



Joint Letter on Meaningful Civil Society Involvement in the Coalition for Children's Rights and Protection in the Age of AI

Ahead of the inaugural Global Dialogue on AI governance, over 125 leading civil society organizations and experts across all continents urged Governments to no longer allow children to be collateral damage in the race to develop and deploy AI.

As such, we wholeheartedly welcome the launch of the [Coalition for Children's Rights and Protection in the Age of AI](#) and urgently call for civil society, children, and young people to be meaningfully involved. This Coalition represents a crucial step towards implementing Member States' existing obligations and commitments under international human rights law, particularly children's rights by holding tech companies accountable and civil society is central to ensuring its success.

Meaningful civil society involvement is crucial to the Coalition's success

As tech companies continue to gain outsized influence over AI, and governance approaches grow increasingly fragmented across jurisdictions, meaningful civil society involvement is crucial to ensure global AI governance is inclusive, accountable, credible, and effective.

Yet, despite sustained engagement and proactive attempts to collaborate ahead of the Coalition's launch, we regret that civil society has not yet been involved. While the original announcement suggested that civil society organizations would be included, no opportunity of the sort has been offered so far. To ensure the Coalition's legitimacy and effectiveness from the very beginning, we call to ensure that civil society organizations are part of the Coalition from the outset and can participate in all foundational work moving forward.

Civil society can contribute technical expertise, propose concrete evidence-based solutions, and generate the political will needed to ensure that children's rights are effectively protected in practice. Drawing on this breadth of perspectives from a wide

range of stakeholders, the Coalition's outcomes would be more democratic, robust, and effective, while building trust across communities through inclusive participation.

However, such contributions must extend beyond a mere observational role. Independent civil society and academia must be allowed to meaningfully shape and participate in global AI governance, not simply be offered opportunities to observe and address processes with limited influence over outcomes.

The same values hold for children themselves. The safe, meaningful and age-appropriate participation of children, including children from diverse backgrounds and contexts must be mainstreamed throughout the Coalition's work, so that AI systems are designed, developed, and deployed in ways that uphold their rights, dignity, and best interests. Here too, civil society organizations can support safe and meaningful child participation to raise children's lived experiences, perspectives, and priorities, helping to ensure that the Coalition's work and priorities remains responsive to children's realities and grounded in their rights.

Bringing this principle to life requires a shift towards meaningful collaboration by ensuring civil society can contribute to agenda-setting, deliberations, and outcomes through inclusive, balanced, and active engagement. Participation could extend to agenda-setting, working groups and technical processes, development of recommendations, and follow-up monitoring of implementation.

The Coalition must move from commitments to action

In the global AI race, children have become test subjects for untested and unregulated AI, but violations of children's rights are never an acceptable price for innovation.

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres reflected at the Global Dialogue, 'We do not let medicine reach a child until it is proven safe. We test every toy; yet AI has reached our children – their learning, their friendships, their most private questions, before anyone asked what it would do to them'.¹

While AI can present opportunities for children, AI systems are being deployed at a speed and scale that far outpaces the safeguards required to protect them. When systems are not designed, tested, and governed with children in mind, they can undermine children's distinct rights, including their rights to privacy, safety, health, education, access to information, and participation in public life.

As the UN Independent International Scientific Panel on AI concludes, 'large language models reflect the ideology of their creators',² and children in the Global Majority are disproportionately exposed to risks,³ further exacerbating existing inequalities for children who already face barriers or exclusion, including girls, children with disabilities, LGBTQI+ children, children from marginalized communities, and children living in poverty or crisis-affected settings.⁴

Together with over 125 leading organizations and experts across all continents, we urge governments to adopt and enforce a simple principle: AI systems should not be used by or affect children unless they have been designed to respect children's rights and independently certified to be safe.

As concluded by the Scientific Panel, '[t]he most urgent governance shift required is from content moderation to system architecture'⁵ as '[t]he primary drivers of harm are design

¹ Secretary-General's remarks to the opening of the first Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance [as delivered]

² Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, p. 37.

³ Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, p. 35.

⁴ Stoilova, Livingstone, & Atabey, *Children's rights in the age of generative AI: perspectives from the global South*, pp. 10-11.

⁵ Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, p. 37.

and deployment decisions – underlying system architectures of influence, including targeting, amplification and behavioural design – not individual outputs’.⁶

Parents or caregivers and children should not be expected to bear the burden of managing risks embedded in AI systems. Responsibility to embed children’s rights from the outset rests with the companies that build, deploy, and profit from these technologies⁷ and Governments have the obligation to hold them accountable and provide prompt and effective remedies where appropriate.⁸

To move from commitments to action, the Coalition should urge Member States to meet their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child by promoting the adoption and enforcement of laws that require tech companies to demonstrate that AI systems likely to affect children respect their rights and are safe before they are brought to market.

While we wholeheartedly welcome the attention to children’s rights in the context of AI, we encourage Member States to simultaneously address the impact of the entire digital environment on children’s rights. The same commercial incentives and exploitative business models which undermine children’s rights and development in the context of AI contribute to risks across all digital products and services children are likely to access or be impacted by – including social media, EdTech, gaming, and others.

By embedding children’s rights at the core of its proceedings and meaningfully including civil society, the Coalition can build a future where technology serves children, by turning fragmented national efforts into coherent, rights-based international action, anchored in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We stand ready to share our expertise and to support the Coalition’s objective to embed children’s rights into the design, deployment and regulation of AI systems.

For concrete recommendations, see our [Joint Statement: The inaugural Global Dialogue on AI Governance must deliver for children](#).

Signatories:

1. 5Rights Foundation
2. Ada Lovelace Institute
3. Aldeas Infantiles SOS España
4. Amnesty International
5. ChildFund Alliance
6. Child Rights Connect
7. Mtoto News
8. Plan International
9. Red PaPaz
10. Terre des Hommes International Federation
11. World Vision International

⁶ Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, p. 38.

⁷ Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, p. 26.

⁸ UNCRC General comment No. 25, para 35.