

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy

Ref.: AL CAN 7/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

13 February 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 59/20 and 55/3.

In this context, we would like to bring to the attention of Your Excellency's Government regarding the information we have received concerning **two cases of digital sexual violence against Ms. Katelynn Spencer and Ms. [REDACTED], whose intimate images were reportedly unlawfully disseminated on Pornhub without their consent. These cases relate to a broader concern of distribution and monetization of sexual abuse material, including Child Sexual Abuse Material (hereinafter referred to as "CSAM"), filmed sex trafficking, rape, and other forms of criminal image-based sexual abuse carried out and facilitated by Aylo Holdings S.A.R.L. (formerly known as Mind-geek, S.A.R.L. and owned by Ethical Capital Partners, a Canadian private equity firm) and its network of pornographic video sharing websites such as Youporn, RedTube, MyDirtyHobby, and its flagship website, Pornhub.com. We further note information about the role of financial service and online platform provides in facilitating the monetization and dissemination of such unlawful and harmful content.**

According to the information received:

Case of Katelynn Spencer

On 28 May 2020, Katelynn Spencer a 34-year-old U.S. citizen from Massachusetts, was informed that two sexual videos of her had been uploaded without her consent to the Pornhub account of a former male acquaintance. One of the videos was recorded when she was 18 years old, after being groomed and coerced into its creation. The second video had been recorded without her knowledge and contained her full name.

Upon discovering this, Ms. Spencer contacted the alleged perpetrator, who reportedly admitted to having uploaded the videos years prior. Further investigation revealed that one of the videos had been published in 2010 and had reached 970,000 views, while the other had 47,000. She subsequently discovered that the videos had been downloaded, redistributed, and posted on multiple pornographic websites, accompanied by degrading comments and viewed millions of times.

In seeking justice, Ms. Spencer reportedly faced numerous institutional barriers. Since the videos had been recorded in her hometown, she was referred to the local police department, where the alleged perpetrator's mother worked as an

officer which Ms. Spencer assessed as conflict of interest. Ms. Spencer confirmed she was 18 when the video was recorded. Following this confirmation, a legal process ensued to charge the alleged perpetrator with “Dissemination of Obscene Material.”

On 22 March 2022, the case was dismissed. No legal action was taken against the alleged perpetrator, who continues to maintain an active Pornhub account.

Ms. Spencer has developed multiple physical and mental health conditions, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Complex PTSD (CPTSD), depression, anxiety, an eating disorder, a sleep disorder, and an autoimmune disease. She has been hospitalized several times, came close to death, and lost her career, her home, her husband, friends, and family due to the impact of the trauma.

Ms. Spencer has engaged in a process of recovery and advocacy. She played an active role in the passing of Bill H4744, “An Act to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation” in the state of Massachusetts and participated in documentaries broadcast internationally, appeared on national television, and given interviews with major media outlets, podcasts, and radio stations. She has also met with numerous senators and representatives, advocating for legal protection for victims of this form of abuse.

Case of ██████████

Ms. ██████ a former paralegal from Tennessee, discovered that multiple non-consensual videos of her had been uploaded to Pornhub. Some of these depicted acts of date rape during a trip to Las Vegas, others involved voyeuristic recordings made without her knowledge in her own home, and several were recorded by her then-partner during intimate moments between 2018 and 2020. Despite repeated efforts to report these videos, most remained online and were monetized by unknown third parties.

In August 2020, Ms. ██████ approached local authorities. According to her, she was not believed and was treated as a suspect rather than a victim. Her attempts to provide evidence, including a detailed presentation identifying her body in screenshots and a polygraph test—were dismissed. Although she was eventually believed by federal US authorities, she was informed that prosecution would not proceed due to the perceived difficulty of securing a conviction. Ms. ██████ endures severe psychological trauma, dissociation, and suicidal ideation.

