

Local

Zain Group's report on Child Online Safety highlights risks facing children

Published in collaboration with Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development

NEW YORK: The Co-Chairs of the Broadband Commission Working Group on Child Online Safety, Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, and the World Childhood Foundation USA (Childhood) announced the publication of a new report on Child Online Safety: Minimizing the Risk of Violence, Abuse and Exploitation Online. The report is a collective effort and draws upon the expertise of the Broadband Commissioners and experts from around the world. The report was presented at a high-level meeting at the UN, entitled 'Children and the Digital World: Threats and Opportunities.' Queen Silvia of Sweden, Founder of Childhood attended and delivered a keynote address.

Broadband connectivity brings many benefits to children, including access to education and entertainment, it also has a dark side to it as it exposes children to major risks and threats online as well as different forms of violence and exploitation, such as child sexual exploitation and abuse, bullying and radicalization, among other critical vulnerabilities. The new Child Online Safety report gathers the available evidence on the scale and nature of the risks and harms children face online and provides actionable recommendations for how to prioritize children's online safety. The report was developed under the leadership of Dr Joanna Rubinstein, President and CEO of Childhood USA, and Zain Group CEO of Operations, Scott Gengenheimer who co-chair the working group.

A key point made in the report is that we need to prioritize child online safety, especially in anticipation of the expansion of the broadband in the developing world where most children live today. All the stakeholders, governments, regulators, operators, Internet service provider, NGOs and civil society and academia have to join forces in implementing common strategies to make the Internet safer for children in order to help prepare future generations to thrive in

the digital space. These steps include incorporating measures addressing child online protection in the national broadband plans, ensuring that applications and services are age-appropriate and save per design, and that we deploy technology-driven solutions to improve child online safety.

Commenting on the publication of the report, Dr Joanna Rubinstein commented, "Millions of children are online every day using digital devices. They benefit from getting access to information, education and entertainment. However, they are also exposed to abuse and exploitation including sexual abuse, bullying and even radicalization. It is our duty to prevent this from happening and requires collective action. This report demonstrates the necessity of taking action now and sheds light on how we can take practical steps to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 calling on ending all forms of violence against children by 2030."

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary - represent the global commitment to a better future for all, especially to children. In 2018, the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development established the Working Group for Child Online Safety with the primary objective to raise awareness of the online risks and threats to children.

"There is a clear and urgent global need to work together to ensure that connectivity embellishes our children's experience of the world, rather than impairs it," said Doreen Bogdan-Martin,

Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU. "Today's new report and Declaration by the Broadband Commission Working Group on Child Online Safety are welcome and valuable contributions to the global store of best practice, as well as serving as important new inputs to ITU's Child Online Protection Framework."

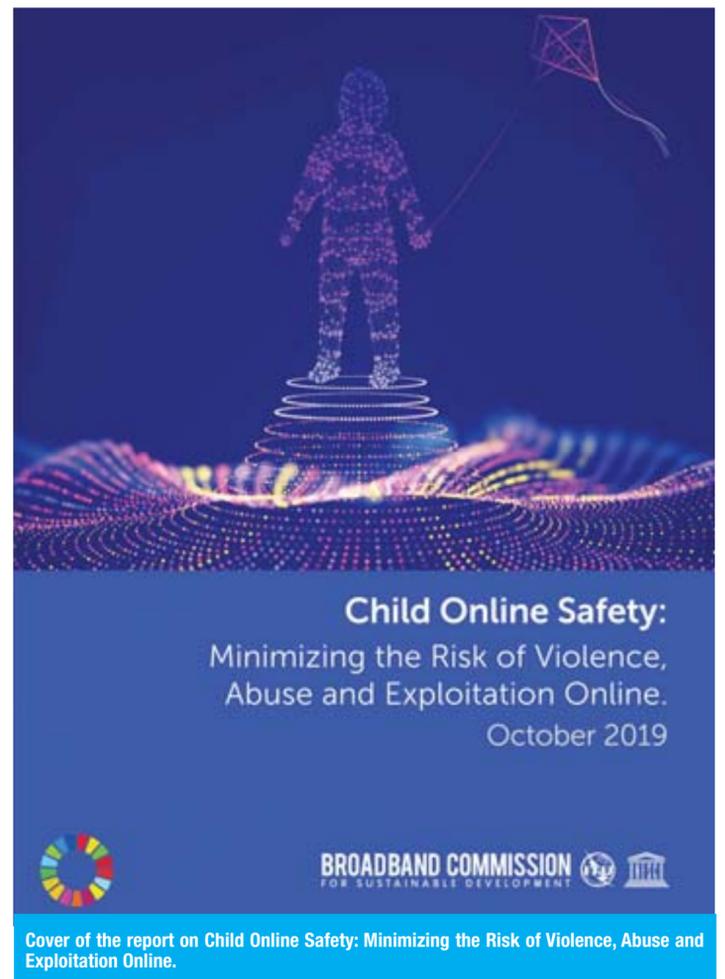
Scott Gengenheimer said, "Child Online

Safety is a topic that is of great importance for Zain and we are committed to playing our key role in addressing this on a global level. Our region has conflicts and challenges that are quite unique compared to other places in the world as well as the highest share of youth in the world, coupled with a rising broadband connectivity rate. It is imperative for organizations which are based in the region, to be at the forefront of the effort to protect the most vulnerable victims both in the physical world as well as in cyberspace."

