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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Study on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh

Summary

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh, provides an overview of the activities undertaken since her previous report and presents a thematic study on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry. In the report, the Special Rapporteur explores the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse to which child performers are exposed within the entertainment industry and identifies pathways for mitigating such risks. She also presents a set of recommendations for States and other stakeholders with a view to contributing towards an understanding of the areas in which intervention is needed to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation in the entertainment industry.



I. Introduction

1. In the present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 7/13 and 52/26, the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh, presents a thematic study on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry. She explores the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse to which child performers are exposed within the entertainment industry, identifies the challenges in and pathways for mitigating those risks and presents recommendations for protecting such children.
2. The report also includes information on the activities undertaken by the Special Rapporteur since her previous report.

II. Activities of the Special Rapporteur

A. Country visits

3. Upon invitation, the Special Rapporteur conducted two official country visits during the year: to Uruguay, from 16 to 26 May 2023;¹ and to Australia, from 30 October to 10 November 2023. The report on the visit to Australia will be presented in March 2025.
4. The Special Rapporteur extends her gratitude to the Governments of Australia and Uruguay for the cooperation extended before, during and after the visits.
5. The Special Rapporteur highly appreciates the positive response received from Botswana regarding her request to conduct an official visit to the country in the first half of 2024.

B. Communications and press releases

6. During the period under review, the Special Rapporteur transmitted communications to Governments jointly with other mandate holders relating to issues that fell within the scope of her mandate. The Special Rapporteur issued press statements jointly with other mandate holders in connection with the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, World Tourism Day and the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

C. General Assembly and other activities

7. On 7 September 2023, the Special Rapporteur delivered a keynote address and participated in the discussion held during a virtual dialogue organized by Foreign Policy, in partnership with World Vision International and the Oak Foundation, entitled “Safeguarding childhood: tracking national budgets to end child abuse”. She highlighted the importance of preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation as critical components of the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 5, 8 and 16.
8. On 3 October 2023, the Special Rapporteur delivered a lecture at Johns Hopkins University on her mandate and, specifically, on the risk of exploitation and sexual abuse children are exposed to through voluntourism. The lecture brought together academicians, students and researchers in the exchange with the Special Rapporteur.
9. On 5 October, the Special Rapporteur presented a report² to the General Assembly focused on the exploitation and sexual abuse of children in relation to voluntourism. In the interactive dialogue with States, she shed light on the potentially harmful consequences of the unregulated sector of voluntourism and outlined good practices for effective intervention.

¹ See [A/HRC/55/55/Add.2](#).

² [A/78/137](#).

10. On 10 October 2023, during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur convened a side event jointly with Foundation ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes) and PACT by ECPAT-USA entitled “A closer look at the phenomena of voluntourism”. The event was focused on innovative ways to develop inter-agency and cross-sectoral initiatives encompassing the child protection, education, media and tourism sectors and faith-based organizations to foster actions aimed at addressing voluntourism and responding to its adverse effects on children.

III. Thematic study on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry

A. Introduction

11. The sexual abuse and exploitation of children are prevalent across various mediums within the entertainment industry and in different entertainment genres, both formal and informal. The problem cuts across various facets of the industry and community space, exposing children to risks in the areas of film, television, music, theatre, modelling, circuses, choirs, concerts, nightclubs, bars, glamour industries, sports,³ tourism and hospitality⁴ and in community facilities, at public spectacles and events and in digital space, including the newer domains⁵ of social media influencing and gaming.⁶ In recent times, children have been cast in reality television shows or have gained celebrity status through the Internet, with little to no legal counsel nor protection.⁷

12. Several high-profile cases that have involved the sexual abuse and exploitation of minors have sparked broader societal discussions regarding the limits of acceptable social norms and values. Incidences of the sexual exploitation and abuse of children resulting from unethical practices or abuse by people with power and authority in the entertainment industry, in both public and private settings, have been reported globally.⁸ Lawsuits brought against industry insiders have revealed multiple cases of the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, highlighting such exploitation and abuse as global issues of concern.⁹ In a number of instances, the victims have been met with silence, their experience unacknowledged. In some instances, their cases have not been investigated. Victims have also faced threats and intimidation and have found that reparation measures were not available.¹⁰

13. The rights and interests of children in the entertainment industry are numerous and multifaceted and encompass issues relating to publicity, contracts, privacy and labour practices.¹¹ While research concerning adults has been published on gender, work arrangements and sexual harassment in the entertainment industry, much less information

³ See [A/HRC/40/51](#).

⁴ See [A/78/137](#) and [A/HRC/22/54](#).

⁵ See [A/HRC/28/56](#).

⁶ See submissions from Colombia, Guinea, Ecuador, Foundation ECPAT International and the Centre d'Etudes sur le Leadership et la promotion des Droits Humains. All submission referred to in the present report are available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2023/call-inputs-study-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-children-entertainment>. See also International Labour Organization (ILO), “Policy brief on sexual harassment in the entertainment industry”, November 2020.

⁷ Tabetha Bennett, “Child entertainers and their limited protections: a call for an interstate compact,” *Child and Family Law Journal*, vol. 9, No. 1 (2021).

⁸ See <https://projectwhen.org/research-on-workplace-harassment/harassment-in-the-media-and-entertainment-industry>; and Justine J. Reel and Emily Crouch, “#MeToo: [uncovering sexual harassment and assault in sport](#)”, *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, vol. 13, No. 2 (June 2019).

⁹ See Helping Survivors, “History of Hollywood sexual abuse”, 19 October 2023; and Human Rights Now, “HRN releases oral statement on sexual violence in the entertainment industry”, 18 July 2023.

¹⁰ See Nikki R. Breeland, ““All the truth I could tell”: a discussion of Title VII’s potential impact on systemic entertainment industry victimization”, *UCLA Women’s Law Journal*, vol. 25, No. 2 (2018); see also United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, *Louissette Geiss and others v. The Weinstein Company Holdings LLC and others*, Opinion, 17 April 2019.

¹¹ Bennett, “Child entertainers and their limited protections”.

exists on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the industry. A survey undertaken by the International Labour Organization (ILO) provided a glimpse into the industry. The results indicated that 53.7 per cent of respondents had experienced sexual harassment during rehearsals and 46.3 per cent of respondents had experienced incidents during auditions or interviews.¹² A statistically rigorous study commissioned in 2017 by the Freedom Fund in the context of a single urban area of one country indicated that the proportion of minors working in the adult entertainment sector as a whole was 17 per cent, with over 70 per cent of those minors having experienced some form of violence. Over 60 per cent were working in sexually exploitative environments.¹³ The types of sexual exploitation to which young people reported being exposed ranged from flirting and groping to being made to perform sensual massages and engage in sexual intercourse.¹⁴ The results of another study showed that as many as 97 per cent of adolescents engaged in entertainment sectors were sexually exploited by customers and employers¹⁵ and that two thirds of workers in those sectors were below the age of 18 years.¹⁶

14. Predatory sexual behaviour has been accepted as the norm in the entertainment industry because directors, producers, managers and agents have faced no repercussions for unlawfully wielding power and authority over young and vulnerable aspiring entertainers.¹⁷ Studies have shown that a significant number of instances of sexual abuse and exploitation in that field remained unreported, primarily due to the prevailing power dynamics and a fear of retaliation and the loss of career opportunities.¹⁸ Such factors often result in an environment in which individuals in positions of authority can exploit vulnerable child actors and performers.

