

UN launches global principles to combat online hate and demands big tech take action now

June 25 2024, by Edith M. Lederer



United Nations Secretary General António Guterres speaks with the media as he arrives for a EU Summit in Brussels, March 21, 2024. At a press conference Monday, June 24, 2024, Guterres laid out principles to combat online hate and demanded that big tech companies use their power to reduce harm to people and societies around the world. Credit: AP Photo/Omar Havana, File

The United Nations chief on Monday launched global principles to combat online hate and lies and demanded that big tech companies use their power to reduce the harm they are doing to people and societies around the world.

Secretary-General António Guterres also demanded that advertising and public relations companies "stop monetizing harmful content" and strengthen information integrity. He urged [media outlets](#) "to raise and enforce editorial standards" and governments to commit to creating and maintaining a free and independent media landscape.

Guterres said the principles, laid out at a news conference, are the result of consultations with the 193 U.N. member nations, youth leaders, academia, the media and [civil society](#) including tech companies.

The principles call on tech companies, advertisers, media and other key players to refrain from using, supporting or amplifying disinformation and hate speech.

All parties involved in the development of artificial intelligence should take urgent and transparent measures to ensure that all AI applications are designed, deployed and used safely, securely, responsibly and ethically, and uphold human rights, according to the principles.

They also call for tech companies to ensure safety and privacy and allow users greater choices and control over their online experience and personal data, and for all key parties to ensure special protections for children.

Guterres stressed that big tech companies have "an outsized responsibility."

"Take responsibility," he demanded. "Acknowledge the damage your

products are inflicting on people and communities."

Guterres demanded that the companies take action.

"You have the power to mitigate harm to people and societies around the world," he said, "You have the power to change [business models](#) that profit from disinformation and hate."

As for advertisers and the PR industry, the U.N. chief singled out the coordinated disinformation campaigns seeking to undermine action to address the climate crisis.

"Creatives—don't use your talents to greenwash," Guterres said. "PR agencies—look for clients who aren't misleading people and destroying our planet."

He called on the media to provide "quality journalism based on facts and reality" and find advertisers that are part of the solution, not the problem. And he urged governments to protect journalists, uphold [human rights](#), refrain from internet shutdowns and other drastic measures and respect the right to freedom of expression and opinion.

Guterres said all countries should have a vested interest in not promoting misinformation, "because sooner or later the truth is discovered."

He stressed that the principles "aim to empower people to demand their rights."

"No one should be at the mercy of an algorithm they don't control, which was not designed to safeguard their interests, and tracks their behavior to collect [personal data](#) and keep them hooked," he said.

Guterres, when asked how the U.N. can ensure that [tech companies](#) and

advertising and PR agencies take the U.N. principles to heart and take action, pointed to their staff who are parents, citizens and "are interested in 'do no harm.'"

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