In 2021, Ms. ██████ filed a lawsuit against Pornhub and testified before the Canadian Parliament. Shortly thereafter, Pornhub removed the videos bearing her name; however, the content had already proliferated across more than 200 other pornographic websites. Despite the existence of identifying features such as a birthmark, Pornhub failed to act, citing the so-called “faceless loophole,” which reportedly enables traffickers to monetize abusive content without consequence.

The prolonged circulation of these videos led to online harassment, real-world stalking, and public recognition. Ms. █████ left her job and now lives with a disability due to PTSD and severe depression. She lost her home, her financial independence, and experienced strained relationships with family and children. Her trauma was so severe that she considered committing suicide, stating that her only reason for survival was her children, including her daughter with Down syndrome.

Despite her several requests and multiple ways to identify her body in the videos uploaded without her consent, Pornhub reportedly allowed third parties to profit from the monetization of this content for years.

Alleged Violations of the Right to Privacy of Women and Girls Due to the Absence of Consent Verification Measures

According to a 2024 investigation conducted by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (OPC) to assess Aylo's (formerly MindGeek) compliance with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA),¹ Aylo was unable to inform the OPC how often, and under what circumstances, its moderators requested documentation to verify that uploaders had obtained the consent of all individuals depicted. Furthermore, Aylo was reportedly unable to provide any evidence demonstrating that such verifications had taken place or that it had ensured that all individuals featured in the content were not minors at the time of production.

According to the September 2025 complaint and order issued by the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) against Aylo,² the company's practices caused significant harm to victims. As stated by the Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection, "Pornhub's operators turned a blind eye to the proliferation of videos depicting the sexual abuse of children on its sites so it could profit off this exploitation." A FTC Commissioner similarly stated that "Pornhub's operators inflicted grave harm on children and nonconsenting adults by promoting and distributing truly horrific material online." Reportedly the FTC stated that, in their complaint, the FTC and the State of Utah alleged that Aylo deceived users by claiming it has zero tolerance for child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and works to block CSAM and non-consensual material (NCM) on its sites by, among other things, taking prompt action when videos are flagged by users. In reality, Aylo reportedly failed to review videos flagged by users, did not ban uploaders of CSAM from further use of its websites, did not prevent the re-upload of CSAM that Aylo had identified, and did not review all videos before they went live for CSAM or NCM.

The FTC further stated that Aylo engaged in unfair practices by distributing CSAM and NCM content on its sites, which Aylo's Manager of Operations and Child Safety acknowledged "re-victimizes" the individuals who were abused in

¹ Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. (2024, February 29). *PIPEDA Findings #2024-001: Investigation into Aylo (formerly MindGeek)'s Compliance with PIPEDA*. <https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/opc-actions-and-decisions/investigations/investigations-into-businesses/2024/pipeda-2024-001/>;

² <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-takes-action-against-operators-pornhub-other-pornographic-sites-deceiving-users-about-efforts>

the creation of the content. The FTC detailed findings of its investigation, including that: Aylo allowed the dissemination of CSAM and NCM content on its tube sites by allowing, until December 2020, anyone to upload pornographic videos and photos; urging its content partners to contribute content involving “young girl,” “schoolgirl,” and similar topics; licensing and owning CSAM and NCM content with titles such as “Brunette Girl was Raped”; and promoting to users playlists of CSAM and NCM content with titles such as “less than 18” and “the best collection of young boys”. Furthermore, Aylo reportedly did not maintain, even though it had previously committed to doing so, paperwork required by federal law to verify the age and identity of individuals featured in some of the content posted on its sites. Moreover, despite promising to quickly review and, if necessary, remove violative content flagged by users, Aylo reportedly did not even review content flagged as CSAM and NCM until it received at least 16 flags. It also claimed it would utilize fingerprinting technology to block users from re-uploading CSAM that had been removed, but the technology failed to effectively prevent such content from being re-uploaded to the site. Finally, Aylo reportedly also failed to block individuals who uploaded CSAM despite promising to ban such users.