15. The global nature of the industry means that such issues are not confined to one geographical region but, rather, are prevalent in countries worldwide. Nevertheless, movements such as Me Too¹⁹ have enabled some victims to step forward courageously to expose perpetrators, resulting in a heightened awareness in recent times of sexual exploitation and abuse in the entertainment industry. The testimonies of the brave victims who have come forward have consistently pointed to the urgent need for improved protections for children and young people within the entertainment sector and have raised vital questions regarding the inadequacy of existing preventive and protective measures, systems for accountability and access to justice.

1. Absence of norms and the normalization of abuse

16. In the thematic study on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry, the lack of agreement on the scope of inviolable norms or principles and the disregard of the best interests of the child in the entertainment industry are highlighted as issues of concern. Blurred lines, with regard to social norms, between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour²⁰ and exposure to content and lifestyles based on exaggerated consumption and forms of self-fulfilment that objectify or instrumentalize human beings or trivialize relationships can be disruptive and harmful.²¹ Patterns of domination, inequalities within communities and the normalization of abuse and violence are the latent realities that place children and adolescents at a constant risk of sexual exploitation anywhere that they

¹² ILO, "Policy brief on sexual harassment", pp. 11 and 12.

¹³ Meredith Dank and Kyle Vincent, "Prevalence of minors in Kathmandu's adult entertainment sector" (The Freedom Fund, 2019).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Foundation ECPAT International, "Preparatory study for situational analysis of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Nepal: a preliminary report", 2015.

¹⁶ John Frederick, Muna Basnyat and Joseph L. Aguetant, *Trafficking and Exploitation in the Entertainment and Sex Industries in Nepal: A Handbook for Decision Makers* (Kathmandu, Nepal, Terre des hommes Foundation, 2010).

¹⁷ See submissions from the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria and Caritas India.

¹⁸ See ILO, "Policy brief on sexual harassment".

¹⁹ Anna E. Jaffe, Ian Cero and David DiLillo, "The #MeToo movement and perceptions of sexual assault: college students' recognition of sexual assault experiences over time," *Psychology of Violence*, vol. 11, No. 2 (March 2021), pp. 209–218.

²⁰ See submission from the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria.

²¹ See submission from El Salvador.

work in the entertainment industry.²² Those realities were highlighted in the results of a thematic study on addressing the vulnerabilities of children to sale and sexual exploitation within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, which was presented by the Special Rapporteur in her previous report to the General Assembly.²³ Films and television shows portraying the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children cross the line between merely depicting such sexual abuse and exploitation and “glamourizing” it. Moreover, reinforcing, through such depictions, the power imbalances that perpetuate the sexual abuse and exploitation of children within the industry poses various ethical dilemmas.²⁴

17. Child sexual abuse material appears not only on the darknet but also on legal websites.²⁵ Such content helps to normalize the intolerable crime of the sexual instrumentalization of children.²⁶ Such representations weaken the viewer’s sense of guilt and make such sexual acts easier to perceive as non-abusive.²⁷ The systems and business structures that enable child sexual abuse in the entertainment industry must, therefore, be critically examined.²⁸

2. Disproportionate power relations and dependence on the abuser

18. Perpetrators who engage in such behaviours often wield positions of power or influence over their child victims, exploiting their vulnerabilities and aspirations and those of their parents or guardians.²⁹ Child performers, who are in vulnerable positions due to their age and the limited rules on working conditions, are disproportionately affected in contractual relations. Those in positions of power typically engage in “grooming”, in which they gain the trust of children and even their guardians, then isolate child victims from their support networks, leaving them emotionally reliant on the perpetrators’ guidance.³⁰ Victims are frequently coerced into maintaining silence through various means, including threats to their careers or their personal safety.³¹ Where victims are exploited in the context of poverty or intimacy, they may be dependent on and attached to their abusers. Combined with the lack of or limited contact with the outside world, victims may end up feeling empathy towards their abusers or be in a state of denial, as their future hinges on the world of entertainment.³²

3. Gendered dimensions that perpetuate harmful norms and practices

19. With reference to the extensive examination by the Special Rapporteur of the gender dimensions of the sexual exploitation of children,³³ it is noted that gender inequalities affect both off-screen and on-screen roles in the entertainment industry. A study conducted on 1,100 popular films found that only 43 women worked as directors.³⁴ There is high job insecurity among women in the industry, especially for women of colour and Indigenous women, who remain significantly underemployed.³⁵ The hegemonic power of masculine corporate culture is one of the most dominant problems and has serious ramifications for violence and abuse.³⁶ Female actors are more likely to be vulnerable in terms of contracts and

²² See submission from Colombia.

²³ See [A/77/140](#).

²⁴ See submission from Foundation ECPAT International.

²⁵ See submission from the European Centre for Law and Justice.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Diana E. H. Russell, “Russell’s theory: exposure to child pornography as a cause of child sexual victimization”, in Melinda Tankard Reist and Abigail Bray, eds. *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the Harms of the Global Pornography Industry* (North Melbourne, Victoria, Spinifex Press, 2011).

²⁸ See submission from Joseph Bonner.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See Melissa S. de Roos and others “[Mimicry Deception Theory applied to sexual abuse of children](#)”, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 143 (September 2023); see also Melissa Samantha De Roos, “Mimicry Deception Theory applied to grooming behaviors of child sexual abuse”, thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 2017.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See submission from the Centre d’Etudes sur le Leadership et la promotion des Droits Humains.

³³ See [A/76/144](#).

³⁴ See submission from Caritas India.

³⁵ ILO, “Policy brief on sexual harassment”.

