



4.10.2018 – At least [120 million girls](#) under the age of 20 – about one in 10 – have been forced to engage in sex or perform other sexual acts since 2014. Millions more, including millions of boys, never tell anyone about being abused, for fear of stigma or reprisals. Today, the majority of the world's two billion children are exposed to violence.

Smartphones and developments in technology all entail new possible forms of exploitation of children – but technology also brings with it new possibilities for combating sexual exploitation of girls and boys around the world, said HM Queen Silvia of Sweden at a UN [High Level Conference](#) against sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

The Conference, hosted by the Swedish Mission to the UN, World Childhood Foundation USA, the Oak Foundation, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and Together for Girls, convened leaders from governments, academia, civil society and the private sector to discuss child sexual abuse and exploitation.

During the event, a benchmarking tool developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit was

officially launched. Known as “Out of the Shadows”, it covers 40 countries and assesses how effectively nations are addressing issues of child sexual abuse across four categories: the safety of the environments in which children evolve; the legal frameworks in place; the level of government commitment and capacity to address the issue; and the level of engagement of the private sector, civil society and the media.

“This index is not about pointing fingers”, [said](#) UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed. ““All over the world, governments are updating their laws and policies to more effectively criminalize child sexual abuse and exploitation. Governments are also building systems to better protect and care for child victims. Civil society, the media and industry are key allies in these efforts.”



HM Queen Silvia was welcomed by warm applause. “The Convention of the Rights of the Child remains the most widely ratified of all UN Conventions. Now that this Convention has been complemented by Sustainable Development Goal 16, target number 2 – which calls for ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture of children by 2030 – we have an unprecedented opportunity to intensify our collective efforts. An opportunity that we cannot afford to waste!”

The Index reveals that the wealthiest countries tend to have the highest rankings, but even so, their scores reveal critical gaps in terms of achieving all the necessary protective conditions for children. Much of the sexual violence is being widely shared over the Internet. “In terms of trends, and this is of course worrying, what we see in terms of online sexual abuse, is that a vast majority of the children we’re looking at are ‘white’ children...coming from the Western part of the world,” said Björn Sellström, Coordinator for Crimes Against Children for the inter-governmental crime-fighting organization [INTERPOL](#) .

“Let me say here: This starts in our homes”, said the Deputy Secretary-General. “Governments are not in our homes. This is about us. I have six children, one grandchild and I cannot possibly imagine that that would be allowed in my home, or at my neighbours, or the neighbour after that.”

Ms. Mohammed concluded: “Preventing violence and exploitation of children is everyone’s business, everywhere, at all times. We must address this challenge and break the silence.”

Sweden was the first country in the world banning all forms of corporal punishment of children.