Alleged Failure by Aylo/MindGeek to Implement Adequate and Effective Prevention and Control Measures: Insufficient Moderation of Illegal Content, a Policy of Non-Enforcement and irregular methods of review

In March 2021, the House Financial Services Committee, Subcommittee on National Security, International Development and Monetary Policy of the United States House of Representatives held a hearing entitled “*Ending Exploitation: How the Financial System Can Work to Dismantle the Business of Human Trafficking.*”³ During this hearing, the founder of Trafficking Hub movement and President of the Justice Defend Fund testified under oath regarding Aylo’s allegedly deficient content moderation practices.

According to her testimony, only ten moderators were assigned per eight-hour shift across all of Aylo’s pornographic platforms distributing free, user-generated content, amounting to approximately 30 moderators per day. These moderators were reportedly reprimanded if they reviewed fewer than 700 videos per shift and were expected to process up to 1,200 videos each. Some experienced moderators allegedly stated that they reviewed over 2,200 videos per shift, often with the sound turned off, raising concerns that Aylo’s content moderation system is structured to prioritize upload volume over effective oversight.

Moderators also reportedly stated that they were often forced to “guess” whether videos depicted minors or involved criminal content such as rape, acknowledging the practical impossibility of reliably distinguishing between a 15 or 16-year-old and an 18-year-old in nude material. One moderator noted that he “would sometimes look at whether an underage appearing girl’s nails were painted as an indicator of whether or not the video was a child pornography

³ *Ending Exploitation: How the financial system can work to Dismantle the business of human Trafficking* | Committee Repository | U.S. House of Representatives.
<https://docs.house.gov/Committee/Calendar/ByEvent.aspx?EventID=111399>

crime scene,” though acknowledged that young children and underage teens also paint their nails, after all.”

Additionally, moderators reportedly indicated that it was equally difficult to distinguish between depictions of violent but consensual acts and non-consensual sexual assault, or between consensually recorded content and that which was uploaded without consent. Moderators reportedly stated that their instructions were not to remove illegal content, but rather to permit as much content as possible to remain on the site regardless of legality. One moderator described their role as being “to find weird excuses to keep videos on our sites.”

Reportedly, legal discovery in ongoing litigation further revealed internal communications suggesting that Aylo employees understood that internal policies were not intended to be enforced in practice. Aylo had a policy of only putting a video in the queue for review that was flagged by users for terms of service violations only if it was flagged over 15 times, allowing monetized videos depicting illegal activity, abuse, CSAM, or non-consensual content to not be put in line for review unless flagged 16 or more times—a standard that prioritizes the platform's financial interests over victim protection.

Lack of measures against the proliferation of CSAM and a reluctance to act against it

Aylo’s flagship website, Pornhub, was launched in 2007; however, during one of the depositions taken during legal discovery of one of the cases against Aylo, it was revealed that the company only began reporting CSAM to law enforcement in April of 2020. This means that the company failed to report a single instance of child sexual abuse material for over 13 years to the proper child protection authorities. There are also records that suggest the Pornhub’s official policy with regards to CSAM was to not report it and evidence suggests employees were going so far as to tell users not to report CSAM to authorities.

Until late 2020, the website Pornhub reportedly had a download function available on every video, thereby enabling the material transfer of content that could have been contraband child sexual abuse material from their servers to the individual devices of users around the globe. This could be considered a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2252 and 18 U.S.C. § 2257. The function was accessible to approximately 170 million users per day by the end of 2020, facilitating the continued transfer and distribution of monetized CSAM and further endangering vulnerable individuals. Furthermore, according to internal company documents, which were uncovered in legal discovery during a certified class action lawsuit in Alabama against on behalf of underage victims, reportedly revealed that Aylo promoted, suggested, and advertised CSAM to its users. This is in line with the testimony of the founder of the Trafficking Hub movement to the House of Representatives of the United States in 2021.