³⁶ Ibid.

are often put into the abusive situation of being shown in tight or alluring apparel or in the nude.³⁷ Boys and girls, both homosexual and heterosexual, are the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse in the entertainment industry. While there is little awareness of the availability of counselling and support among both male and female victims, this is especially true for male victims, making it particularly difficult for them to seek consultation.³⁸ The exploitation of boys also tends to be hidden. Girls' abuse is more readily apparent as, based on the perception of their bodies and secondary sexual characteristics, they are openly treated as adults at an early age. Recently, instances have been reported of children being given artificial steroids and drugs that trigger puberty and the maturation of their sexual organs at an early age.³⁹

4. Business operations and practices that enable trafficking in children

20. Children are trafficked or recruited to work as performers or entertainers⁴⁰ by means of fraudulent offers, misleading promises and the exploitation of their hopes and dreams.⁴¹ With millions fleeing conflict and violence or other situations that are increasingly driving displacement and migration, many children end up without their families and are forced to work in the entertainment industry to survive.⁴² The need for States to provide proper guidance to businesses in the entertainment sector is, therefore, imperative.⁴³ The entertainment industry is perceived by many to be a gateway to fame, success and luxury and traffickers use such perceptions to deceive children and their family members, offering false hopes for high salaries and a better life.⁴⁴ Several documented cases have involved children working as dancers or hostesses and reportedly being subjected to sexual exploitation and violence. Child victims have been discovered in bars and nightclubs and other public venues. Such establishments tend to have dedicated private spaces in which exploitative acts can occur out of sight.⁴⁵ Such practices allow traffickers to further exploit children, who become isolated from their support networks.⁴⁶ Strong links between the entertainment sector and the tourism industry have also been recognized, including the presence of unsupervised children in the tourism industry, mostly as vendors of souvenirs, which might increase their vulnerability to exploitation.⁴⁷

5. Abuse of technology

21. Perpetrators use technology to reach potential victims for exploitative purposes, including the production of child sexual abuse material, through the commercial market of online entertainment.⁴⁸ Children are exploited in the cybersex industry, which sometimes involves the physical smuggling of children across borders.⁴⁹ Traffickers often take advantage of interactive computer services, such as social media platforms, to connect with child victims, abusing children's limited knowledge regarding the safe use of online space. Modern technology enables offenders to reach out to potential victims and clients through encrypted applications and the dark web. The anonymity offered by online services poses another challenge for law enforcement in investigating technology-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation, identifying victims and conducting rescue operations.⁵⁰

³⁷ See submission from Caritas India.

³⁸ See submission from Japan.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See submission from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

⁴¹ See submission from Joseph Bonner.

⁴² See submission from the Centre d'Etudes sur le Leadership et la promotion des Droits Humains.

⁴³ See Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights.

⁴⁴ UNODC Regional Office for South Asia, *Compendium of Best Practices on Anti Human Trafficking by Non Governmental Organizations* (New Delhi, 2008), pp. 144–146.

⁴⁵ *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022* (United Nations publication, 2022), p. 35.

⁴⁶ See submission from UNODC.

⁴⁷ See submission from Foundation ECPAT International.

⁴⁸ See submission from UNODC.

⁴⁹ See submission from Jubilee Campaign.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

B. International legal framework

22. The rights of children and minimum standards for their protection in all areas of life are outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 34 of the Convention specifically addresses protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including involvement in pornographic performances and materials. Article 13 provides for the child's right to freedom of expression, including in the form of art, or through any other media. That right is not absolute, however, and is subject to certain restrictions, including for respect of the rights or reputations of others or for the protection of national security or of public order or of public health or morals.

23. In article 5, States parties are enjoined to respect the rights and duties of parents or other persons legally responsible for the child to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the Convention. Article 16 provides for the child's right to privacy, family, home and correspondence and for protection from unlawful attacks on the child's honour and reputation, including the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

24. Highlighted in the preambular paragraph of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography is the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. In article 2 (a), the sale of children is explicitly defined to mean any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration. In article 3 (1) it is underscored that any acts and activities relating to the sexual exploitation of the child or the engagement of the child in forced labour must be fully covered under each State party's criminal or penal law, whether such offences are committed domestically or transnationally or on an individual or organized basis.

25. While States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are obligated to protect children from economic exploitation, in the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), of ILO, the minimum ages of 13 years for work that is done outside of school hours and 16 years for full-time employment are specified. In the Minimum Age Recommendation, 1973 (No. 146), of ILO, in addition to measures to protect children from hazardous work, conditions of employment and enforcement are outlined as are requirements relating to health and safety standards; annual holidays; social security and other insurance and benefit schemes; fair remuneration and its protection, bearing in mind the principle of equal pay for equal work; the strict limitation of the hours spent at work in a day and in a week and the prohibition of overtime, so as to allow enough time for education and training, including the time needed for homework related thereto; for rest during the day and for leisure activities; and the granting, without possibility of exception save in genuine emergency, of a minimum consecutive period of 12 hours' night rest and of customary weekly rest days.

26. In the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), of ILO, the worst forms of child labour, including the sexual exploitation that could occur in the context of child labour, are addressed. The Convention also contains a call for the protection of children from such exploitation. Additional safeguards relating to child labour are set out in other ILO conventions, including the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206), the Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946 (No. 79), and the Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 90).

27. In its general comment No. 16 (2013), the Committee on the Rights of the Child highlighted the obligations of States regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, including the obligations of States to encourage the mass media, including private media, to disseminate information and materials of social and cultural benefit to the child, for example, regarding healthy lifestyles. It also stated that the media must be regulated appropriately to protect children from harmful information, especially pornographic materials and materials that portrayed or reinforced violence, discrimination and sexualized

images of children, while recognizing children's right to information and freedom of expression. It called for States to encourage the mass media to develop guidelines to ensure full respect for the rights of the child, including their protection from violence and from portrayals that perpetuated discrimination, in all media coverage.

28. In its general comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasized that child protection policies, procedures, professional ethics, codes and standards for all professionals working with children in the field of play, recreation, sports, culture and the arts must be introduced and enforced. The Committee also called for the improvement of information for parents, teachers and policymakers to raise awareness of the potential harm associated with violent games and for the development of strategies for promoting safer and attractive options for children.

C. Risks to which children are exposed

1. Health, privacy and safety

29. Child performers in the entertainment industry are exposed to sexualized, violent and aggressive environments that are unsafe for their integral development and in which they can be exposed to the consumption of addictive substances.⁵¹ The risk of sexual, physical and emotional abuse and violence in the workplace can be intrinsically linked to business models,⁵² affecting children working in the entertainment sector. In sexualized business models, sexual harassment in the workplace is accepted, including by children, as "part of the job".⁵³ The entertainment industry is highly competitive, placing pressure on children to achieve targeted goals, which could lead to increased anxiety and depression.⁵⁴ The effects on children of early stardom can manifest themselves in a range of problems, including addiction, depression, eating disorders and financial problems.⁵⁵ There have been well-publicized cases around the world of child performers who have "coping difficulties".⁵⁶ The child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation often experience a range of debilitating psychological effects, including post-traumatic stress disorder and even suicidal ideation.⁵⁷

30. Working long hours, with irregular schedules or in dangerous conditions and without proper education and protection, has an impact on children's health and social and mental well-being and affects their school attendance and performance.⁵⁸ Their participation in inappropriate public and even violent performances can encourage a loss of values.⁵⁹ Many children's safety and privacy are jeopardized as they face online or offline stalkers and their lives can be publicized following grooming and recruitment.⁶⁰ The film and television industry qualifies as a breeding ground for microaggressions, according to the results of a study carried out in 2017 by the organization Sisters Working in Film and Television, where they are normalized and given the space to occur.⁶¹ The risk of sexual harassment is

⁵¹ See submission from El Salvador.