Zain continues to champion the cause of child rights and protection given that challenges in tackling the dark side of connectivity are mounting. The report aims to raise the prioritization of child online safety among all key stakeholders and decision makers including in governments, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and academia. Zain has been bold and unapologetic in shedding light on topics related to child abuse and the need to stamp it out, which can sometimes be considered a taboo topic in region.

The Internet has already transformed our lives at an unprecedented pace and scale. For children in developed countries, the digital world is the one they are born into and live within every single day. The Internet and its associated technologies are completely integrated into the way they live their lives across a very broad spectrum of activities. Governments, academia, civil society and the private sector must invest in and accelerate the development of scalable solutions to address abuse and exploitation of children online. Achieving the SDGs for children by 2030 requires innovation and collective action.

Broadband connectivity is a key enabler for children's future, as it ensures that all children have an equal opportunity to thrive, so that no child is left behind. It also plays a critical role as an enabling component as well as helping fuel the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals.



Cover of the report on Child Online Safety: Minimizing the Risk of Violence, Abuse and Exploitation Online.

Zain, Mentor Arabia to host Queen Silvia of Sweden in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, and MBC Al-Amal last month announced a strategic partnership to support Mentor Arabia Foundation. At a press conference in the Four Seasons hotel, Beirut, the three entities revealed the first visit to Lebanon of Queen Silvia of Sweden, President of Mentor International, scheduled for October 15, 2019.

Mentor Arabia's mission is to empower Arab children and youth and prevent them from risky behaviors through policies, capacity development, advocacy, awareness campaigns, knowledge and partnerships. As part of their regional partnership, Zain Group and MBC Al-Amal agreed to collaborate with Mentor Arabia in different programs aimed at supporting the work of Arab youth in the community.

Queen Silvia's visit will include Queen Silvia launching the Youth Mentoring Platform initiative, a partnership between Mentor Arabia and the American University of Beirut (AUB). The program aims to create a "dialogue space" for youth to express their views with respect to challenges they may face and exploring possible opportunities, solutions, and enabling factors to maximize their potential.

A gala event is set to be held on October 15 attended by Queen Silvia and diplomatic, corporate, media, academic and social figures, will feature the revelation of further youth-oriented initiatives and cooperation details. The event will also include the presentation of the Mentor Arabia Young Entrepreneurs Award to one female and one male recipient. This award recognizes and encourages young Arab leaders who have made exceptional contributions in social, humanitarian or development work, which have impacted society positively.

During the press conference, Lebanon Minister of Social Affairs, Dr Richard Kouyoumjian commented, "Governments around the world should support the work of NGOs that empower young people and strengthen their capacities to protect them from dangerous behaviors, while at the same time developing their communities."

Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait Chief Communications Officer who represented Zain at the press conference commented, "As a leading telecommunications operator across the region, Zain feels a deep sense of responsibility to play a role in guiding and inspiring our youth to make good decisions in reaching their potential. We are also passionate about their protection from harm in the physical sense as well as in cyberspace."

Thuraya Ismail, Executive Director of Mentor Arabia said, "The core of everything we do is to make a difference in young people's lives and so far, we have been able to make significant progress in this area; thanks to the support of outstanding people and organizations."

Mazen Hayek, spokesperson of MBC Group said, "Our partnership with Mentor Arabia translates MBC's efforts to empower Arab youth and motivates



BEIRUT: From the press conference.



Waleed Al-Khashti speaks during the press conference.



(From left) Mazen Hayek, Thuraya Ismail, Dr Richard Kouyoumjian, Waleed Al-Khashti, and Egyptian singer Abu.

them to reach their potential. Our consistent message at the MBC Group remains inspired by our institutional motto: 'We see hope everywhere'."

The famous Egyptian singer Abu, a member of Mentor Arabia friends' committee, emphasized on "the role of art in raising more awareness on the dangers of risky behaviors and to widen the public interest in organizations such as Mentor Arabia because of their positive impact on society in all its categories".

Established in 2006 with its regional head office in Beirut, Lebanon, Mentor Arabia Foundation, is a non-

governmental organization, and part of Mentor International, founded in 1994 and headed by Queen Silvia of Sweden. The Foundation has eight national chapters in Europe and USA.

Mentor Arabia Foundation is led by a board of

reputable trustees, chaired by Prince Turki Bin Talal Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud and consists of representatives from multiple esteemed regional and international organizations alongside leading public figures, youth, specialists and scientists.