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Topic 1: Protecting Children from Online Exploitation and Abuse
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The rapid growth of the internet and other digital resources has created new avenues for children to access educational resources, express their creativity, and socialize. At the same time, it has exposed children to an increased risk of exploitation and abuse at the hands of online predators, traffickers, cyberbullies, scammers, and other dangerous individuals. The emergence of artificial intelligence has introduced additional risks, creating new forms of abuse by generating content that allows for sophisticated impersonation and deception.

Children worldwide are falling victim to abuse at the hands of individuals online, and the statistics are overwhelming: 1 in 5 internet-using children experienced exploitation or abuse through digital technologies and platforms in 2026.[1]More than 9 million children were asked to participate in non-consensual coercive sexual interactions, and an estimated 15 million children worldwide were exposed to unwanted explicit content online. In 2025, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reported over 50,000 cases of sextortion, a form of online blackmail where perpetrators threaten to share the victim's intimate images or private information if they don't comply with demands.[2] The WHO estimates that 1 in 6 school-aged children experience cyberbullying.[3] Furthermore, it is evident that there are significant barriers to reporting, with less than 1% of cases being reported to authorities and 40% of cases being disclosed to nobody at all.[4]

Beyond the immediate threat to children's safety and privacy, online exploitation and abuse can have severe impacts on mental health, with victims being four times more likely to experience suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

A coordinated international effort is needed to protect children's safety and privacy while preserving access to digital resources that help them socialize, learn, and express themselves. The following are some questions to help guide your research:

- Can existing international laws be adjusted or strengthened to address the online exploitation and abuse of children?

[1] https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/1-5-children-across-21-countries-have-experienced-tech-facilitated-sexual
[2] https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2026/ncmec-releases-new-sextortion-data-2025
[3] https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/27-03-2024-one-in-six-school-aged-children-experiences-cyberbullying--finds-new-who-europe-study
[4] https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/reports/through-childrens-eyes?trk=article-ssr-frontend-pulse_little-text-block

- How can reporting systems and assistance for victims be better provided?
- How can UNICEF cooperate with other organizations and countries to investigate online crimes against children?
- What measures should social media companies and other digital platforms implement to encourage online safety for children and prevent dangerous interactions?
- How can schools and governments educate children in online safety? What about children in developing countries and underserved communities?
- How can artificial intelligence be regulated to prevent the creation and distribution of child sexual assault material?

These are not meant to be an exhaustive list of topics, so please don't limit your research to these questions! They are meant to act as a springboard for you to start your research and help you develop a well-informed stance for your country, identify gaps in current policy, and propose innovative and practical solutions that appropriately reflect the complexity and gravity of this issue.

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If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at zlam@mail.yu.edu. I am looking forward to hearing your ideas and seeing you engage in thoughtful and informed discussions with your fellow delegates!

Best,

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Chair, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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