⁵² See submission from CLARISSA (Child Labour: Action-Research-Innovation in South and South-Eastern Asia).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See submission from South Africa.

⁵⁵ Leslie Margaret Anderson, "Myself or someone like me: a review of the literature on the psychological well-being of child actors", *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, vol. 26, No. 3 (September 2011), pp. 146–149.

⁵⁶ See Jessica Krieg, "There's no business like show business: child entertainers and the law", *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Business Law*, vol. 6, No. 2 (2004).

⁵⁷ See Allison Elizabeth Robb, "Exploring psychological well-being in actors: a qualitative study of professionals and students", thesis, University of Adelaide, 2017; and Roberto Maniglio, "The impact of child sexual abuse on health: a systematic review of reviews", *Clinical Psychology Review*, vol. 29, No. 7 (November 2009), pp. 647–657.

⁵⁸ See submission from South Africa.

⁵⁹ See submission from El Salvador.

⁶⁰ See submission from South Africa.

⁶¹ See ILO, "Policy brief on sexual harassment".

exacerbated by dress codes that force workers to wear revealing or skimpy clothing.⁶² Many girls reportedly use drugs or alcohol to manage stage fright.⁶³ Sexual relations with managers serve as casting sessions or interviews for new recruits to dance troupes.⁶⁴

31. Exposure to the use of addictive substances, both those used for recreational purposes and those used to extend physical endurance in the face of strenuous working hours or for tolerance to certain environments, can produce stress and anxiety.

2. Abusive contracts and informal work arrangements

32. The acceptance of abusive and harmful contracts can lead children to involve themselves in work activities that may be risky by nature or whose requirements could seriously hamper their rights, such as their right to education.⁶⁵ Their vulnerability is further compounded by their age and the fact that they may not be aware of their rights at work or the prevailing laws against child labour.⁶⁶ Families or guardians may be unaware of the risks or turn a blind eye to them⁶⁷ due to the idealization of the children's activities, which may also be deemed lucrative. Such attitudes could have a negative impact on efforts to rescue, rehabilitate and reintegrate children. As the entertainment sector can include performances in international contexts, children could travel outside of their home country, potentially depriving them of their support system and exposing them to exploitation or sexual abuse.

33. The delineation of boundaries in contracts may not be clear regarding the exposure of the private lives of children and adolescents, including the use, beyond their control, of their image and voice in variety of media formats. Unregistered businesses and freelance or self-employed workers tend to comply less with employment laws, protective measures and redress mechanisms.⁶⁸ In the worst cases, traffickers may present contracts that seem legitimate on the surface but are riddled with exploitative terms and conditions.⁶⁹ Victims may be coerced into signing such contracts without fully understanding the implications because of language barriers, resulting in substandard wages and exposure to various forms of abuse.⁷⁰

34. Employers are able to exploit children who are burdened by family situations or for whom the role of guardianship cannot be effectively exercised, as, for example, in contexts in which children are expected to take on family responsibilities, including caring for sick parents, paying off their family's debts or financing the education of younger siblings.⁷¹

3. Stigmatization, discrimination and secondary victimization

35. The acceptance and normalization of the abuse of children is a major risk when they work in the entertainment sector.⁷² Insecurity, intimidation, shame, the risk of discrimination and the fear of retaliation, an abuser's threats and the negative impact of reporting due to stigma are barriers that prevent child victims from getting help.⁷³ The negative social perception of children employed in entertainment venues as, for example, singers or dancers in restaurants, circuses, choirs or tourism- or fashion-related shows and the resulting lack of respect for them on the part of the clients, including a sense of entitlement to intimacy with them, put such children at risk.⁷⁴ The sexual abuse of children in such settings is often

⁶² See submission from CLARISSA.

⁶³ Uganda Youth Development Link.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ See submissions from El Salvador and South Africa; see also Nor Aida Ab Kadir and others, "Protection of best interest: a study on children working in the entertainment industry in Malaysia and their right to education", *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, vol. 29, No. S2 (2021), pp. 43–57.

⁶⁶ See submission from ECPAT Luxembourg.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See ILO, "Policy brief on sexual harassment".

⁶⁹ See submission from Joseph Bonner.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See submission from CLARISSA.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ See submissions from Poland and Spain.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

associated with shame, stigmatization, secrecy or a culture of silence, with children unable to talk about the sexual abuse that they have suffered and parents remaining silent about the danger of abuse to their children.⁷⁵

36. A fear of the authorities on the part of child victims due to their perception of having committed wrongdoing and a climate of secrecy also discourage child victims from reporting abuse and serve as barriers to justice.⁷⁶ The consequences for careers within the entertainment industry of reporting sexual abuse and exploitation can be devastating. Survivors often face severe repercussions, such as discrimination and career setbacks, including challenges in finding work and being typecast or even of being blacklisted within the industry.⁷⁷ Victims face strained relationships and the stigma associated with speaking out about abuse.⁷⁸ Such repercussions underscore the necessity of creating a safe and supportive environment in which victims feel empowered to break the cycle of silence and seek justice against their abusers in the entertainment world and beyond.

37. In conjunction with the failure to address the abuse of children working in the entertainment industry, law enforcement personnel may also be perpetrators of such abuse by consuming the products of the industry or by protecting entertainment businesses through their connections,⁷⁹ resulting in additional victimization and compounding the victim's trauma.⁸⁰ In the context of social media, some jurisdictions expose children and adolescents who send or exchange sexually explicit content of themselves to further victimization by criminalizing their actions,⁸¹ especially where restorative justice approaches⁸² are not effective or are unavailable. Traumatized children may suffer further traumatization by the authorities when justice systems are not child-friendly or gender-sensitive.⁸³

D. Pathways to mitigating risks

1. Formulate and implement legislative frameworks, policies and guidelines

38. It is imperative to formulate and implement legal frameworks, policies and guidelines to govern the entertainment industry in order to protect child performers. Such efforts must start with a determination of the legal scope, while factoring in the acceptable norms regarding the depiction, imagery and portrayal of children, the physical and moral limits and the hazards or risk of violence in the realm of media and entertainment. Launching zero-tolerance policies towards sexual exploitation, abuse and violence in the entertainment sector within national strategic plans can be an added value. Slovenia, for example, has put into place a policy to combat all forms of exploitation, taking into account norms and cultural context.⁸⁴

39. States must explicitly criminalize all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry. States can also regulate child protection standards, with mandatory application across all industries, and put into place a designated regulatory authority to monitor the application of such standards in the entertainment industry.⁸⁵ In terms of practice across jurisdictions, the Special Rapporteur notes that work permits for minors in

⁷⁵ See submission from Albania.

