Breakout Session 1: "Digital Diplomacy: Online Citizen Engagement and Social Media Platforms as Mechanisms for Prevention & Countering Online Hate Speech"

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 19 November 2018
15:00 - 17:00, Conference Room 11

THEME AND POINTS OF DISCUSSION

The theme of Breakout Session 1 is *"Digital Diplomacy: Online Citizen Engagement and Social Media Platforms as Mechanisms for Prevention & Countering Online Hate Speech"*.

Date & Venue: 19 November 2018 from 15:00 to 17:00. Conference Room 11, UNHQ

Format: interactive discussion with short presentations from the speakers highlighting good practices on the theme. The last 20 minutes will be dedicated to interventions from the floor.

Points of discussion:

1. How can we forge effective and successful partnerships between national governments, policy makers, digital giants (Google, Facebook, Twitter, and others), and media professionals and private companies?
2. Are there adequate global regulations or policies to contain on-line hate speech while protecting freedom of expression?
3. How can media consumers shield themselves from fake news and online hate speech?
4. What are concrete recommendations and next steps to address this issue?

BACKGROUND

Information and communications technology (ICT), including Internet and social media, has become a viable tool for radical and terrorist groups to disseminate violent extremist propaganda, recruiting new converts, and raising money. Technology enables terrorist groups to reach disenfranchised people everywhere in the world and influence them. Security Council resolution 2129 (2013) notes the evolving nexus between terrorism and ICT, in particular the Internet, as well as the use of such technologies to commit terrorist acts.

We see the Internet being used as a platform for hate speech, repression, censorship, and control. We need to look no further than the headlines to see how the Internet and social media can be used to divide and even radicalize people - feeding distrust, reinforcing tribalism and breeding hatred.

At the same time, fake news has become one of the biggest concerns in our age. Consequently, people started to lose their trust in the various media platforms.

But as much as there are many digital risks, some of them could be turned into digital opportunities.

Just last week the UN Secretary General spoke at the Internet Governance Forum in Paris and said that technology should empower not overpower us and, as with past transformative inventions, we need to set policies that contain unintended consequences or malicious use.

In this context, Internet and social media platforms should be used as powerful tools to prevent hate speech.

Social media can help facilitate dialogue and reconciliation among people from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. It can positively affect perceptions on ethnicity, change attitudes, and promote social inclusion, respect, and mutual understanding. It can also act as an early warning mechanism during periods of heightened tension.

This **Breakout Session will provide an opportunity to understand how social media can be harnessed to help mitigate identity-based drivers of conflict while contributing to the "sustaining peace agenda"**. The discussion will explore efforts of the United Nations with the technology industry as well as civil society and the private sector to strengthen their partnership in this area.

SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR

- Naila Hamdy, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, The American University in Cairo
- Nancy Groves, Head of Social Media, United Nations Department of Public Information
- Errin Whack, National Writer, Race and Ethnicity, Associated Press
- Ian Plunkett, Head of Public Policy Communications, Twitter
- Maha Jaafar, YouTube Creator for Change Ambassador

Moderator: Ezzat Ibrahim, Editor in Chief, Al-Ahram Weekly.