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Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea
to the United Nations

CSocD63 Side Event

Beyond Access: Youth Online Safety and Digital Equity

Date & Time: 15:00 - 16:15 EST on February 12th, 2025

Place: Conference Room 9, UN New York Headquarters

Concept Note

● Overview

The digital transformation is a key driver of global change in the 21st century, significantly enhancing efficiency and productivity across various sectors, including the economy, education, and public services. It has become essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, despite the positive effects of digital transformation, there remain significant gaps in both access to and safe use of digital technologies.

The UN Digital Economy Report¹ warns that while digital technologies have the potential to be tools for reducing inequality, the lack of policy response could exacerbate the digital divide, deepening social and economic polarization. The digital divide most severely affects marginalized groups, limiting their opportunities for education, innovation, and connection.

The digital divide goes beyond just access to technology; it encompasses disparities in technological proficiency and unequal opportunities. As an illustration, UNICEF recently noted that AI technologies could potentially widen the digital divide globally.²

In particular, the online safety divide faced by digitally native youth has become a significant challenge, profoundly impacting their education, growth, and well-being in a rapidly evolving digital environment. Underserved communities are especially at risk, with youth facing heightened dangers such as cyberbullying, exploitation, and misinformation.

¹ UNCTAD, 2019.

² The State of the World's Children, UNICEF, 2024.

● Key Issues

1. Youth Online Safety Divide

According to a UN survey,³ approximately 40% of young people have experienced cyberbullying or digital harassment, highlighting it as one of the most severe threats in the online space. Issues like the misuse of deepfake technology to create sexual exploitation materials show that the digital divide is not merely a technical issue.

The lack of digital literacy hinders the development of critical thinking and digital citizenship among youth, contributing to the consumption of misinformation and the formation of biased worldviews.

2. Need for International Solidarity

The digital divide is not confined to specific countries or regions; it is a global issue that requires worldwide attention. To address the online safety divide, which arises in complex ways across borderless online spaces, multilateral collaboration among the private sector, governments, international organizations, and civil society is essential.

To maximize the positive benefits of digital technology while ensuring that youth can grow up in a safe environment, both policy and educational efforts must be pursued simultaneously.

3. SDGs and Bridging the Digital Divide

UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized the importance of youth digital participation to achieve the SDGs and highlighted the critical need for bridging the digital divide and empowering youth.⁴

Improving access to digital technology and addressing online safety gaps are aligned with the international community's efforts to achieve social inclusion, equitable development, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

³ U-Report poll, UNICEF, 2019.

⁴ The Secretary-General Message on International Youth Day. 2024.

● Objectives

1. Identifying Solutions to Bridge the Online Safety Divide

The digital divide goes beyond technology access issues and directly impacts youth safety, well-being, and rights. This side event will explore concrete and practical solutions to bridge this safety divide. It will analyze the types and severity of digital divides experienced by youth based on their regional and social backgrounds and discuss policy, technological, and educational alternatives to address these issues.

For example, setting safety standards for digital environments for youth, developing cyberbullying prevention programs, and exploring international support measures to enhance accessibility.

2. Sharing Youth Online Safety Strategies and Success Stories

This event will showcase successful case studies of policies and programs implemented by various countries, institutions, and organizations to ensure youth online safety. Specifically, it will discuss strategies and approaches to addressing online safety issues in creative and effective ways in different national and regional contexts.

For instance, sharing best practices through cyberbullying prevention education, digital capacity-building programs, and youth-friendly technology development. Concrete implementation methods will be suggested so participants can apply them within their contexts.

3. Discussing Approaches to Promote Global Best Practices

The event will focus on building actionable multilateral cooperation models to promote successful practices beyond specific regions or countries. This will involve collaboration among international organizations, governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society to form networks, allocate resources effectively, and spread policies and programs.

Additionally, policymakers and institutions from various countries will collaborate to set global standards, creating a systematic approach to ensuring youth can safely engage with the digital world.

