



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

**Sixty-seventh session**

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly  
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and  
peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by Beijing Children’s Legal Aid and Research Center, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### Combating Cybercrime Against Girls by the Rule of Law

Worldwide, as online technology continues to penetrate our work and lives, girls are at increased risk of online sexual exploitation and abuse. As cyberspace is a virtual place, cybercrime against girls' rights, including online grooming, live-streaming of sexual abuse, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), online sexual coercion and extortion, online sex trafficking, and image-based sexual abuse, are highly concealed, and some cybercrimes can easily evade legal sanctions. We believe that only by using legal means to severely punish cybercrime against girls can we create a safe and healthy environment for girls to grow up in. To this end, we believe that the risk of using the internet to sexually exploit and abuse girls could be reduced by improving legislation on cyberspace governance and strengthening judicial penalties for cybercrime against girls.

In November 2021, a feminist organization Equality Now, released a report showing that online sexual exploitation and abuse are growing at an alarming pace globally. The Kenya-based Equality Now said in the report that women and girls are particularly vulnerable as offenders take advantage of the sex, gender, and structural discrimination inherent in patriarchal societies. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse and they experience multiple layers of discrimination: they are girls, they are young, and society sexualizes them.

According to the 2021 Annual Report by the Internet Watch Foundation, sexual abuse imagery of girls is increasingly being shared online with almost all (97%) child sexual abuse material identified in 2021 showing female children. The UK-based organization said in the report that sexual abuse imagery of children aged 11–13 is most prevalent, accounting for almost seven in 10 instances identified in 2020.

In Global Threat Assessment 2021 published by WeProtect Global Alliance, the UK-based organization found that in the past two years, the reporting of child sexual exploitation and abuse online has reached its highest levels. The report said evidence indicates an increase in the incidence of online grooming, the volume of child sexual abuse material available online, the sharing and distribution of child sexual abuse material and livestreaming for payment. WeProtect cited a global survey by Economist Impact that 54% of respondents said they had experienced online sexual harms during childhood, including being sent sexually explicit content or being asked to do something they felt uncomfortable with.

During the progress of female children protection, the issue of protecting girls from online abuse has not received sufficient attention and discussion, and the challenges are mainly as follows. First, if the abuse against girls does not occur in physical space, the connection between the physical presence of such behaviour and the outcome of the harm is difficult to be proved with legal evidence. Second, when the web server is located in another country or region, it is much more difficult for judicial authorities to investigate as well as to collect evidence. In addition, the legal provisions on crimes against girls in cyberspace have not been refined, and some countries still have gaps in this area of law. Moreover, internet companies are not yet fully aware of their legal responsibilities, and cybercrime against girls is not effectively curbed from the very beginning.

We believe that to fundamentally reduce and eliminate cybercrime against girls, girls should be empowered by the strength of the rule of law and protected by the authority of the law. Therefore, we call for strengthening the protection of girls by law in the following aspects:

1. Enacting laws requiring internet enterprises, network operators and online social platforms to take measures to proactively check, report and remove content related to online sexual assault against girls, and taking further measures to reduce the possibility of online sexual assault crimes against girls;
  2. Giving full play to the role of professional legal professionals and legal institutions to provide legal advice and assistance for online crimes involving girls abuse cases, provide legal advice and assistance, and implement legal supervision and legal education for parties related to the protection of girls' rights;
  3. Vigorously train more legal professionals to protect girls from online abuse, and provide legal training for police, teachers, and other personnel related to the protection of girls, as well as internet safety and security personnel.
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