Office for South Asia co-organised the High-level Roundtable Meeting on the Implementation of the SDGs relating to Violence against Children in South Asia in Colombo, Sri Lanka, hosted by the Sri Lankan Government. The meeting stressed the need for wider partnerships, stronger systems to address the intersecting challenges around violence against children, investment in data,

and the positioning of regional mechanisms like SAIEVAC as 'regional pathfinders' for the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

In 2014, ECPAT International established a formal global 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.

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