In 2023, it was reported that Aylo Holdings S.A.R.L. (Aylo), was criminally charged by the U.S. government for intentionally hosting and profiting from non-consensual pornography produced by the “Girls Do Porn” (GDP) trafficking operation based in California. Despite the evidence-based allegations

and confessions indicating that Aylo knowingly partnered with and benefited from videos produced by GDP, the U.S. government offered Aylo a deferred prosecution agreement. After the date of the signed deferred prosecution, published information suggests that Aylo continued to distribute and monetize unverified and illegal content, and had failed to compensate victims as agreed. Reportedly, these actions not only enabled accessibility to illegal content but also drove more views and ad impressions, thus increasing its revenue at the expense of victims.

Finally, in this regard, the Girls do Porn allegations referred to earlier could also be considered a violation of U.S. Code § 1591 by Aylo and its executives. These actions not only enabled accessibility to illegal content but also drove more views and ad impressions, thus increasing its revenue at the expense of victims.

According to evidence uncovered during legal discovery and confirmed by the certification of two class action lawsuits by federal judges in U.S. courts, at a minimum, tens of thousands of children—and many more adult victims—have been criminally abused and had their videos uploaded to Pornhub, while its parent company monetized the content on the site. Available evidence indicates that Pornhub’s owners and executives were aware of the monetized sexual exploitation occurring on the platform.

To date, Aylo reportedly faces up to 25 lawsuits filed on behalf of nearly 300 victims, including, as previously noted, multiple class actions. It has also been reported that Aylo removed 91 percent of the content on Pornhub following revelations that the company failed to verify whether over 50 million monetized, user-generated pornographic images and videos were lawful, consensual, or free from the criminal exploitation of underage victims.

Due diligence responsibility failures of financial service providers

Financial service providers are integral to the financial infrastructure that enables exploitation and dissemination of non-consensual and criminal sexual abuse material.

Reportedly financial service providers, such as Capital One, Mastercard, and Visa, have played a role in facilitating the monetization of such unlawful and harmful content by processing payments for advertisements, subscriptions and services on platforms operated by Aylo Holdings S.A.R.L and on comparable platforms operated by its major competitors, including XVideos and XNXX, owned by WGCZ Holding, which operate under similar business model.

Platforms such as those operated by Aylo Holdings S.A.R.L and others rely on advertising revenue, premium subscriptions, and paid downloads. Access to credit card payment networks to support these online revenue streams therefore enables the conversion of user engagement into profit. This monetization structure can reportedly incentivize and enable commercial sexual exploitation that constitutes sex trafficking under international law. Reportedly, major credit companies such as Visa and Mastercard as well and their member banks providing merchant services to MindGeek/Aylo were aware of its trafficking

venture and knowingly profited from it.⁴

Due diligence responsibility failures of online service providers

Similarly, online platform providers, such as Google, Meta and Microsoft, through advertising and search engine visibility, contribute to the accessibility and profitability of these websites.

A growing body of credible research and experts indicate that major online platforms reportedly contribute to the accessibility and profitability of platforms such as Pornhub, through search visibility, advertisement technologies and data-tracking infrastructures. Search engines reportedly prioritize known hubs of non-consensual abusive and exploitative content, increasing discoverability to platforms such as Pornhub that host such material. In addition, it is reported that pornographic websites extensively embed third-party tracking tools operated by dominant technology companies within the broader digital advertisement ecosystems. Platform infrastructures and governance practices may therefore reportedly be facilitating the visibility, reach and economic viability of pornographic platforms that have been linked to sexual exploitation and abuse, such as Pornhub, as well as their reach, economic viability.⁵

Without prejudging the accuracy of these allegations, we express our deep concern regarding the potential and severe human rights violations that women and girls were reportedly subjected to in the context of the distribution of pornographic material. The allegations raise serious concerns regarding implementation of obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by your Excellency's Government on 19 May 1976. Article 2 requires State Parties to take necessary steps to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant. Article 7 prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Article 17 of the ICCPR guarantees that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on their honor and reputation. It further states that everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks. The right to an effective remedy is enshrined in article 2(3)(a)), and access to justice guaranteed by article 14.

