

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release:

Date: 30 May 2024

Venue: Paris, France

Empowering Africa's Digital Generation: AU Commissioner Amani Abou-Zeid Propels Africa's Vision for Child Online Safety Globally



Amidst the escalating challenges posed by online abuse and exploitation, leaders from diverse backgrounds converged at the first ever "United Against Online Abuse" conference held at the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) headquarters in Paris. This high-level gathering served as a pivotal platform for stakeholders from across the globe to unite in their commitment to combatting the pervasive threat of online hate and safeguarding vulnerable populations, particularly children and youth, in the digital realm.

The event witnessed keynote addresses by Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, French Government Minister for Sport and the Olympic and Paralympic Games of France, and Mohammed Ben Sulayem, FIA President. Their insights accentuated the imperative of prioritising athlete well-being above anything and the significance of international cooperation and collaborative action in addressing online abuse and fostering a safer digital environment for all.



Representing Africa was H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, who champions Africa's efforts, interests and perspectives on digital empowerment, digital inclusion and online safety. With a deep commitment to Africa's digital future, Commissioner Abou-Zeid's contributions highlighted the continent's unique strides and achievements in navigating the complex cyber landscape.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid expressed appreciation for the FIA and its president, acknowledging their pivotal role in hosting this important conference. She commenced her keynote address by highlighting a monumental achievement: the landmark adoption of the Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy during the 2024 African Union Summit. *“This ground-breaking policy, the first of its kind in the world, emphasises Africa's commitment to protecting children in the digital age and serves as a beacon of hope for global efforts to combat online abuse and exploitation”*, she said. The policy provides a comprehensive framework for implementing children's rights in the digital sphere, ensuring that African children maximize the benefits of digital technologies while minimizing associated risks.

The fight against online abuse in sports holds particular significance for Africa, a continent renowned for its abundance of athletic talents. With Africa's youthful demographic, many aspiring athletes are among the continent's young population, making them particularly vulnerable to online abuse. Commissioner Abou-Zeid's advocacy for child online safety illustrates the crucial intersection between digital protection for children and the broader fight against online abuse, which also encompasses safeguarding athletes from harm in the digital sphere. *“By championing this policy, Africa sets a precedent for the rest of the world, ensuring that its young sports talents can thrive in a safe and supportive digital environment”* she stated.

Recognising the escalating risks of online abuse and exploitation, including within the sport ecosystem, Commissioner Abou-Zeid underscored the importance of other key initiatives spearheaded by the AU Commission. These include the development of the African Common Position on the application of international law in cyberspace and the African Digital Compact. *“These initiatives are strategically aimed at combating hate speech, cybercrime, and other online threats, crucial steps towards creating a safer digital environment for Africa's youth, athletes and overall population”*, she noted.

Strong national, regional and transcontinental partnerships are crucial to effectively protect children's rights in the digital domain. *“Such efforts necessitate the joint involvement of governments, NGOs, international organisations, and businesses focused on child protection”*, she added.

Being the fastest digitalising region in the world, Commissioner Abou-Zeid stressed the importance of leveraging this trend and *“recognise the overall transformative potential of*

digitalisation as a catalyst for socio-economic development across Africa". To this end, the African Union Commission has endorsed strategic frameworks like the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020 – 2030 and the AU Data Policy Framework to maximise the benefits of digitalization in all sectors while ensuring responsible use of data.

For further information please contact:

Ms. Bezayit Eyoel | Department of Infrastructure and Energy | African Union Commission | E-mail: bezayite@africa-union.org |

Mr. Gamal Eldin Ahmed A. Karrar | Senior Communication Officer | Information and Communication Directorate (ICD), African Union Commission | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org

Information and Communication Directorate | African Union Commission | **E-mail:** DIC@africa-union.org |
Website: <http://www.au.int> | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia | Follow Us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) |