

5Rights welcomes UN General Comment ushering in new standards for children's rights in digital space

4th February 2021
For Immediate Release

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has today adopted General Comment No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. 5Rights Foundation, alongside a steering committee of child rights experts, has supported the Committee to reach this extraordinary moment.

“It’s official – children's rights apply in the digital world! This is a major step forward for how we conceive of the responsibilities of governments and technology businesses - they must now act in children’s best interests, and observe their rights to privacy, safety and access to information that is truthful, adapted to their age and in their own language. We look forward to working with governments in the coming months to ensure the Comment is implemented at a national level.”

Baroness Kidron OBE, 5Rights Chair and Steering Group Member

To those who say children’s rights apply online as offline but are not sure how to do this – read General Comment 25! To those who worry that it’s too difficult or expensive or impractical to realise children’s rights in the digital environment – read General Comment 25! To the 700 children we consulted around the world, and the many others they spoke for, this is for you!

Professor Sonia Livingstone OBE, Steering Group Member

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the single most important expression of children's rights and the needs of childhood and is the basis for much domestic legislation in relation to children around the world. Following the adoption of the Comment, the 196 States who are signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child will now have to report formally on its provisions. Its adoption makes explicit - for the first time - that children's rights apply in the digital world.

The Comment is a culmination of three years of work for the 5Rights Foundation, supporting the Committee on the Rights of the Child to author the GC 25. Forty Nation States, hundreds of organisations, 700 children and 50 dedicated experts from 27 countries have contributed to the process. Today we celebrate this incredible joint effort on behalf of children across the globe.

The culture and practice of the digital environment is inseparable from any other aspect of childhood. Children want – and need – to be a part of the digital world; not just as users of digital products, services and platforms, but as creators, decision-makers and as citizens, both now and in the future. The General Comment can ensure that they do so in a safe and rights respecting way, and we look forward to the Comment being published in the coming weeks.

The adoption of the GC today is a major step in 5Rights’ mission to build the digital world that young people deserve.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About 5Rights Foundation

5Rights Foundation develops new policy, creates innovative projects and challenges received narratives to ensure governments, regulators, the tech sector and society understand, recognise and prioritise children’s needs and rights in the digital world. In all of our work, a child is anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our work is pragmatic and implementable, allowing us to work with governments, intergovernmental institutions, professional associations, academics, and young people across the globe to build the digital world that young people deserve.

5Rights is a registered charity. Charity number: 1178581.

Background

The UN Convention of the Rights of the of the Child (UNCRC) was drafted 30 years ago, the same year as the invention of the world wide web, but to date these two ‘worlds’ have failed to recognise each other. For children and young people to realise their rights they must be able to realise them in all contexts – including the digital.

5Rights supported the UN Committee on Rights of the Child to develop a General Comment on Children’s Rights in relation to the Digital World.

General Comments are the mechanism through which the human rights treaty bodies interpret rights in a changing world. The General Comment on the UNCRC is an authoritative interpretation of how children’s rights should be promoted and upheld in the digital environment and the digital age.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child were assisted by a Steering Group who helped develop the General Comment. The Steering Group was made up of:

- Baroness Beeban Kidron OBE

- Professor Sonia Livingstone OBE
- Dr Amanda Third
- Gerison Lansdown
- Jutta Croll

Spokespeople are available to comment on the adoption of the Comment.

Please contact al@5rightsfoundation.com