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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**CELEBRATION OF THE DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD**  
**JUNE 16, 2023**



**Accra, June 16, 2023** - The Day of the African Child (DAC) is an annual commemoration celebrated on June 16th. Established in 1991 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, now known as the AU), the Day of the African Child recognises Africa's youth and encourages deep reflection and commitment to addressing the numerous challenges faced by young people on the continent.

The theme for the 2023 Day of the African Child (DAC) is ***"The Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment."*** This theme was selected by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), upon the observation that the digital age has significantly transformed how children exercise and experience their rights. The Committee emphasised that the digital world plays a crucial role in shaping children's lives, influencing their ability to exercise their rights, and determining whether these rights are upheld or violated. Therefore, it is essential to consider the impact of the digital environment on children in relation to the rights outlined in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as national laws.



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The explosion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has created new opportunities for children and young people to communicate, connect, share, learn, access information, and express their opinions on matters that affect their lives and their communities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 recognised that ICTs can be a key enabler to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Though empowering, ICT can also reinforce and magnify existing fault lines and worsen economic, and other, inequalities. If digital inclusion is not achieved, existing inequalities are likely to increase, and new ones may arise.

Although the digital environment was not originally designed for children, it plays a significant role in their lives today. Access to digital technologies can support children in realising the full range of their civil, political, cultural, economic, and social rights. Children's rights online include their rights to seek, receive and impart information; the right to express themselves in the digital space; the right to privacy; non-discrimination; and the right to be protected from harm. The best interests of the child should be the paramount consideration of any matter regarding children under the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560), and this includes the digital space.

The Government of Ghana, as part of national efforts to secure the country's digital ecosystem, established the Cyber Security Authority (CSA) following the passage of the landmark Cybersecurity Act, 2020 (Act 1038) to regulate cybersecurity activities in the country, promote the development of cybersecurity in the country, and promote the protection of children online in accordance with Section 4(j) of Act 1038. In protecting the digital rights of children, the CSA oversees policy development on child online protection; capacity building and awareness creation of child online safety and related cybersecurity issues; provision of victim support; and research and development of practical tools to help minimise risks children face online.

A report from UNICEF indicates that more than 13,000 images and videos of child sexual abuse were reportedly accessed or uploaded from Ghana in 2020. Furthermore, the report also explored instances of romance scams and the posting of explicit sexual content. An ongoing national survey conducted by the Cyber Security Authority in selected Senior High Schools in the Greater Accra Region on the online habits, risks, and vulnerabilities of students using the internet, has revealed that approximately 64.35% of students actively participate in social media platforms. A significant portion of these students reported receiving pornographic materials in various formats, including images, text, or videos. Also, 55.90% of students had interacted with strangers they met online, highlighting the potential dangers of offline meetings. Additionally, the survey also recorded significant instances of romance scams and the posting of explicit sexual content.

Based on the survey findings, 20% of children engage in self-generated sexual images and videos by solicitation and/or coercion and share them with supposed intimate partners. Forms of digitally facilitated violence and sexual exploitation and abuse may also be perpetrated within a child's circle of trust, by family or friends or, for adolescents, by intimate partners; and may include cyberaggression, including bullying



and threats to reputation and the non-consensual creation or sharing of sexualized text or images. Unfortunately, these images and videos are later exploited to blackmail these children. This year, cases regarding children received via the CSA's Point of Contact have been sextortion cases. Unfortunately, half of all cases received had children as the perpetrators.

Though the Cybersecurity Act, 2020 (Act 1038) criminalises online child sexual abuse and exploitation, protecting and promoting the digital rights of children is a shared responsibility. Reporting online sexual abuse, cyberbullying and online scams should be the first option when such cases arise. Destigmatising online offences is one of the quickest ways to address and curtail its prevalence.

Child perpetrators are not exempted from being punished. The growing prevalence of children blackmailing other children for sexual favours or money must stop. To curb this dangerous trend, such children will be prosecuted under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (Act 653). Article 20(2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child provides that Governments should assist parents and guardians in the performance of childcare and ensure the development of institutions responsible for providing care of children.

As Ghana celebrates the Day of the African Child today, the CSA calls on parents and caregivers to build their capacity to teach their children how to stay safe online and regulate the online activities of their children. The CSA will be developing guidelines for Parents and Educators to help them protect children online. As indicated in Article 9 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, parents and guardians have a duty to provide guidance and direction in the exercise of these rights, having regard to the evolving capacities, and best interests of the child.

Let us all: Parents, Media, Schools, and the Government, take up this challenge today to provide a better online experience for Ghanaian children.

Happy Day of the African Child





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## About the Cyber Security Authority (CSA)

The Cyber Security Authority (CSA) has been established by the Cybersecurity Act, 2020 (Act 1038) to regulate cybersecurity activities in the country; to promote the development of cybersecurity in the country and to provide for related matters.

Kindly follow the CSA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#) for Advisories, Safety Tips and News on Cybersecurity: **Cyber Security Authority Ghana.**

