



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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The role of policymakers and regulators in promoting a rights-based approach to the regulation of digital platforms

Concept note and provisional programme for the hybrid side-event during UNESCO Global Conference *Internet for Trust: Towards Guidelines for Regulating Digital Platforms for Information as Public Good*

Tuesday 21 February 2023, 14.00 to 18.00 CET (Paris time)

Room IX – Fontenoy building, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

BACKGROUND

The IPU and UNESCO share a common interest in protecting and promoting the right to freedom of expression and have decided to bolster their cooperation through the implementation of various activities aimed at protecting and promoting fundamental freedoms, access to information and digital governance with respect to emerging technologies.

The internet and social media have paved the way for more interaction and connectivity, but also facilitated the rise of online intimidation and mis- and disinformation. For MPs, as public figures, this is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, several of them have been victims of online abuse for exercising their right to freedom of expression and subject to campaigns of misinformation. On the other hand, MPs can also use their online presence to do exactly the same vis-à-vis others.

The purpose of this hybrid side-event is to identify the role and responsibility that parliaments and policymakers have in helping ensure that digital platforms are used and regulated in a human rights-compliant manner. Importantly, the session will also explore the capacity building needs of policymakers for digital governance based on UNESCO's Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation Competency framework. The side-event will also aim to share relevant parliamentary experiences and good practices in this area, to offer an opportunity for members of parliament to provide their perspective on UNESCO's digital platforms regulatory framework and to identify concrete areas for capacity building for policymakers and regulators. The meeting is also open to other stakeholders who wish to engage with parliamentarians and regulators on this topic.

The side-event will take place in the margins of the Global Conference [“Internet for Trust - Towards Guidelines for Regulating Digital Platforms for Information as Public Good”](#), organized by UNESCO from 21 to 23 February 2023 at its headquarters in Paris. The Global Conference will bring together ministers, regulators, judicial actors, the private sector, the UN family, civil society, academia, intergovernmental organizations and the technical community from around the world to shape digital platform regulation.

At the side-event, interpretation will be provided from and into English and French.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 21 February 2023

14:00	<p>Introductory remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union• Mr. Guilherme Canela, Chief of Communication and Information – Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists Section, UNESCO
14:15	<p>Session I: Overview of the UNESCO's issue brief on the “misuse” of the judicial system to attack freedom of expression: Trends, Challenges and Responses</p> <p><i>Freedom of expression goes to the heart of democracy and is essential to members of parliament, journalists, and human rights activists to carry out their work without fear of reprisal. However, the latter have been the victims of criminal sanctions for opinions and expressions - often in relation to criticism of public officials - in instances that do not reach that threshold of severity.</i></p> <p>UNESCO's issue brief addresses the current trends, challenges, and responses worldwide on defamation and related laws, with a particular focus on abusive legal practices such as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). The session will examine the brief's recommendations addressed to Member States and legislators, which aim to decriminalize defamation and initiate legislative reforms of defamation laws in line with international standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Guilherme Canela, Chief of Communication and Information – Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists Section, UNESCO
14:30	<p>Session II: Creating a conducive online space for freedom of expression, dialogue and respect</p> <p><i>The free flow of ideas is indispensable for democracy to work. It is therefore crucial that parliamentarians, journalists, civil society, and others wishing to contribute to the public debate, can do so effectively and freely.</i></p> <p>This session will look at the right to freedom of expression and the steps that parliaments can take to protect it online and offline. Against the backdrop of the increased repression of free speech in some corners, as well as mounting incidents of hate speech and fake news, permissible and impermissible restrictions to freedom of expression under international law will also be examined. The session will look at ways to build genuine bridges in support of human rights within parliament and between parliament, civil society and the media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Samuel Cogolati, President of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, Member of the Federal Parliament of Belgium• Ms. Sarah Elago, former Member of the House of Representatives of the Philippines
15:45	<p>15 minutes break</p>
16.00	<p>Session III: How can regulators and civil servants be ready for the challenges of digital governance?</p> <p><i>With the accelerated development and pervasive use of digital technology, digital transformation, including artificial intelligence (AI) adoption, has in recent years become a mantra for public organizations. For national digital transformation efforts to succeed, governments need to identify and address digital technology governance challenges, update their digital skills and take a whole-of-society inclusive approach.</i></p>

In this context, what are some of the regulatory challenges and what kind of capacities do regulators and civil servants need to develop to ensure rights-based and human-centered digital governance?

- **Dr. Gianluca Misuraca**, Executive Director, AI4Gov Masters programme Representative, Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI), Singapore
- **Diaby Moustapha Mamy (Ing.)**, Senior Advisor, ICT & Digital Transformation Cabinet of the Vice-President African Union Commission

Moderator: **Ms. Marelza Oliveira**, Director, Division for Digital Inclusion and Policies and Digital Transformation, UNESCO

17:15

Closing remarks

- **Mr. Rogier Huizenga**, Manager, IPU Human Rights Programme
 - **Ms Marelza Oliveira**, Director, Division for Digital Inclusion and Policies and Digital Transformation, UNESCO ■
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