● Program

Part	Content	Speaker
Opening	○ Introduction	Jiho Kim (UN Youth Delegate / BTF)
	○ Opening Remarks	H.E. Ambassador Mr. Marcelo Scappini Ricciardi (Permanent Mission of Paraguay to the UN)
		Ursula Wynhoven (Director and Representative to the UN / ITU)
	○ (Keynote Speech) Bridging the Digital Divide for Digital Equity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the digital divide and online safety gaps for youth • Promoting international solidarity to ensure digital equity and safe online environments 	Sinead Bovell (WAYE Founder & Generation Connect Visionaries Board Member / ITU)
Part 1: The Digital Divide and Youth Safety Gap		
Panel	○ Panel Introduction	Jiho Kim (UN Youth Delegate / BTF)
	○ (Panel① Policy) Policy Approaches to Bridging the Youth Online Safety Divide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normative advances to Bridging the Online Safety Divide for Women and Youth • Trends in technology-facilitated violence from an intersectional perspective (who is most at risk, what are the consequences) • Policy and programmatic solutions for safer online spaces 	Kathryn Travers (Policy Specialist, Ending Violence against Women / UN Women)
	○ (Panel② International) Beyond Access: UNDP's Approach to Inclusive Digital Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening global cooperation to promote equitable access to digital opportunities. • Advancing technological innovation while ensuring digital safety and resilience. 	Vitalii Zakhoshyi (Digital Analyst, Chief Digital Office / UNDP)
	○ (Panel③ International) Bridging the Digital Divide: Global Efforts and Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative initiatives by international stakeholders to reduce the digital divide and promote equitable access • Holistic strategies to enhance technological accessibility while ensuring online safety through global cooperation 	Yumeng Liu (Youth Representative / UN DESA)

Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (Panel④ Youth-focused) <p>Addressing the Youth Online Safety Divide: Challenges and Strategic Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of youth-led initiatives in creating safer online environments and their positive impact on local communities • Promoting active youth engagement and fostering international cooperation to bridge the online safety divide effectively 	<p>Esme Longley (Negotiations Officer / McGill Youth Advisory Delegation)</p>
	Part 2: Youth Online Safety Strategies and Global Best Practices	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Panel Introduction 	<p>Jiho Kim (UN Youth Delegate / BTF)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (Panel⑤ Crisis-focused) <p>Safeguarding Youth Mental Health in the Digital Era</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Challenges for Youth in the Digital Environment • Strategies and success stories for promoting digital safety and mental well-being 	<p>Eva Kiegele (Technical Officer, External Relations / WHO Office to the UN)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (Panel⑥ Society) <p>Research-Based Strategies and Practical Recommendations for a Safer Online Future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research findings on online safety divide • Recommendations for navigating a safe digital world 	<p>Haesoo Kim (Ph.D / Cornell Social Media Lab)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (Panel⑦ Youth-focused) <p>Threats of Digital Divide to Youth, and the Role of Digital Moral Education in the AI Era</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online safety divide threatening youth safety. • The importance of moral education in addressing cyber issues. 	<p>Junseok Park (UN Youth Delegate / BTF)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Panel Discussion and Q&A 	<p>All panels</p>
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Closing remarks, Campaign and Group Photo 	<p>Jiho Kim (UN Youth Delegate / BTF)</p>

● Organizations

The Permanent Mission of Paraguay to the United Nations plays a crucial role in advancing Paraguay's diplomatic efforts within the UN framework. As a committed member of the international community, the Mission actively engages in multilateral dialogues to promote peace, security, human rights, and sustainable development. Through its participation in the UN and other global forums, the Permanent Mission of Paraguay fosters international collaboration to bridge the digital divide, enhance youth protection online, and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By working alongside governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society, the Mission underscores Paraguay's commitment to global digital inclusion, reinforcing policies that promote access, education, and safety in the evolving digital landscape.

The Blue Tree Foundation (BTF) is the first NGO established in the Republic of Korea to prevent school violence, raise public awareness, and provide treatments for those involved in school violence and cyberbullying since 1995. The ultimate goal is to make a happy and peaceful world for the youth to dream of hope. The Blue Tree Foundation calls on attention and actions for governments, private enterprises, schools, local and international communities to combat all types of youth violence. To prevent and eradicate violence, it strives to spread nonviolent values through victim care and healing support; education for all, including teachers, parents, and students; legislation and revision of relevant policies; research and campaigns; and global networking and solidarity.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), established in 1865, is the oldest UN specialized agency responsible for promoting and regulating the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) worldwide. ITU fosters smooth communication between member countries through telecommunications standardization, rational distribution of radio communication resources, and support for ICT infrastructure development. In particular, ITU is actively working on various projects to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive digital society. Additionally, ITU leads efforts to address the new challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution by collaborating with governments, the private sector, and academia, while also playing a key role in creating a global ICT environment for sustainable development.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations has been actively participating and contributing to the three major areas of UN activities: peace and security, human rights, and development since its accession to the United Nations in 1991. The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations is strengthening solidarity with many countries around the world that share universal values such as freedom, human rights, and the rule of law, and is striving to fulfill its role in supporting international community overcome global crises and challenges wisely. Based on this, it is doing its duty to contribute to promoting freedom, peace, and prosperity in the world.