

GUIDELINES ON CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION

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July 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

Protecting children online is a global challenge that requires a global approach. EACO member states have different policies and laws in respect to child online protection.

At the global level, ITU under its Cyber Security Agenda (GCA) has established COP initiatives to create an international collaboration network and promote online safety of children around the world. While efforts to improve Child online Protection (COP) are already underway, there are various aspects that require a multi-stakeholder approach.

These guidelines outline steps to be undertaken by the EACO member states to fully implement the different policies and laws.

2. ACRONYMS

GCA- Global Cyber security Agenda

COP- Child Online Protection

NRA- National Regulatory Authorities

ITU-International Telecommunication Union

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Consumer –An individual or organization who purchases ICT products or services for final use.

Consumer Education – An initiative undertaken to equip the consumer with knowledge, skills and information to enable informed decision making in the purchase, use and disposal of ICT products and services

Consumer Organization – An entity whose main focus is to advocate and address consumer issues and undertake consumer education

National Regulatory Authority – the entity established by law to regulate the information and communications sector in a country.

Service Provider – an entity licensed by the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) to offer ICT goods and services.

4. THE SCOPE

These guidelines aim at collectively safeguarding children's online experience and use of communication services. The scope of these guidelines are premised on addressing the following thematic areas:-

- Legal measures
- Technical and Procedural Measures
- Organizational Structures
- Capacity Building
- Regional Cooperation
- Research

5. OBJECTIVES

This policy seeks to achieve the following:

- a) Assist EACO members to develop and implement appropriate mechanisms for COP;
- b) Harmonize COP initiatives in the region;
- c) Create awareness across the region on matters of COP;
- d) Facilitate sharing of best practice in handling COP issues;
- e) Harmonize the reporting and case resolution mechanism at national and regional level;
- f) Foster multi-stakeholder and regional collaboration in development and implementation

6. PRINCIPLES OF CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION AND SAFETY

- **Accountability:** all stakeholders are responsible for COP;
- **Acceptance:** Technology is beneficial but it is susceptible to abuse;
- **Contextual:** these guidelines are aligned to national and regional policies, values and norms;
- **Research:** Leverage on child online behaviour studies to develop appropriate safeguards;
- **Empowerment:** education, awareness and capacity building for stakeholders.
- **Involvement:** participation and collaboration of all stakeholders

7. ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

7.1 National Regulatory Agencies

The National regulatory agencies shall:

- a. Develop and implement a national strategy and framework on COP
- b. Propose enactment, amendment and harmonization of legislation at national and regional level. The legislation shall:
 1. Define online offences and include provisions that outlaw certain online behaviour that exploits children's vulnerability
 2. Define online materials and include provisions that protect children online.
 3. Define provisions for enforcement
- c. Define the reporting/redress mechanisms
- d. Require that ICT Industry develop and publicise technical tools for COP
- e. Promote awareness and develop capacity in handling child online protection issues`
- f. Promote and facilitate child online research
- g. Coordinate collaboration of stakeholders of COP;
- h. Promote the application of technical tools and child safety software in supporting COP;

7.2 The ICT Industry

- a. Demonstrate support and commitment of the COP and safety initiatives;
- b. Foster development of child friendly products and services by instituting internal policies and procedures;
- c. Promote a safer digital environment for children;
- d. Promote child online platforms for information sharing and collaboration
- e. Collaborate with other stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies and procedures
- f. Develop and publicise a mechanism to facilitate reporting of complaints on child online related offences

8. IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE GUIDELINES

The National Regulatory Authorities shall ensure compliance to these guidelines within their jurisdictions.

9. REVIEW OF THESE GUIDELINES

To ensure their relevance, these guidelines may be reviewed from time to time as shall be agreed upon by EACO member states.