



## Oral Statement Human Rights Council 52<sup>nd</sup> Session

### Annual Day on the Rights of the Child – Part II Rights of the child and the digital environment

In an ever-changing world, digital technologies have undergone rapid transformation and children have not escaped these changes. Unfortunately, despite its many positive effects on our lives, the digital environment also presents serious risks<sup>1</sup> for children.

We at MMM strongly believe that including, educating and supporting parents in the process of helping children navigate the digital environment safely and responsibly is key to mitigate these risks and preserve a child's physical and mental integrity. In particular, as they assume most of the unpaid work of caring for and educating children, mothers should be equipped to guide and interact with their children about their use of digital technologies.

This means that parents themselves need to be educated on the risks and dangers of the digital world, and how they can provide age and gender appropriate guidance to their children to alleviate the risks while taking advantage of the benefits.

Parents must also be made aware of the impacts of their own use of digital technologies on their children. Not only their own usage patterns influence their children's, but their overuse of screens reduces their interactions with their children. This can be particularly harmful for early childhood development<sup>2</sup>.

Our recommendations:

1. Equip parents with digital parenting skills by providing information, workshops or training, parenting resources<sup>3</sup>, and fostering communication.
2. Encourage parents to have open communication with their children about their digital lives, so that they discuss the risks and benefits of technology, set rules and boundaries together, and establish a culture of trust and respect.

Children have the right to access information, communicate, and express themselves online, but they also have the right to be protected from all forms of online violence and other indirect harm induced by the use of digital technologies<sup>4</sup>. For these rights to be fulfilled, parents must be considered as key stakeholders, and adequately educated and supported.

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<sup>1</sup> OCDE (2021), « Children in the digital environment: Revised typology of risks », Documents de travail de l'OCDE sur l'économie numérique, n° 302, Éditions OCDE, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9b8f222e-en>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-study-mothers-smartphone-use-could-damage-toddler-development/>

<sup>3</sup> See for example the Family digital wellness guide of the Boston children's Hospital Digital wellness lab <https://digitalwellnesslab.org/parents/family-digital-wellness-guide/> and the intervention of Dr Michael Rich, Founder and Director, Center of Media and Child Health, Harvard University on the impact of digital technology on children and how parents can be guided during our CSocD59 side-event <https://makemothersmatter.org/harnessing-digital-technologies-for-family-wellbeing-our-collective-responsibility/>

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe "Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment": <https://rm.coe.int/guidelines-to-respect-protect-and-fulfil-the-rights-of-the-child-in-th/16808d881a>

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