

WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

MODEL UNITED NATIONS



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROTECTING YOUTH FROM SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

MAY 12-14, 2026

KEY ISSUES:

1. Protecting children from the addictive algorithms used to entice and maintain social interaction.
2. Addressing age restrictions as imposed by countries
3. Finding the balance between freedom of speech and generated hate speech, AI generated faked images and videos
4. Creating a social media code of conduct.

Background

A landmark lawsuit has been launched by a 20 year old woman against Meta, TikTok and YouTube claiming that the algorithms used by these social media platforms not only are addictive but that they are purposely addictive. The plaintiff claims that she suffers from anxiety, depression, and other mental health effects as the result of continued and prolonged use of social media platforms. She also alleges that not only were these algorithms addictive but that the companies, despite knowing the addictive nature of these algorithms, purposely targeted young teenagers, understanding that early exposure to addictive activities would also lead to life-long addictions. The lawsuit is similar in some measure to the successful lawsuits launched against tobacco companies in the 1970s when it was proven in court that the companies knew, and kept secret, their knowledge of the harmful effects of smoking. Two major differences between these two sets of lawsuits is the understanding of the difference between physical addiction as proven in the tobacco company cases and the psychological addiction asserted in the social media lawsuits. The second difference is the argument that any restrictions and liabilities directed against these platforms violates freedom of speech. Of significance is that there are an additional 1,200 cases pending and this case may set a precedence for the upcoming cases.

<https://recovered.org/blog/landmark-youth-social-media-addiction-lawsuit>

The lawsuit alleged against the social media platforms is not the only issue faced by these platforms which are not only massive in size but also cross tran-national borders. The AI generative chatbot Grok, developed for use in X (previously known as Twitter) has been used to generate images that sexualize unsuspecting victims, in particular youths. To X's credit, it has added restrictions to Grok's ability to generate such images but Grok is not the only generative AI platform available to unscrupulous users. The use of faked images, videos and other social media formats is an increasingly growing issue that subjects people, particular vulnerable groups like youth. Young female celebrities have been particularly susceptible to AI generated pornographic images which not only cause psychological trauma but ruin professional and private reputations.

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/grok-and-the-ai-porn-problem>

Finally, in response to the damages sustained by youth with regard to mental health issues, there is growing concern that academic performances in school have been affected. As a result, Australia is the first country in the world to impose age

restrictions on social media use. The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 calls for a mandatory minimum of 16 before youth can open certain social media account. The bill also does not allow for parents to give consent to their children to use these platforms. The bill does not punish underage users if they violate the restrictions outlined in the bill. Rather it seeks to punish the social media platforms with fines reaching \$50 million. Other countries,

The Australian Government passed a new law called the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 on 28 November 2024. This law introduces a mandatory minimum age of 16 for accounts on certain social media platforms. It came into effect on 10 December 2025, and parents cannot give their consent to let under-16s use these platforms. Other countries, like Canada, are considering similar legislation. There are obvious concerns over such actions including the viability of enforcement and restrictions on free speech. Some social media platforms like Meta argue that such regulations are hard to monitor, especially as sophisticated youth have found ways around such restrictions. They have argued that the best way to restrict youth from accessing certain social media platforms is at the source: when purchasing cell phones or apps which would require age verification.

Regardless of the difficulties in enforcement, the issue of social media responsibility is again raised.

The United Nations has already responded, to some degree, to social media bans. On one hand the United Nations is opposed to general social media bans as it restricts freedom of speech and human rights. On the other hand the UN that stopping hateful online content is not censorship. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk wrote: "Allowing hate speech and harmful content online has real world consequences. **Regulating this content is not censorship,**". This is partially in response to the decision by Mark Zuckerberg, head of Meta, that the company would end its fact-checking programme in the United States. He argued, that fact-checking ran the risk of being politically biased, resulting in too much censorship.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/01/1158886>

The United Nations reaction to social media censorship can certainly be applied to social media manipulations that lead to harms suffered by youth.

Issues for Consideration

1. Should social media platforms be held responsible for creating algorithms that are addictive. What measures should social media platforms implement in order to protecting children from such addictive algorithms?
2. Should social media platforms be banned from allowing AI generated sexualization of children through images and other content? What measures should be put in place to regulate AI generative programs?
3. Should countries consider age restrictions for social media use as imposed by certain countries?
4. How can a balance between censorship and freedom of speech be reached when it comes to social media platforms?

5. Should social media companies be required to create a code of conduct for administrators and users alike when using such platforms?

<https://www.unicef.org.au/unicef-youth/staying-safe-online/social-media-ban-explainer?srsId=AfmBOor4mvMGSbnr0qCpUule1JUDN3zw4LVAZGZil4g-F7SEW8vXPwo>

<https://recovered.org/blog/landmark-youth-social-media-addiction-lawsuit>

Grok and the A.I. Porn Problem

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/grok-and-the-ai-porn-problem>

Social media ban

<https://www.unicef.org.au/unicef-youth/staying-safe-online/social-media-ban-explainer?srsId=AfmBOor4mvMGSbnr0qCpUule1JUDN3zw4LVAZGZil4g-F7SEW8vXPwo>

Key Issues for Discussion

1. How can effective actions be taken to alleviate the concerns that Indigenous peoples experience world wide?
2. How can Indigenous voices become more clearly heard and accepted by governments world wide?
3. How can Indigenous ways of life be more effectively protected?
4. How can the quality of life of Indigenous populations be more effectively accessed?
5. Should the Sustainable Development Goals be amended to include specific Indigenous concerns?
6. Should a clear definition of Indigenous Peoples be incorporated into UN terminology?

Questions for your country:

1. How pervasive are the problems experienced by Indigenous populations world wide felt in your country?
2. How have Indigenous populations been traditionally treated within your country?

3. What meaningful steps has your country taken in dealing with Indigenous issues?

Resources:

Articles

How a Torn-off Indigenous Headdress Became Symbol of Cultural and Structural Affront at COP30. Earth.org, December 6th, 2025. <https://earth.org/how-a-torn-off-indigenous-headdress-became-symbol-of-cultural-and-structural-affront-at-cop30/>

Indigenous Peoples' Rights. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/>

UN Documents

United Nations. Fight Racism. Indigenous Peoples. <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/indigenous-peoples>

United Nations. United Nations Human Rights. Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-indigenous-peoples>

UN Resolutions

General Assembly. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, first passed in 2007 and reaffirmed in 2022. (A/77/460).

International Decade of Indigenous Languages ([Resolution A/RES/74/135](#)) (IDIL 2022-2032)