The alleged lack of adequate mechanisms to verify consent and age, the alleged permissiveness toward violent and degrading content, and its monetization—including CSAM, rape, and sexual exploitation—may constitute violations of the rights to human dignity, equality, privacy, protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, effective access to justice, and the right of women and girls to live free from violence and discrimination.

⁴ *Serena Fleites et al. v. MindGeek S.A.R.L. et al.*, Second Amended Complaint, U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, Case No. 2:21-cv-04920, (<https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/fleites-vs-mindgeek-sac.pdf>).

⁵ See the following: AI Forensics, *Pay-to-Play: Meta's Community (Double) Standards on Pornographic Ads* (8 Jan 2025), <https://aiforensics.org/work/meta-porn-ad>; Elena Maris, Timothy Libert & Jennifer Henriksen, *Tracking Sex: The Implications of Widespread Sexual Data Leakage and Tracking on Porn Websites*, arXiv (15 Jul 2019), <https://arxiv.org/abs/1907.06520>; National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE), *Google Search: A Complicated Case of Corporate Influence*, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/google/>.

We are concerned that individuals reportedly face an unduly heavy burden when attempting to remove content, whether - or not - they consent to its upload. In a hypothetical case, a person seeking to remove content would have to contact at least 15 people to request that they report any content in which they appear, and worryingly, this would not guarantee the removal, but just the beginning of a process to remove the video. These actions have allegedly enabled the systematic circulation of criminal content, prioritizing advertising revenue over the safety and dignity of victims—of which many are reportedly girls. Under international human rights law, the alleged consent of a victim cannot justify human rights abuses. It is important to clarify that the irrelevance of consent is distinct from situations in which consent is invalid or has been invalidated.

Also relevant to these allegations is the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Article 4 (c & d) of this instrument notes the responsibility of States to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons. To this end, States should develop penal, civil, labor and administrative sanctions in domestic legislation to punish and redress the wrongs caused to women and girls who are subjected to violence. Women and girls who are subjected to violence should be provided with access to the mechanisms of justice and as provided for by national legislation, to just and effective remedies for the harm that they have suffered. States should, moreover, also inform victims of their rights in seeking redress through such mechanisms. As the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, has clarified, both customary and conventional international law establish that States have due diligence obligations for preventing, responding to, protecting against and providing remedies for acts of violence against women whether such acts are committed by State or non-State actors (E/CN.4/2006/61, para. 30). We are concerned that the deferred prosecution agreement granted to Aylo in the *Girls Do Porn* case may be perceived as setting a particularly harmful precedent of corporate impunity.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please indicate the measures you have taken to ensure that women and children, including girls that have been victims of image based sexual abuse, have the means to effectively report and to find effective redress, assistance and support.
3. Please provide information on any interactions of your Excellency's Government with Aylo Holdings S.A.R.L., domiciled in Canada, in

relation to regarding the potential human rights violations against women and girls in the context of the distribution of pornographic material.

4. Please provide information on how your Excellency's Government intends to ensure that use of payment services on websites that allow the distribution of user-generated pornographic content without reliably verify the age and consent of all individuals depicted is prohibited, with the purpose of preventing the distribution and monetization of serious violations of human rights including sexual crimes.
5. Kindly state how your Excellency's Government intends to prevent the making and distribution and monetization of violent and degrading pornographic material online.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your company to clarify the issues in question.

Please be informed that a letter on this subject matter has also been sent to the Government of the United States of America, Aylo Holdings S.A.R.L., WGCZ Holding, Capital One Financial Corporation, Mastercard, Visa Inc., Google, Meta and Microsoft.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Reem Alsalem

Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Ana Brian Nougrères

Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with the above-mentioned alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to its legal obligations under the international treaties it has ratified, as well as to broader international human rights standards.