⁷⁶ See submission from UNODC.

⁷⁷ See ILO, "Policy brief on sexual harassment"; see also Jocelyne A. Scutt, Review of *Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies and Conspiracy to Protect Predators*, by Ronan Farrow; *She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement*, by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey; and *Brave: A Revealing and Empowering Memoir*, by Rose McGowan, *Denning Law Journal*, vol. 32, No.1 (2020).

⁷⁸ Angie C. Kennedy and Kristen A. Prock, "'I still feel like I am not normal': a review of the role of stigma and stigmatization among female survivors of child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence", *Trauma Violence and Abuse*, vol. 19, No. 5 (December 2018).

⁷⁹ See submissions from Caritas India and CLARISSA.

⁸⁰ See A/HRC/52/31.

⁸¹ See submission from the European Centre for Law and Justice.

⁸² See Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment.

⁸³ See submission from UNODC.

⁸⁴ See submission from Slovenia.

⁸⁵ See submissions from Foundation ECPAT International and UNODC.

some instances are provided by the labour department on case-by-case basis. In Bulgaria, for example, work permits for minors can be revoked on the grounds of health and safety.⁸⁶ In Spain, the participation of minors under 16 years of age in public performances must be authorized by the labour authority as a prerequisite for the conclusion of the corresponding contract.⁸⁷ The Spanish legislation also includes provisions that prohibit minors from working at night, overtime or during school hours.⁸⁸

40. The legal provisions should include the mandatory registration of industry entities, a description of their duties with regard to child performers, the requirements for vetting staff,⁸⁹ the establishment of reporting mechanisms and the means of access to them and provisions for the protection of whistle-blowers. Industry procedures in relation to child performers should be put into place, including training on child safety, reporting structures and protocols for handling cases and travel and procurement.⁹⁰ In Ireland, for example, the legislative framework extends to the talent agencies that represent child actors. The agencies bear the responsibility for putting into place procedures and policies to safeguard such children from harm, including sexual abuse.⁹¹ Such entities are required to undertake an assessment to identify the risks of harm and to develop procedures to mitigate those risks.

41. With regard to measures for closer scrutiny in the licensing of entities within the industry, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for example, has made it a criminal offence for businesses to fail to seek a licence, as relevant, or to fail to comply with the requirements of a licence. Licensing systems could be incorporated into the policies of local authorities to safeguard children in that locality.⁹² Such a system could make industry entities, including producers, responsible for ensuring that all children are protected when they take part in a performance or other such activity and that their education does not suffer.⁹³

42. Strict regulatory safeguards should also be established regarding the work of children in entertainment venues, including, in particular, the barring of late-night work to mitigate risk.⁹⁴ Measures must be put into place to deter potential abusers and to create an environment in which victims feel safe to come forward to report the slightest violation of their rights.⁹⁵ Procedural barriers, including statutes of limitation for filing reports,⁹⁶ should be eliminated to enable victims to bring complaints at any point in their lives when they are ready to do so.

43. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes the added value of laws that specifically penalize sexual exploitation by those abusing their position or power, as outlined in the submission from North Macedonia. Such a provision could help to ensure a stronger system for preventing or combating the behaviours that target the dependency or vulnerabilities of children. It is noted that North Macedonia also criminalizes the roles of intermediaries in sexual abuse, including the compounding of exposure and risk for children through, for example, the provision of alcohol, narcotic drugs or other substances,⁹⁷ which are exacerbating factors for violence against women and children in the entertainment industry.

44. All those working with children should be subject to the mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse. Such reporting could be mandated in national policies. In Japan, for example, the plan for the prevention of sex crimes against children 2022 is focused on the message that “victims are not to blame” in an effort to educate the public and encourage victims to report.⁹⁸ In England, mandatory reporting is one of the recommendations in the final report of the

⁸⁶ See submission from Bulgaria.

⁸⁷ See submission from Spain.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ See submission from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

⁹⁰ See submission from Foundation from ECPAT International.

⁹¹ See submission from Ireland.

⁹² See submission from the United Kingdom.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ See submission from Foundation ECPAT International.

⁹⁵ See submission from Joseph Bonner.

⁹⁶ See submission from the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ See submission from Japan.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, issued following a seven-year investigation into institutional failings across England and Wales.⁹⁹

45. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes that legal provisions should prohibit any provision in a legal settlement agreement for a claim regarding sexual abuse or exploitation that prevents the disclosure of related information.¹⁰⁰ Laws must also prohibit clauses in agreements that require the victim to give up any procedural or substantive rights or remedies in cases of sexual abuse or exploitation.¹⁰¹

46. The effective implementation of legislation through investigation, including the collection and reporting of evidence against the perpetrators and facilitators of sexual abuse and exploitation, can reflect a commitment to justice and accountability.¹⁰² Towards this end, cases, including high-profile trials, can serve as examples to deter others from exploiting children.¹⁰³

2. Establish partnerships with business owners to foster child-safe business models

47. Codes of conduct and guidelines can be more effective when designed and implemented jointly with business owners by encouraging rapport and building trust, enabling business-level peer education and fostering a sense of responsibility.¹⁰⁴ Owners must factor in the perception of their business by society when designing business models. Business owners may lack understanding about the issue of child labour in their sector and that the image of their business could be at stake if practices are risky for children. Awareness-raising activities should be conducted, therefore, with the active participation of business associations¹⁰⁵ on such key topics as monitoring, management and the systematization of hiring procedures and on ensuring safety provisions in the work environment. Management models should focus on mitigating risks by removing spaces for potential child sexual exploitation, for example, by ensuring a transportation system for child performers to safely travel to and from the workplace.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, business owners, civil society organizations and law enforcement authorities could cooperate to find pathways for safeguarding children, in line with their respective scope of work.

48. Building networks or associations of business owners in the entertainment sector could help to support accountability mechanisms. The peer-to-peer approach is a good practice that could facilitate the development of a national-level body or a federation that would work jointly with local enforcement authorities to improve accountability across the network of entertainment venues.¹⁰⁷ It may also be useful for the industry to develop guidance and other resources to assist those working within the industry to identify the signs of child abuse and child sexual exploitation.¹⁰⁸ Such measures could increase the level of awareness regarding norms and boundaries and the consequences of violations.

