A Joint Call to Action by allies and survivors:
A digital world safe for every child to explore, learn and thrive

Sexual violence against children and adolescents is a pressing global issue. The consequences of child sexual exploitation and abuse are profound, leading to serious implications for children's health, societal participation and economic prospects. The digital world has amplified children's exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse, exposing children to unprecedented risks. In the last 12 months:

- **300 million + children** under the age of 18 have been affected by online child sexual exploitation and abuse[1]
- **One in eight children** globally have been subjected to online solicitation and have experienced non-consensual taking, sharing and/or exposure to sexual images and videos. [2]

The volume of child sexual abuse material has increased by 87% since 2019[3]. In 2023 alone, there was a +300% rise in grooming and sexual extortion and more than 100 million reported child sexual abuse pictures and videos circulating online globally.[4]

One case of online child abuse is reported every second.[5]

While emerging technological advances offer unparalleled opportunities, they also conceal deep and tragic risks for children. Digital platforms can and are being exploited by individuals to sexually abuse or exploit children. This is a global and borderless crime, with new and emerging risks such as AI-generated imagery depicting child sexual abuse and financial sexual extortion developing rapidly and further complicating the fight.

Online violence is not distinct from violence in the physical world. Often the perpetrator is known to the victim, and the impact of online violence often plays out through bullying and harassment at school and in other settings.

[1] Childlight | Into the Light Index, June 2024
[2] Childlight | Into the Light Index, June 2024
[3] Global Threat Assessment 2023: Assessing the scale and scope of child sexual abuse online - WeProtect Global Alliance, October 2023
[4] CyberTipline Data (missingkids.org), 2023 CyberTipline data
[5] Childlight | Into the Light Index, June 2024

We have a collective responsibility to provide children and young people the safe digital world that they deserve. The escalating crisis of online child sexual exploitation and abuse is not just a challenge, it is a pandemic that demands urgent action. We need urgent transformative action to end online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

This is a preventable issue, not an inevitable one.

We call upon all States, the tech industry and other relevant stakeholders to commit to prevent and end the sexual exploitation and abuse of children online and create a safer digital future for every child.

1. Legislation and regulation

- Enact and implement **globally-aligned legislation and support international standards** that prioritize children's safety and wellbeing, are future-proof and tech-neutral. Laws should be designed to anticipate and counteract emerging dangers to child safety online and must mandate online service providers to implement 'safety by design' principles, as well as to report and remove all child sexual abuse material on their platforms, tools, or services.
- Ensure **coordination across government**, law enforcement, the tech industry and civil society to enable a more effective systems-wide response using tools such as WeProtect Global Alliance's Model National Response framework.
- Develop laws and regulation to **consider emerging technologies**, such as generative AI, through consultation with a diverse group of stakeholders. These laws and regulations should encompass the entire lifecycle of technology development, deployment and management. Technologies that pose a higher risk to child safety should be subject to more stringent oversight to ensure their responsible use and mitigate potential harm.
- Require that all services and products intended for or likely to be used by children are **designed to be safe** and age-appropriate, utilizing sanctions for non-compliance.
- Support legal reforms to ensure **children are not criminalized** for the possession or sharing of their own images whether they are a victim of grooming and abuse or engaging in natural, age-appropriate or consensual exchanges with peers.
- Adopt the multi-disciplinary and interagency Barnahus model[6] to provide child victim-survivors access to **comprehensive care and support**, promoting their

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[6] https://www.barnahus.eu/en/about-barnahus/

wellbeing while facilitating justice in a trauma-informed setting. Enshrine in law the right of victims and survivors to compensation.

- Publish **clear and accessible transparency reports** on child safety efforts, including the volume and types of content flagged and removed and subsequent actions taken; the removal, temporary or permanent suspension of accounts; and user reporting trends.

2. Funding

- Prioritize stable, **sustained funding to tackle online child sexual exploitation and abuse** – including investment in frontline responders across sectors, social services, and investigators that are trained on survivor-centered and trauma-informed approaches.
- Prioritize investment in **prevention and public health approaches** to address the systemic drivers of child sexual exploitation and abuse online, including through awareness-raising campaigns.
- **Increase official development assistance** and funding to equalize the capacities and capabilities across the globe to tackle this **borderless crime**, including through participating in existing global collaborative funding vehicles such as Safe Online.
- **Enhance safety on platforms and services** by increasing resources for Trust & Safety teams, tools, and processes. Expand child safety knowledge across broader functions such as engineers, product managers, and policy officers. Additionally, ensure Trust & Safety teams have sufficient resources to manage a high volume of reports and emerging online safety threats while supporting their wellbeing needs in dealing with harmful content.
- **Prioritize investment in knowledge, research and data** on present and emerging trends and threats to children in online environments to inform policy, practice and product design across sectors.

3. Centre the perspectives of children, victims and survivors in the response

- Uphold **children's right to participation** in decisions affecting their lives and prioritize the rights, perspectives, expertise, and experiences of children, victims, lived experience experts, and **survivors**. Ensure that national laws, policies, and other responses to tackle child sexual abuse and online child sexual exploitation are developed in consultation with victim-survivors from diverse backgrounds,

facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the issue and the design of effective interventions and responses.

- **Empower children** by providing them with clear, confidential, child-friendly and easy-to-use and accessible reporting tools and information resources so they have the knowledge and ability to take action when they want or need to.
- **Reduce barriers to support for survivors**, minimizing re-traumatisation and enhancing access to information and comprehensive trauma-informed, survivor-centered services.
- **Support research** with children, young people and survivors to better understand their needs in the digital environment and identify relevant good practice.

4. Build public and institutional awareness

- Build a **comprehensive understanding of child sexual exploitation and abuse** online across the highest levels of government and law enforcement.
- Build **public awareness** among children and young people, parents and caregivers and professionals to ensure that there is widespread understanding of online child sexual exploitation and abuse and how to keep children safe.
- Build **awareness of resources** for offenders and potential offenders who are seeking support to change their behavior and increase access to early interventions and support for children and young people engaging in harmful sexual behavior.
- Build the capacity of **education systems** and ensure national education policies, and programmes incorporate online safety in school curriculums.

The upcoming Global Ministerial Conference to End Violence against Children is a pivotal moment to redefine the digital world for our children, ensuring that technology is used for their benefit and never for their harm.

We call on governments, the tech industry and other stakeholders worldwide to step up, take bold, urgent steps, and commit to end the sexual exploitation and abuse of children online.

Online violence is preventable, and we cannot afford to delay any longer. The time for transformative action is now.