We wish to recall the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Canada on 10 December 1981. This treaty defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this sense, non-consensual pornography must be understood as a form of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, as it disproportionately affects women by reducing their bodies to objects for consumption, shaping how they are perceived and treated by pornography users, and exposing them to further violence and discrimination. Article 5 of the CEDAW, sets forth that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. Article 10 (h) of the same Convention includes the obligation of State Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women to ensure women (and girls, by analogy), access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families.

We wish to refer to article 2(3)(a) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded by Canada on 19 May 1976, which affirms that victims of human rights violations—including those perpetrated by private actors—have the right to an effective remedy. In connection with this, articles 7, 17, 14, and 24 of the Covenant respectively establish that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy or unlawful attacks on their honor and reputation; that all persons shall have access to justice; and that every child is entitled to the protection measures required by their status as minors.

We also wish to refer to general comment No. 20 of the Human Rights Committee, which interprets article 7 of the ICCPR, and clarifies that each State party has the duty to protect all individuals from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, not only through legislative and other measures, but also when such treatment is perpetrated by private individuals. Likewise, general comment No. 17, which interprets article 17 of the ICCPR, affirms that the right to privacy requires States to adopt legislative and other measures to give effect to the prohibition of unlawful interferences and attacks, and to protect this right in practice.

We would like to recall his Excellency Government obligations by acceding to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on 19 May 1976. Article 3 State obliges Stateto realize the right of women and girls to

the enjoyment of all economic social and cultural rights. According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, respect for this right requires refraining from discriminatory actions that directly or indirectly result in the denial of the equal right of men and women to their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

In connection to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective ([A/HRC/38/47](#)) a wide range of new forms of violence against women have emerged in connection with digital technologies, including the unauthorized sharing of intimate images. States must explicitly prohibit and criminalize online violence against women, particularly non-consensual sharing of intimate images, online harassment, and cyberstalking. Legal frameworks should address all aspects of this abuse, including the repeated circulation or “resharing” of harmful content. Moreover, laws should criminalize threats to release such images, enabling advocates and prosecutors to take preventive action before the abuse occurs.

In a similar vein, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences ([A/HRC/56/48](#)) in her report she emphasizes that pornography platforms actively normalize and industrialize sexual violence, particularly against women and girls in situations of vulnerability. The industry is characterized by systemic patterns of abuse that cause both physical and psychological harm. Women involved in pornography have reported serious health consequences, including genital injuries, infections in the throat, rectum, and eyes, and long-term physical trauma. These harms are not isolated but rather form part of a broader system that commodifies and publicly broadcasts bodily autonomy.

The report underscores that prostitution is strongly associated with severe human rights violations and pervasive violence. Women and girls in prostitution are frequently dehumanized, subjected to physical aggression common in pornography—such as choking, gagging, and verbal abuse—and exposed to significant health risks, including sexually transmitted infections and bodily injuries. They also face widespread non-consensual image-based abuse and other forms of digital sexual violence.

It further notes that the belief in men’s entitlement to purchase sex normalizes violence and blurs the boundaries between sex and sexual assault. Violent behaviours depicted in pornography are often replicated in real life, contributing to rising rates of rape, including gang rape. Research shows that pornography consumption—whether violent or not—increases aggression toward women and children, reduces empathy among men who buy sex, and shapes harmful sexual initiation practices among adolescent boys.

Finally, it stresses that gender equality cannot be achieved while prostitution is normalized. The system is structurally unequal, with women forming the “supply” and men the “demand,” reinforcing sexist norms that reduce women to objects for male sexual use. The porn industry further pressures women and girls to conform to market-driven body ideals, socializes them into self-objectification, and contributes to a broader “pornified” culture in which media and academic narratives glamorize prostitution and entrench the commodification of women and girls.

In addition, we wish to refer to articles 19, 34, and 36 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Canada on 13 December 1991, which establish the obligation to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. Article 3 further requires that the best interests of the child be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. In this regard, article 1 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, signed by Canada in 2005, requires States Parties to prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography as defined by the Protocol:

- (a) Sale of children means any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration.
- (b) Child prostitution means the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration.
- (c) Child pornography means any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes”.