3. Inform, rescue and support child performers

49. Child performers in the entertainment industry must be properly informed by means of adequate training regarding the possible negative consequences of their participation in certain activities.¹⁰⁹ Procedures for ensuring the informed and free consent of children¹¹⁰ upon the completion of such training could be made mandatory. Awareness-raising

⁹⁹ See submission from the United Kingdom; see also Alexis Jay and others, *The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse* (United Kingdom, 2022).

¹⁰⁰ ILO, "Policy brief on sexual harassment".

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² See submission from the Centre d'Etudes sur le Leadership et la promotion des Droits Humains.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ See submissions from CLARISSA and ECPAT Luxembourg.

¹⁰⁵ See submission from Spain.

¹⁰⁶ See submission from CLARISSA.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ See submission from Ireland.

¹⁰⁹ See submission from Foundation ECPAT International.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

campaigns should be conducted in schools and through the dissemination of informational materials in areas in which children and young people gather.¹¹¹

50. As underscored by the Special Rapporteur in her report on a practical approach to addressing the sale and sexual exploitation of children,¹¹² preventive measures and resilience-building in children should include the provision to children of the necessary, age-appropriate messages on their rights, so that they are able to make informed and responsible decisions. In the Dominican Republic, for example, a life skills and comprehensive sexual health awareness programme provides children and adolescents with knowledge of the risks that could be detrimental to their physical and emotional integrity; sexual practices and behaviours; and gender-based violence and its normalization in society, in addition to tools to prevent abuse.¹¹³ The positive parenting programme of the Dominican Republic trains parents and other caregivers on the identification of warning signs of abuse and violence to support the well-being of children.¹¹⁴

51. The Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of child-sensitive reporting procedures, a comprehensive referral system and a victim-centred approach to addressing the concerns of children that could prevent them from reporting, including issues of privacy.¹¹⁵ To foster a culture of reporting and transparency, overreliance on self-reporting by child victims should be avoided and proactive approaches, focused on the detection of child sexual abuse material and its removal, should be prioritized.¹¹⁶ Access to confidential helplines¹¹⁷ or hotlines staffed by trained counsellors, who could offer immediate support to child victims in the entertainment industry, must be provided, advertised and facilitated by industry entities. Two examples worth mentioning from South Africa are the National Human Trafficking Hotline for reporting cases of trafficking in children and the Film and Publication Board hotline for reporting online violations.¹¹⁸

52. Many child victims require safe spaces in which to receive comprehensive care away from the place where they were victimized.¹¹⁹ Resources must be allocated in this regard, including for legal support and representation, shelter,¹²⁰ therapy, peer-to-peer support and counselling services that cater to the victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. The Special Rapporteur, in her reports on a practical approach to addressing the sale and sexual exploitation of children¹²¹ and on reparation for child victims and survivors of sale and sexual exploitation,¹²² highlights the *barnahus* model, which provides support and assistance to children, including provisions for holding hearings in accordance with the requirements of court procedures in child-friendly environment, similar to the practice referred to in the submission from Slovenia.

4. Implement oversight and accountability measures

53. Establishing provisions for oversight and accountability to ensure the implementation of protection measures could strengthen the scope of such measures for children at risk in the entertainment industry. An independent oversight and accountability mechanism could be established by an industry-specific regulatory body or commission that would monitor and enforce adherence to relevant regulations. Measures should be taken to increase the effectiveness of labour inspectors in the course of their regular work, including in places in

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² [A/HRC/49/51](#).

¹¹³ See submission from the Dominican Republic.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ See submissions from Bulgaria and South Africa.

¹¹⁸ See submission from South Africa.

¹¹⁹ See [A/HRC/49/51](#).

¹²⁰ See submission from Saudi Arabia.

¹²¹ [A/HRC/49/51](#).

¹²² [A/HRC/52/31](#).

which children work, which include entertainment establishments and industry offices.¹²³ In addition, whistle-blower procedures should be developed and implemented.¹²⁴

54. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Disclosure and Barring Service provides for the disclosure of relevant criminal records to support informed recruitment decisions and to bar those who pose a risk of harm to children from being hired.¹²⁵ The Service also produces sectoral guidance documents that specify the responsibilities of providers of regulated activity, which include businesses that employ children, including the legal duty to report relevant concerns about employees to the Service. Information-sharing with relevant inspectorates and regulators is also prioritized.¹²⁶ Similarly, in Spain, it is forbidden for companies and other entities to employ in any profession, trade or activity involving regular contact with minors who are listed in the Central Register of Sex Offenders and Trafficking in Human Beings.¹²⁷

55. The Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of establishing monitoring mechanisms for verifying whether existing measures and provisions regulating child labour are respected within the entertainment sector.¹²⁸ With regard to the sexual abuse and exploitation of performers or influencers in social media, specifically, an independent national arbitration mechanism could be created to facilitate the reporting of hate speech, depictions of violence or threats.¹²⁹ Such institutional mechanisms for investigating complaints, conducting audits and issuing penalties or sanctions for non-compliance with standards on safeguarding children could be effectively implemented by adequately trained personnel.

56. Law enforcement authorities should conduct regular checks of entertainment venues in which children work and, simultaneously, checks of the guardians or parents of those children. In Uzbekistan, for example, a mapping was conducted over eight months of students who were found in entertainment venues and Internet clubs. As a result, 1,574 entertainment establishments were held liable under the Code of Administrative Responsibility for allowing minors to stay overnight in those venues.¹³⁰ In addition, 37,863 parents or guardians were held responsible under the Code.¹³¹

5. Educate, raise awareness, train and build capacities

57. Comprehensive education and awareness-raising programmes should be expanded to educate industry professionals about the behavioural limits applicable to child performers, the age of consent and the means of reporting. Both staff and freelance employees should be well educated about the negative consequences for children of sexual abuse and exploitation, in addition to understanding their own exposure as employees to civil and criminal charges and the potential impact on their careers.¹³² The Special Rapporteur also emphasizes the importance of educating parents who push their children into the entertainment industry or act as their managers within it about the risks to which their children could be exposed and on the importance of prioritizing the best interests of the child and their right to be heard in every decision made on their behalf.

58. Programmes should be developed to help to create an environment in which victims feel comfortable speaking out and potential abusers are deterred from engaging in abusive behaviour. In Albania, national awareness activities are organized annually in November on child abuse and sexual exploitation. Such activities include the promotion of a culture in which raising one's voice and reporting are encouraged.¹³³ At the local level, child protection

¹²³ See submission from Foundation ECPAT International.

¹²⁴ See submission from Ireland.

¹²⁵ See submission from the United Kingdom.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ See submission from Spain.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ See submission from Foundation ECPAT International.

