The Internet has altered our societies as profoundly as the printing press did, requiring a deep reimagining of the ethics and mindsets with which we approach knowledge, communication and cohesion. Along with the potential for more accessible information and rapid communication and consultation, the digital age, particularly social media, has also heightened fragmentation and "echo chambers". Objectivity, or even the idea that people can aspire to ascertain the best available truth, has come increasingly into question. The goal of giving equal balance to competing points of view can come at the expense of impartiality and evidence, distorting the public debate. The ability to cause large-scale disinformation and undermine scientifically established facts is an existential risk to humanity. While vigorously defending the right to freedom of expression everywhere, we must equally encourage societies to develop a common, empirically backed consensus on the public good of facts, science and knowledge. We must make lying wrong again. Institutions can be a “reality check” for societies, curbing disinformation and countering hate speech and online harassment, including of women and girls. I urge acceleration of our efforts to produce and disseminate reliable and verified information. The United Nations plays a key role in this regard, which it can continue to strengthen, building on models such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Meteorological Organization Scientific Advisory Panel or the Verified initiative for COVID-19. Other steps include support for public interest and independent media, regulation of social media, strengthening freedom of information or right to information laws and ensuring a prominent voice for science and expertise, for example through representation of science commissions in decision-making. A global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information could be explored together with States, media outlets and regulatory bodies, facilitated by the United Nations. With recent concerns about trust and mistrust linked to technology and the digital space, it is also time to understand, better regulate and manage our digital commons as a global public good.

In 2023, we will commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 30 years since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights. As this milestone nears, the time has come to take stock, rejuvenate our shared values and update our thinking on human rights. Consideration should, for instance, be given to updating or clarifying our application of human rights frameworks and standards to address frontier issues and prevent harms in the digital or technology spaces, including in relation to freedom of speech, hate speech and harassment, privacy, the “right to be forgotten” and neuro-technology. The right to a healthy environment also warrants deeper discussion. It may be time to reinforce universal access to the Internet as a human right, with accelerated steps to connect the remaining 3.8 billion people offline to the Internet by 2030, notably those most often left behind, including women, along with indigenous and older people. The United Nations stands ready to work with Governments, businesses and civil society to find alternatives to disruptive blanket Internet shutdowns and generic blocking and filtering of services to address the spread of disinformation and harmful life-threatening content, in line with international human rights law."
Misinformation

- UNESCO publications on "Misinformation": [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/search/a3ad7a0d-f489-4504-a852-48e516da6609](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/search/a3ad7a0d-f489-4504-a852-48e516da6609)

COVID-19 MISINFORMATION

- **Verified**: UN initiative to combat the growing scourge of COVID-19 misinformation [https://shareverified.com/](https://shareverified.com/)
  - #PledgetoPause: Misinformation is prolonging the pandemic. But by pausing to think before you share information online you can save lives [https://shareverified.com/pledge-to-pause/](https://shareverified.com/pledge-to-pause/)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
  - How to report misinformation online: [https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/how-to-report-misinformation-online](https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/how-to-report-misinformation-online)
  - New online course to fight the infodemic (2 February 2022): [https://www.who.int/news/item/02-02-2022-new-online-course-to-fight-the-infodemic](https://www.who.int/news/item/02-02-2022-new-online-course-to-fight-the-infodemic)
  - What is Go Viral? The GO VIRAL! game helps protect you against COVID-19 misinformation (23 September 2021): [https://www.who.int/news/item/23-09-2021-what-is-go-viral](https://www.who.int/news/item/23-09-2021-what-is-go-viral)


Refworld (UNHCR) search for information on “Misinformation”: https://bit.ly/3qWrgTZ


**Disinformation**


- UN's rights council adopts 'fake news' resolution, States urged to take tackle hate speech (UN News, 1 April 2022): https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1115412


• UNESCO publications on “Disinformation”: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/search/051e03ad-4fd1-481a-9ccb-443e46a80c99

Hate Speech

• UN Digital Portal against Hate Speech - #NoToHate

• UNESCO - Countering hate speech: It starts with words
  https://www.unesco.org/en/countering-hate-speech
Hate speech in the form of xenophobia, racism, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, anti-LGBTQI+ hatred, misogyny and other types of intolerance is on the rise worldwide, spreading faster and further than ever before through social media. Both online and offline, hate speech targets and dehumanizes people and peoples based on who they are – often by actors seeking political gain. UNESCO counters hate speech through education and media and information literacy, promotes international standards on freedom of expression to address root causes of hate speech, and supports countries to build effective responses, including by fostering the capacity building of regulators and judicial operators and advocating for enhanced transparency of internet companies.

• United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech
The Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech sets out strategic guidance for the United Nations system to address hate speech at the national and global level. It also includes ways the United Nations Secretariat can support the work of the United Nations Resident Coordinators in addressing and countering hate speech. Its objectives are twofold: first, to enhance United Nations efforts to address root causes and drivers of hate speech; and second, to enable effective United Nations responses to the impact of hate speech on societies.

  https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3889286

• Guidance Note on Addressing and Countering COVID-19 related Hate Speech, 11 May 2020 (prepared by the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect in collaboration with the UN working group on hate speech)
  https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3863213

• 18 June - International Day for Countering Hate Speech (A/RES/75/309)
  https://www.un.org/en/observances/list-days-weeks

• Further UN documents on “Hate Speech”: https://bit.ly/3tNytr4


• UNRWA Reiterates its Zero Tolerance Policy Toward Hate-Speech (24 June 2022):

• General Assembly holds Informal High-Level Event to Commemorate First International Day for Countering Hate Speech on 20 June (PI/2303, 20 June 2022):
  o Webcast: https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1y/k1ywfx7kau

UN Video - Alice Nderitu, the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide: Hate Speech | What are the Consequences? | What You Can Do to Prevent the Next Atrocity (17 June 2022): https://youtu.be/2Xvx_ZTXWNe


Hate speech and incitement to hatred or violence (OHCHR): https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-religion-or-belief/hate-speech-and-incitement-hatred-or-violence

Promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression: Note by the Secretary-General (A/74/486, 9 October 2019): https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/reports/2019/report-online-hate-speech

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report prepared by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 34/18. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur evaluates the human rights law that applies to the regulation of online “hate speech”.


Social Media 4 Peace: https://en.unesco.org/social-media-4-peace
The overall objective of this UNESCO project is to strengthen the resilience of societies to potentially harmful content spread online, in particular hate speech inciting violence while protecting freedom of expression and enhancing the promotion of peace through digital technologies, notably social media.

Social Media 4 Peace project marks first International Day against Hate Speech (29 June 2020): https://en.unesco.org/news/social-media-4-peace-project-marks-first-international-day-against-hate-speech


UNESCO Publications on “Hate Speech”: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/search/66e2dd84-b6fe-4bb5-a01b-0bfa9c6196c

Refworld (UNHCR) search for information on “Hate Speech”: https://bit.ly/3tUAlhZ
Related information sources
