



MACRA

Communication services for a digitally transformed nation

PRESS RELEASE

SAFER INTERNET DAY COMMEMORATION IN MALAWI

The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) would like to announce this year's Safer Internet Day (SID) commemoration, which falls on 7th February 2022 under the theme "***Together for a better internet.***" As a country, Malawi is commemorating the day under the sub-theme "***let's talk about it, making space for conversations about online safety***".

This year safer internet day commemoration celebrates the 20th edition of countries across the globe ensuring a safe and secure digital platform for all, especially children and young adults.

SID is a landmark global event in the online safety calendar, initiated by the EU Safe Borders Project in 2004 and taken up by the Insafe Network as one of its earliest actions in 2005. SID is commemorated across 180 countries and territories worldwide.

Each year, SID aims to raise awareness of emerging cyber safety issues and chooses a topic reflecting current concerns from cyberbullying, social networking, cyber hygiene, misinformation, digital identity, cyber flashing, and tips meant to keep everyone safe online.

As part of our commitment, in 2018, Malawi formed a committee comprising various stakeholders ranging from civil society, government, academia, and the private sector for the purpose of harmonizing efforts in tackling issues of online safety.

The Digital world has no borders and if we are to ensure a better digital space for all of us, especially for the young users there is a need for multi-stakeholder collaborations, and we all need to work as a team with a common goal of online safety.

At the heart of MACRA is our goal to ensure a safe digital space for all consumers of ICT services, including children and young adults. This is why MACRA, over the past few years, has embarked on various consumer awareness campaigns across the country educating consumers on their rights as ICT consumers, tips on preventing mobile money fraud, cybersecurity, and cyber-crimes, and the salient features of the Electronic Transactions and Cybersecurity Act.

In 2020, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) launched the Guidelines on Child Online Protection (COP), a holistic approach and global response, international cooperation, and national coordination to protect children from online risks and potential harm and empower them to fully benefit from online opportunities.

ITU also instituted the Council Working Group on Child Online Protection, which defined COP actions including raising awareness of child online safety issues and assisting and supporting Member States in developing and implementing roadmaps for the COP initiative. Malawi with technical assistance from ITU is in the process of developing a national Child Online Protection Strategy

Technology has evolved drastically over the past two decades with immersing positive impacts and benefits on communication, education, health, agriculture, and finance, among other sectors of the economy. However, the surge has also exposed us to many risks with real-world impacts, making online safety awareness even more important.

The E-Safety Commission reports that 1 in 3 children have experienced some form of cyberbullying and harassment, while 47% of teenage children have received a sexual message. The Commission also reports that 30% of teenagers have been contacted by a stranger online while 67% of adults have experienced some form of cyber harassment and misinformation.

This year, the theme “**let’s talk about it, making space for conversations about online safety**” is focusing on creating a platform where parents, teachers, guardians, policymakers, and the Government can hold conversations on how to ensure online safety for all.

The theme aims at enhancing **digital literacy** and good **cyber hygiene** equipping children and young people with the skills, putting children and young people’s voices at the heart, and encouraging them to shape the online safety support that they receive.

Digital literacy is an important entitlement for all young people in an increasingly digital culture while cyber hygiene will equip children with the right tools and information to navigate the digital space safely and securely.

This year, the theme tackles cyber issues being faced by children and young people, the changes they want to see, and how the key stakeholders can work together to advocate for child online safety.

Malawi joins the Global call for child online safety, with human rights experts flagging the need to tackle online child sexual abuse and the Head of the United Nations Agency for Information and Communication Technology urging greater worldwide collaboration to ensure what has become a priority for many countries.

We all need to scale up efforts by connecting through a truly global alliance to develop an empowering, safe, and inclusive digital agenda for children. MACRA is calling upon all stakeholders in Malawi to observe the day and help to spread the message promoting



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All communications should be addressed to the Director General

safer internet, especially for the young people in Malawi. Every half a second, every day, a child goes online for the first time – tapping into all the great opportunities the Internet has to offer, but facing grave risks, it is a call for us to protect them from sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, and the misuse of their private information.

Speak up and report online abuse, your voice matters. online safety is a right for all.

The planned activities to commemorate the day are a press briefing, panel discussion, TV and radio programs, webinars, and school outreach programs on child online safety in Blantyre, Zomba, and Mangochi.

Dated the 9th day of February 2023



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