¹³⁰ See submission from Uzbekistan.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² See submissions from Poland and the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria.

¹³³ See submission from Albania.

workers organize information-sharing meetings with children, parents and professionals to raise awareness about abuse and ways to prevent it and to train children on how to protect themselves in situations of danger and to report abuse.¹³⁴

59. Awareness-raising campaigns should be carried out, including by means of theatre productions, radio broadcasts, sports activities and neighbourhood, school and university forums.¹³⁵ Such campaigns could teach industry professionals, children at risk, parents and guardians and the larger community to recognize the risks, behaviours and attitudes involved in child sexual abuse and exploitation¹³⁶ and the signs of abuse, and could encourage reporting, including within the entertainment industry. Such efforts could also reduce stigma and increase community understanding and the use of services targeted to child victims and their families.

60. Both the formal and informal structures of the entertainment industry should be identified to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement authorities to recognize, detect and rescue victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation in the industry.¹³⁷

61. Awareness of the risks, behaviours and attitudes in the entertainment industry should be fostered,¹³⁸ including among key actors in the life of the child, such as parents and families, in order to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation in the industry. The Special Rapporteur highlights the urgent policy package for the prevention of sexual violence against children and young people in Japan, which incorporates measures to strengthen enforcement relating to crimes against children involving employment and teacher-student relationships and provides for a consultation service for people active in the fields of culture and the arts regarding the proper conduct of their activities.¹³⁹

62. The Special Rapporteur encourages the formulation of regulations that make it mandatory for commercial enterprises, when organizing an event involving children, to provide information about their activities and guarantees that their production materials are not the product of any form of child exploitation or abuse.¹⁴⁰ In Ireland, under the Children First Act of 2015, relevant businesses must provide a written child-safeguarding statement, covering the areas of education, research and training and cultural, recreational, leisure, social and physical activities, affirming that a child or young person engaged in any such activities conducted by them is safe from harm.¹⁴¹ Producers of entertainment, such as theatrical productions, could strengthen their role in awareness-raising by presenting disclaimers at the beginning of each performance affirming that no child had been harmed or exploited in the preparation of the show.¹⁴² Such messages could help to reinforce those of other public campaigns around child safeguarding.

6. Leverage technical safeguards for the online space

63. The digital industry should intensify its proactive detection efforts in order to counter the online dimensions of the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in the entertainment industry. The voluntary principles to counter online child sexual exploitation and abuse,¹⁴³ developed jointly by Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States and launched in 2020, are a notable contribution to good practices. The 11 principles, which cover prevention and reporting, have been endorsed by major technology companies, including Google, Meta (formerly known as Facebook), Microsoft, Roblox, Snapchat and X (formerly known as Twitter). In addition to the voluntary principles, the Special Rapporteur endorses the proposal for the enforcement of global standards that

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ See submission from Spain.

¹³⁶ See submission from Spain.

¹³⁷ See submission from Guinea.

¹³⁸ See submission from Spain.

¹³⁹ See submission from Japan.

¹⁴⁰ See submission from Ireland.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² See submission from Caritas India.

¹⁴³ Available at <https://www.weprotect.org/wp-content/uploads/11-Voluntary-principles-detailed.pdf>.

impose accountability requirements on service providers.¹⁴⁴ The application of online age verification measures, where the use of an online service, including its content, involves risks for minors, should be widely promoted within the online media industry.¹⁴⁵

64. The Special Rapporteur underscores the importance of cooperation among national and international stakeholders in efforts pertaining to online platforms, as outlined in the thematic study on addressing the vulnerabilities of children to sale and sexual exploitation within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁴⁶ A noteworthy step forward is the cooperation agreement, signed in 2023, between the International Criminal Police Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund.¹⁴⁷ The agreement, which could be replicated by other stakeholders, sets out measures to support the establishment of specialist units or teams to investigate online child sexual exploitation and abuse; to promote and facilitate better linkages between law enforcement and social services and other providers of services to victims; and to advance training and systematic professional development in victim and offender identification, digital forensics for online child sexual exploitation and abuse, child-friendly and survivor-centred interviewing and the use of the International Child Sexual Exploitation Database.

7. Foster multistakeholder collaboration and empower non-governmental organizations

65. Collaboration among law enforcement agencies, experts, professionals, the media and advocates of child victims should be strengthened to enhance the access of child victims to justice.¹⁴⁸ Partnerships should be fostered between industry stakeholders and psychologists, therapists and social workers who specialize in working with victims of child sexual abuse. Agreements for cross-border collaboration should be encouraged to uphold the principle of non-discrimination, curb the exploitative practice of using cheap child labour and ensure harmonized protection standards.¹⁴⁹

66. Commitments and charters developed jointly with government at the national and local levels and with the private sector and academic institutions could help to encourage joint action on preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation in the entertainment sector.¹⁵⁰ While relevant international organizations could provide financial support and expertise on technical standards,¹⁵¹ collaboration with industry stakeholders, including production companies, casting agencies and unions, would result in a system that is more supportive of children. Channelling the insider knowledge of the entertainment industry by engaging entertainment venue owners and workers directly and developing peer-to-peer support models could clarify the roles and responsibilities of those involved in preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation.

67. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes the significant role that could be played by civil society organizations in raising awareness, monitoring and reporting on the harmful effects of child sexual abuse and exploitation in the entertainment industry and providing support to child victims and their families.¹⁵² Such organizations could also organize projects on child protection aimed at making victims aware of the available support structures at the local level and their right to claim support, as such information may not be easily accessible.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁴ See submission from the European Centre for Law and Justice.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ See [A/77/140](#).

¹⁴⁷ See submission from Spain; see also <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2023/INTERPOL-and-UNICEF-sign-cooperation-agreement-to-address-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>.

¹⁴⁸ See submission from Spain.

¹⁴⁹ See submission from Caritas India.

¹⁵⁰ See submission from Foundation ECPAT International.

¹⁵¹ See submission from Caritas India.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ See submission from ECPAT Luxembourg.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

68. Urgent attention must be given to child sexual abuse and exploitation in the entertainment industry in order to establish the measures and practices necessary to combat that scourge. Clear and inviolable norms and principles based on the best interests of the child must be introduced and underscored within the entertainment industry, spanning all countries. Systems and structures that promote child sexual abuse in the entertainment industry and the power dynamics inherent in the relationship between potential offenders and aspiring child entertainers must be identified and addressed, as they have been major factors in the perpetuation of child sexual abuse and exploitation in the industry.

