United Nations: New industry guidelines for online child protection

IRIS 2014-9:1/1

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Two United Nations agencies, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), have jointly published new Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection. The original guidelines had been drawn up in 2009, following the establishment of the Child Online Protection (COP) Initiative by the ITU. But with the rapid advancements in technology and convergence in the intervening years, these UN agencies launched a consultation process in 2013 with civil society, industry and children, on updating the guidelines.

Following the consultation process, the new 42-page guidelines were published in September 2014. The general purpose of the guidelines is to ensure the safety of children when using information and communication technologies (ICT). In particular, the guidelines provide guidance to the ICT industry on protecting children's safety when children are using information and communication technologies.

The guidelines identify five important areas for industry to focus on: first, integrating child rights considerations into all appropriate corporate policies and management processes. Second, developing standard processes to handle child sexual abuse material. Third, creating a safer and age-appropriate online environment. Fourth, educating children, parents, and teachers about children's safety and their responsible use of ICTs. Fifth, promoting digital technology as a mode to further civic engagement.

Some of the specific guidance includes: ensuring an individual or team within a company has overall responsibility for child online protection within the company, the development of notice and takedown procedures, the use of technical measures to prevent underage access to inappropriate content, educate parents on their children's ICT activities, and avoiding over-blocking of developmentally appropriate content. The guidelines then set out sector-specific guidance for a number of different ICT industry sectors, including: mobile operators, internet service providers, content providers, online retailers, app developers, social media providers, public service broadcasters, and operating system developers.

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International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection, 2014 Edition, 5 September 2014

http://www.itu.int/en/cop/Documents/bD_Broch_INDUSTRY0809.pdf

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