**Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child
Part 1**

**Statement by Kidus**

**Main Intervention**

My name is Kidus. I am from Ethiopia and in grade 12. I serve on the National Child Parliament as the Speaker of the House. I’d to express my deepest gratitude to those who organized this event so that we children can amplify our voices. Let us not forget that children around the world suffer from various forms of violence, abuse and exploitation because they are deprived of participation on issues that matter to them.

Talking on issues related to digital technology is very crucial for us children. as we are standing in front of both immense opportunities as well as mounting challenges coming from the digital technology. Digital technology is bringing unlimited opportunities for children to educate and express ourselves, socialize with others and define ourselves in terms of who we are in the future. As also mentioned by Mariana, access to technology is specifically important for children from developing countries like ours.

A couple of months ago, I had the privilege of speaking at the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in Maseru, Lesotho. During discussions with children coming from Rwanda, Eswatini, Lesotho, and DRC, we realized that in Africa, not only is the digital access limited, but that safety issues are mounting because of lack of preventive mechanisms. It is also my delight today to speak at the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council focusing on the preventive aspect of the digital environment.

As much as the digital technology is providing great opportunities for children, it also poses serious challenges affecting their wellbeing and rights. I am aware that children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, prostitution, bullying, trafficking, labor exploitation, ethnic/race-based violence including, Insults, naming and shaming, discrimination, intimidation, hate speech, cyberaggression, etc. Bad contents like pornography, exploitative information, attacking others based on false narrative, misinformation and disinformation, and information encouraging children to engage in unlawful or harmful activities like joining armed groups are causing harms to children.

Equally important to working towards creating digital access, we need to apply every wisdom so that children are protected from all forms of harm floating on the digital environment. Well-designed preventive mechanisms put in place ensure the wellbeing of children on line.

Let me kindly but strongly remind you that prevention is always better than cure. Prevention is also cheaper and safer as opposed to investing in looking for remedy. Before children are victim harmed and suffer physically, mentally, socially and psychologically, let us put in place preventive mechanisms so that they remain safe. Let us put prevention at the top of our priorities. Let the resources, knowledge, power and skills we have be mobilized towards ensuring safety on the digital environment. Safe digital environment is a required for raising safe children. That way, we can ensure the future generation to be holistically well, more productive, and peaceful.

In conclusion, as also mentioned by the high commissioner, on behalf of children around the world, I implore all of you to take all legislative and administrative measures to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation on the digital environment.

So, my question to you High Commissioner is:

* what are you doing to ensure that the UN is working to ensure children’s online safety? How can we all use digital media effectively to address digital issues affecting children such as abuse, exploitation, and violence?

Thank you for your kind attention.

**Final Remark**

1. Ensure children’s participation on issues that matter to them, and their voices must be listened when governments develop legislations, policies, programs, and services on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment.
2. children’s online safety should be integrated within national child protection policies.
3. Regularly update data to understand the implications of the digital environment on children’s lives.
4. Provide specialized training and capacity development to all relevant stakeholders including children parents/guardians, caregivers, and others on how children can safely use the internet.
5. States parties should prohibit by law the profiling or targeting of children of any age for commercial purposes.
6. States parties should ensure that appropriate enforcement mechanisms and legislations are put in place to protect children from the crimes that occur on the digital environment
7. State parties should also regularly review, adopt and update national legislations in line with international human rights standards.
8. There should be reporting mechanisms put in place such as hotlines for children, parents/guardians, care givers, etc. to report incidents law enforcement bodies.

In conclusion

Today's revolution is focusing more on technology, with transactions, studies and other activities taking place online. Leaders must embrace and work to ensure that the young generation has access to the internet and to protect them from any form of violence abuse and exploitation on the internet.