69. Disrupting the normalization of child sexual abuse and exploitation in the entertainment industry is attainable by means of the rigorous implementation of a zero-tolerance policy for those who exploit the vulnerabilities of child performers by wielding their power or influence and the fostering of an environment in which children and all other stakeholders feel safe and are empowered with tools that enable access to justice and accountability. The nexus between trafficking channels and businesses operating under the guise of the entertainment sector must be systemically combated by law enforcement to curb the involvement of vulnerable children affected by conflict, violence and forced displacement. Intensive efforts should be made within the industry to eradicate the practices and norms, including harmful gender norms, that perpetuate child sexual abuse and exploitation.

70. Legal frameworks, policies and guidelines must be developed to safeguard the health, safety and privacy of children in the entertainment industry. Contractual and work arrangements must be reformed to bring them into line with international labour laws aimed at empowering and protecting children from abuse, fear, stigma and discrimination. Data collection and the sharing of information internationally on child sexual abuse cases in the entertainment industry could play crucial roles in bridging any jurisdictional gaps and in streamlining efforts to bring offenders to justice. While the business sector has introduced some good practices, efforts must be accelerated to develop robust multistakeholder partnerships, raise awareness and build capacities for the protection of children in all art, culture and entertainment arenas, including online.

B. Recommendations

71. To eradicate the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the entertainment industry, the Special Rapporteur makes the following recommendations:

1. Legal framework

(a) Ratify and implement all relevant regional and international instruments, in particular the Optional Protocol and the following instruments of ILO: Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206), Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946 (No. 79), and Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 90);

(b) Implement and monitor safeguards, in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism;

(c) Introduce comprehensive legal frameworks by adopting or reforming laws that prohibit and criminalize all forms of sale and sexual exploitation of children and hazardous or the worst forms of labour as they relate to the entertainment industry;

(d) Identify norms and implement limits for the work activities of child performers, including regarding the nature of such activities and the conditions in which they are carried out, while safeguarding children's rights relating to publicity, contracts, privacy and labour;

(e) Ensure the mandatory registration of all entertainment businesses and create associations that can coordinate the harmonization of standards and implement child safety practices in the entertainment industry, including in entertainment venues;

(f) Develop industry-backed codes of conduct for staff and customers in the entertainment industry that ensure the enforcement of appropriate behaviours on a day-to-day basis in places of businesses;

(g) Ensure that legal frameworks address trafficking in children, including through digital means, by the establishment of provisions in penal law to punish offenders in a manner commensurate with the gravity of their offences;

(h) Bring into the legal scope all intermediaries that work within the tourism and entertainment industries, including suppliers, traffickers and facilitators and the finance and technology sectors;

(i) Develop guidelines to raise awareness within businesses and among industry professionals and staff;

(j) Require industry professionals to sign and adhere to a code of conduct that includes child safeguarding provisions as a condition of employment;

(k) Introduce mandatory background checks, particularly for any kind of employment that involves coming into contact with children;

(l) Establish an oversight and monitoring mechanism within the entertainment industry and a mandatory reporting mechanism that imposes a legal obligation on all employees of the industry, including contractors, to report suspected cases of child sexual abuse to the appropriate authorities;

(m) Create monitoring mechanisms within labour inspectorates and provide adequate measures to train staff in identifying and reporting child sexual abuse, including with regard to conditions of work and the potential risks for children in both the formal and informal entertainment sectors;

(n) Establish monitoring systems and accessible reporting mechanisms within educational, arts and cultural institutions and foster awareness about child sexual abuse in the context of mentor-student and peer relations.

2. Knowledge-sharing, awareness-raising and capacity-building

(a) Provide training for child performers and their parents and for managers and promoters of child performers on health and safety standards, work arrangements, including the maximum number of working hours, rules regarding education continuity, risks to children and reporting avenues, such as helplines;

(b) Promote the role of whistle-blowers at the community level and provide strong whistle-blower and witness protections to individuals who report misconduct in order to ensure the safety of those who disclose information about sexual abuse or harassment or other illicit behaviours;

(c) Empower and raise awareness among parents and guardians regarding parental responsibilities, the rights of children, illicit behaviours and mechanisms for reporting violations;

(d) Develop and disseminate media campaigns using audiovisual materials that depict and reinforce norms and values relating to the safeguarding of children and clarify the allowable limits for their portrayal in the entertainment sector;

(e) Introduce awareness-raising on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children into the syllabuses and learning materials of the universities and schools that

educate future entertainment industry workers, including artists and film and theatre professionals;

(f) Provide training to strengthen the capacities of specialists, including social workers, psychiatrists, therapists, teachers and law enforcement personnel, as relevant, to effectively identify, detect and investigate child sexual abuse and exploitation, rescue victims and prosecute and sanction offenders;

(g) Conduct child-friendly investigations, with dedicated testimony rooms for children and specially trained staff, to enable children to be free from fear or pressure;

(h) Conduct training within the judicial sector on the harms suffered by child victims, including to their mental health, and on moral damages and implement appropriate measures for the provision of compensation, psychological support and rehabilitation to child victims;

(i) Ensure that national plans, policies and development efforts address the prevention and eradication of poverty, violence, marginalization, trafficking, child labour and forced displacement.

3. Access to justice and services

(a) Establish comprehensive and accessible referral systems for individuals, institutions, businesses and law enforcement authorities and ensure their use by fostering collaboration between the justice system and other key actors in the areas of child protection, education and health and those in the private sector;

(b) Ensure that children who are required to participate in criminal justice proceedings are given age-appropriate, gender- and child-sensitive support and counselling to assist them at all stages of the proceedings;

(c) Ensure safeguards against secondary victimization when victims seek recourse to justice, remove procedural barriers, including statutes of limitations, that could prevent victims from coming forward and provide easy access to child-sensitive complaint and reporting mechanisms;

(d) Provide trauma-informed therapeutic services and resources to promote healing for victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation, including provisions for their care, recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration and for peer-to-peer support;

(e) Ensure accessible and specialized mental health services for victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation and foster a culture of empathy and understanding that supports long-term sustainable arrangements to reduce the risk of retraumatization;

(f) Establish and support the work of dedicated non-governmental organizations, advocates and activists, with a view to providing specialized support and services for victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

4. Research and cooperation

(a) Conduct research to provide comprehensive and evidence-based data to inform policies and strategies for safeguarding and responding to the needs of children in the entertainment industry;

(b) Strengthen international cooperation, as required under the Optional Protocol, by sharing and updating information relating to victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation and offenders to support partnerships, cooperation frameworks and alliances among countries, international organizations and development partners;

(c) Promote bilateral, regional and other types of agreements to ensure that all provisions, including on the digital dimensions of the entertainment industry, cutting across jurisdictional borders, are aligned with international labour law standards and the principles of non-discrimination and the best interests of the child;

(d) **Create cross-border protocols and develop prevention, response and punishment frameworks to combat child sexual abuse and exploitation occurring across national borders and address the transnational nature of those crimes within the entertainment industry.**
