Statement of Ireland

52nd session of the Human Rights Council

Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child and the digital environment

13 March 2023

Delivered by Katie, aged 16

Thank you Mr. President and thank you to the high commissioner and the panellists for their presentations.
It is an honor for me to participate in this meeting concerning children's rights in the digital environment. We the children of Ireland believe that our voices must be heard on this topic as our lives have been almost entirely characterized by our use of the digital space.

As the first generation to grow up in a world dominated by the use of digital spaces, our entire development has been characterized by digital environments and how we use them. They have allowed us to find communities across the world, enabled people to stay connected with friends and family abroad, provided invaluable educational resources, and enabled us to spread awareness about social issues

But for all the good that the digital environment does provide and all the ways that we rely on it, it can also be very harmful. Being a space where anyone can spread their voice across the world it can provide a platform for those who wish to harm others likewise It can provide a platform for those who wish to spread disinformation and incite hatred.

The vast majority of children today have received some form of internet safety education, unfortunately, it tends to be lacking and out-date. schools should teach children real ways to protect their data and spot predatory behaviour and misinformation. Without a correction, in the way that we teach internet safety, more and more people will continue to be harmed.

We need to ensure children and parents have the skills to navigate the digital space safely and take advantage of its opportunities.

Although the chaotic nature of digital space can pose dangers to children's rights it is an undeniable fact that in this age it is needed for a child to fully access their rights to education, culture, and leisure.