According to general comment No. 13 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, that clarify the scope and obligations under the Convention, the use of a child in the production of images or audio recordings of child sexual abuse constitutes child sexual abuse and exploitation, as does the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

In addition, we wish to highlight the importance of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (also known as the Palermo Protocol), which was signed by Canada in 2000 and ratified in 2002. Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol defines trafficking in persons broadly to include the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, and it obliges States Parties to adopt measures to prevent and combat trafficking, protect and assist victims, and promote cooperation among States. This framework is critical to address systematic exploitation occurring through pornography platforms and related digital environments that facilitate or profit from trafficking and exploitation.

We also wish to highlight the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, unanimously endorsed by the Human Rights Council in resolution (A/HRC/RES/17/31), following years of consultation with States, civil society, human rights defenders and the business sector. These Principles are the authoritative global standard to prevent and address human rights harms connected to business activity. They rest on three foundational pillars:

- a. The State duty to protect against human rights abuse by third parties, including business enterprises;
- b. The corporate responsibility to respect human rights and comply with all applicable laws;

c. The right of victims to access effective remedy.

In line with these principles, States must protect individuals within their territory and/or jurisdiction from human rights abuses committed by business enterprises. This obligation, rooted in both treaty and customary law, requires that States not only refrain from violating rights, but also exercise due diligence to prevent violations by non-State actors (see Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 31, para. 8). The duty extends to abuse committed abroad by companies domiciled in their jurisdiction.

As part of this duty, States are required to “prevent, investigate, punish and redress” business-related human rights abuse through effective legislation, regulation and adjudication (guiding principle 1). They must also “clearly state that all companies domiciled in their territory and/or jurisdiction are expected to respect human rights in all their activities” (guiding principle 2) and “enforce laws that are aimed at, or have the effect of, requiring business enterprises to respect human rights” (guiding principle 3). States must ensure that victims have access to effective remedies when harm results from business activity. Failure to do so may constitute a breach of international legal obligations. While States have discretion in the measures adopted, they must consider the full range of preventive and remedial options. In addition, States must ensure the effectiveness of domestic judicial mechanisms and remove legal, practical or other obstacles to access remedy (guiding principle 26).

General recommendations No. 30 and No. 35 of the CEDAW Committee (CEDAW/C/GC/35), reaffirm that States must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish and provide redress for acts of violence, including gender-based violence, committed by private individuals or entities.

Likewise, according to general comment No. 16 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/GC/16), States must adopt appropriate legal and institutional frameworks to respect, protect and fulfill children’s rights, and ensure access to remedies in cases of rights violations related to business activities.

Moreover, and as highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls in her guidance document on consent of 2025, “pornographic content is also weaponized to extort or coerce women,⁶ or punish them or make an example of them to other women, particularly in the digital age, where controlling the spread of such material is exceedingly difficult. The pornified patriarchal cultural environment also shapes how judges, juries, and the public interpret consent, often to the detriment of victims. Even children, who in law cannot consent, are filmed with their alleged consent and posted online.⁷

We would also like to refer to the report on the due diligence standard as a tool for the elimination of violence against women (E/CN.4/2006/61) of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, both customary and conventional international law establish that States have due diligence obligations

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/sr/activities/stm-at-conference-artificial-intelli.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/sr/activities/consent-guidance-document.pdf>

for preventing, responding to, protecting against and providing remedies for acts of violence against women whether such acts are committed by State or non-State actors. The State cannot delegate its obligation to exercise due diligence, even in situations where certain functions are being performed by another State or by a non-State actor. It is the territorial State as well as any other States exercising jurisdiction or effective control in the territory that remain, in the end, ultimately responsible for ensuring that obligations of due diligence are met. Related to this point is the notion that due diligence may imply extraterritorial obligations for States that are exercising jurisdiction and effective control abroad. Another fundamental principle connected to the application of the due diligence standard is that of non-discrimination, which implies that States are required to use the same level of commitment in relation to prevention, investigation, punishment and provision of remedies for violence against women as they do with regards to the other forms of violence. Moreover, in exercising due diligence to effectively implement human rights law - in order to prevent, protect, prosecute and provide compensation with regard to violence against women - States and other relevant actors must use multiple approaches in intervening at different levels: the individual, community, State and the transnational arena.

