

Report of the Session of Dynamic Coalition on Child Online Safety at the IGF in Vilnius 2010

Organiser: ECPAT International

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The dynamic coalition on Child Online Safety convened at the IGF Vilnius and had a participation of more than 30 representatives belonging to various disciplines. One of the highlight of the session was active participation from a delegate of young people who participated in the session. This was the first time children and young people engaged directly in the forum to share their comments and views on their online experiences and what protection measures are needed from their perspective.

The session started with the moderator giving a brief history of how the dynamic coalition started back in 2007 in Rio and how it was felt that such coalition could continue to lobby for child protection in such high level policy forums as the IGF by bringing together key stakeholders. Since 2007, the dynamic coalition on child online safety has continued to engage in the IGF process, by bringing ever growing membership to the forum and organizing relevant workshops that allowed sharing of information, good practices and highlighting challenges that remained ahead for child protection online. Various agencies including government representatives had been provided opportunity to share their initiatives, connect with other child protection agencies and learn from work done in other parts of the world.

It was made evident that through the combined work of the members of the coalition, the strong interest in child protection within the IGF process was made very clear and it was urged that the commitment from the members to remain as strong as it has been so far.

The session also identified that the members also need to engage in key processes that were part of the bigger IGF such as the national and regional IGFs and how the members could actually contribute meaningfully in those meetings.

It was noted by the session that even though a strong Human rights sentiment has emerged within the IGF and more child centric workshops were organized every year, within the core IGF structure (such as the MAG and the friends of the chair) there was a noticeable lack of child protection expertise and it was recommended that such meetings be attended by the member organizations who had relevant expertise and say on child online protection , to integrate such expertise in the development process and also the deliberations of those meetings so that such recommendations can be cross cutting.

One of the key thing identified is that within the IGF process, unless there are key drivers (both individuals and organizations, eg- Madam Mubarak in the case of IGF Sharm Ek Sheikh, 2009) who is strongly invested in child protection issues, it is extremely difficult to insert the topic within the regular

discourse of the IGF meetings- such as the MAG. Not that people are opposed to the child protection issues, but that is not their core competency and people who have such expertise and knowledge are sadly absent from such events. It was strongly recommended that members of Dynamic Coalition on Child online safety should find their ways to get into the MAG sessions and network with others to make sure such topics are not left out during the regular discussions.

Childnet International shared their experience of bringing children and young people to the forum and how such challenges were handled. They expressed key interest in coming to the next IGF with stronger youth participation. It was mentioned that the national IGF in the UK served as a platform to prepare and train young people so that they could meaningfully participate in the Vilnius IGF.

It was articulated in the session that the whole idea of children's rights was missing out, particularly in relation to online protection as many of the work that is currently being shared and discussed is around online safety that undermines the true essence of children's rights and their right to access information. It was pointed out that lot of parallel efforts are being made without truly leveraging or learning from others. One recommendation was to look at opportunities within IGF, see what others are bringing to the table, such as individual rights and access to information, technology and rights to freedom of expression etc. that may infringe on the rights of the child and also to complement the various efforts that are already in force to strengthen the protection mechanisms for children.

One topic of interest was to strengthen the focus for Kenya IGF in 2011 and prepare the tools and services for the upcoming IGF in Nairobi and allow the African nations to benefit from hosting the IGF in Kenya. The recommendations was to sort of create a turn-key project that would provide the African nations with the required knowledge and tools for fighting against exploitation of children online- something that can be tailor made for them , given that technology such as mobile and broad bands are increasingly made more accessible in these nations.

Family Online Safety Institute shared their GRID project with the team that serves as an online database of information on Internet Safety for children in many countries around the world and how the tool can be made use of by the members.

The government of Egypt representative shared with the members how the IGF and the dynamic coalition on child online safety was instrumental in creating interest on Online safety within the government of Egypt and how they have learnt by participating in subsequent forums. The Ministry of ICT in Egypt has strongly encouraged the participation and empowerment of young people and has led to creation of mainstreamed programs that involve them as planners and implementers. There has been a dynamic coalition for young people established with the active interest and participation from young people from Egypt. It was also reported that the ministry is also working with the ISPs in Egypt to block child abuse images and that they were extremely grateful to the international experts that they had been able to contact and consult with , thanks to the dynamic coalition on child online safety at the IGF.

It was also requested that the events and the proceedings at the IGF should also be linked to the Safer Internet Day that takes place annually and allow the global entities (many of the Dynamic Coalition

members are part of the event) to engage and share their activities and build collective knowledge on online safety issues.

eNACSO shared with the team a document called “ The right click” that served as the agenda for action for various sectors such as Governments, industry or child protection experts and highlighted recommendations in terms of the different types of technology and policies that were being developed in a lot of the countries and address them from a European perspective.

ITU shared the guidelines that they produced for children in six languages and how two years into the COP project, ITU is expanding within its member countries to adopt the guidelines. It was also mentioned that ITU will sponsor the participation of children and young people for the next IGF and look forward to working with the partners to strengthen the COP initiative.

The deputy minister of science and technology from Costa Rica mentioned the challenges that they were facing in creating solutions to protect children online, with the fact that technologies such as broadband is slowly getting introduced in the country. They were already identifying areas of risks and vulnerabilities that can confront children and young people as well as adults and while they prepare for their technological developments, they would appreciate any support and guidance from the members of the dynamic coalition on child online safety.

The representative of the European Commission shared the news of a major e-survey they conducted with 1000 children and 1000 parents in 25 countries of Europe and how they have also worked with the social networks to create policy guidelines. The work with the European directive to include specific provisions on child pornography and child sexual exploitation was also mentioned.

Representative from ConnectSafely.org shared the American perspectives on online safety and how exciting it was for them to see that the rest of the world was also joining the movement to protect children from online harms and risks. They also supported the idea that it should be more than teaching children how to keep themselves away from harm, but strongly build their mindset to enjoy technology and empower them to be active users of the space. All these require pro-active measures from all duty bearers and effective collaboration.

Participants from the net missions program in Hong Kong- all youth delegates, shared their opinions on Internet safety and the importance of participation of children and young people in this type of International event and were happy to be in the forum sharing their ideas and values with adults and those who could make a difference in their lives.

Representative from Cyber safety group in New Zealand proposed moving the Safer Internet Day by a month from February to March as it would suit them better. They were also trying to figure out how the already established agencies on Child protection can help the developing nations following the suggestions made earlier in the session. It was pointed out that cyber security and child protection is more complex than issuing out some safety guidelines to children and young people. A much larger

understanding and collaboration is required among the relevant agencies and child protection authorities to provide a more comprehensive solution.

The law enforcement representative from UK highlighted how they see the UNCRC to provide them with the framework for child protection and how initiatives in UK take a multi disciplinary approach to strengthen each other's work. It was pointed out that social networks are playing a big role and individuals need to be trained and guided on keeping private information protected. There was less than average knowledge on protecting privacy settings for Facebook. It was pointed out that attention should be paid towards young children also and trained from early years on online risks and harms.

Representatives from CISCO, International Centre for missing and exploited children (ICMEC) and Brazilian delegates also made interventions on how they want to be part of the dynamic coalition and participate in forthcoming IGFs.

The moderator thanked all the participants at the end of the meeting and promised that the coalition will convene again at the IGF Kenya and will continue to move the issue of child safety and protection at the IGF by organizing relevant workshop.