We also bring to your attention the former Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy recommendations ([A/HRC/43/52, para. 44](#)) that States should:

- (a) Recognize online-facilitated violence targeted by gender as a human rights violation and form of discrimination and take measures to apply international human rights instruments, in conjunction with national laws, to prevent and mitigate its occurrence.
- (b) Review, strengthen and devise policies and legal and regulatory privacy and data protection frameworks to address gender-based violence in online contexts, in particular technologically interconnected violence.
- (c) Reform criminal and civil laws to address technologically facilitated violence and establish criminal and civil causes of action to allow victims to pursue remedies with adequate protection of their privacy to avoid secondary victimization and to provide them with greater control.
- (d) Allow victims to obtain orders of protection (e.g., restraining orders) in family or civil courts to prevent abusers from posting or sharing intimate images and footage without their consent or engaging in other unlawful harassment.

In addition, we wish to highlight the importance of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (also known as the [Palermo Protocol](#)), which was ratified by Your Excellency Government in 2005. Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol defines trafficking in persons broadly to include the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, and it obliges States Parties to adopt measures to prevent and combat trafficking, protect and assist victims, and promote cooperation among States. This framework is critical to address systematic exploitation occurring through

pornography platforms and related digital environments that facilitate or profit from trafficking and exploitation.

We also wish to draw attention to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights ([A/HRC/17/31](#)), unanimously endorsed by the Human Rights Council in June 2011. These Principles provide the authoritative global standard for preventing and addressing human rights harms linked to business activities, including those of social media companies. They are grounded on three foundational pillars:

1. The State duty to protect against human rights abuse by third parties, including business enterprises.
2. The corporate responsibility to respect human rights and comply with all applicable laws.
3. The right of victims to access effective remedies when harm occurs.

Under these Principles, States are required to take appropriate steps to prevent, investigate, punish, and redress human rights abuses committed by non-State actors within their territory or jurisdiction, including abuses committed abroad by companies domiciled in their jurisdiction. This obligation, rooted in both treaty and customary international law, requires not only refraining from violations themselves but also exercising due diligence to prevent violations by business enterprises (see [UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13 \(2004\)](#)).

Specifically:

- Guiding principle 1 obliges States to adopt effective legislation, regulation, and adjudication to prevent and address business-related human rights abuse.
- Guiding principle 2 requires States to clearly communicate that all companies domiciled in their jurisdiction are expected to respect human rights in all activities.
- Guiding principle 3 emphasizes that States must enforce laws that require businesses to respect human rights.
- Guiding principle 26 underscores the need to ensure effective access to remedies and to remove legal, practical, or other barriers that hinder victims from obtaining redress.

For businesses, principles 17–21 set out a four-step human rights due diligence process, requiring enterprises to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how they address adverse human rights impacts. Principle 22 further obliges companies to provide or cooperate in remediation when they have caused or contributed to harm through their activities.

Failure by States to fulfill these obligations may constitute a breach of international human rights law. While States have discretion in determining the

specific measures adopted, they are expected to consider the full range of preventive and remedial options to protect individuals from business-related human rights violations.

Finally, we wish to highlight the findings of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, in its report on the gender dimensions of the UN Guiding Principles ([A/HRC/41/43](#)), which notes that: “States must take appropriate steps to ensure that all business enterprises operating in their territory or jurisdiction respect the human rights of women. All State-based policies, laws, enforcement, and remedial measures designed to prevent, investigate, punish and redress all forms of discrimination, harassment and violence against women should integrate the gender framework and guidance of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.”