

Safeguarding Information Integrity: Insights from the UN Global's Code of Conduct Consultation (Jakarta)

15 December 2023



The digital ecosystem of information has become highly polluted by untrustworthy and harmful information. Digital platforms have facilitated the massively rapid creation and spread of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.

As a society, we bear the responsibility of creating a healthy digital space; to safeguard and prioritize information integrity. Pollutants of our information ecosystem is a severe and ever-evolving threat that must be faced comprehensively.

Representatives from Safer Internet Lab attended the consultation session of the UN Global's Information Integrity Code of Conduct held in Jakarta on Friday, 15th of December 2023. The focus of this session was the discussion of Policy Brief 8, titled "Information Integrity on Digital Platforms," a component of the "Our Common Agenda" series published by the United Nations in June 2023.

This consultation served as a platform for in-depth deliberation and the exchange of experiences among diverse stakeholders. The main objective was to explore how challenges of information integrity are experienced in Indonesia, understand the ongoing efforts to address these issues, identify areas for improvement in current initiatives, as well as, deliberate on the proposed Code of Conduct outlined in the policy brief.

This consultation session was attended by various key stakeholders working to defend information integrity in Indonesia and actively fighting against misinformation, disinformation and hate speech prevalent in the digital information ecosystem.

Moderated by Miklos Gaspar, Director of UNIC Jakarta (United Nations Information Centre), the discussion revolves around two main questions; 1) What are the ongoing efforts and what can we learn from them?, and second 2) what should a global Code of Conduct encompass?

The discussion involved a variety of stakeholders ranging from representatives from the government, research institutions, as well as, media and journalist alliances. Throughout the session, ongoing efforts in Indonesia are deliberated upon.

A number of regulatory measures are in place to moderate the digital information ecosystem, such as the 2016 Law on Electronic Information and Transactions (No. 11), the 2008 Law on Public Information Openness (No. 14), and the 1999 Law on the Press (No. 40). Furthermore, many ongoing efforts are focused on empowering the public with media and information literacy and prebunking (preemptive debunking) skills. These skills act as a shield for the public to approach information cautiously and critically.

A fruitful discussion on suggestions for improvements take place as members reflect on current efforts and the contents of the proposed Code of Conduct. The key takeaways from the discussion are as follows:

- 1) Addressing digital platform governance is crucial due to the pivotal role that digital platforms play in the digital information ecosystem.
- 2) It is imperative to implement preventive measures, targeting the root-cause of the issue; the creators of disinformation campaigns who are profiting from this business. There is a need to shift the focus from depending on the public to be most accountable, to scrutinizing the actors and mechanisms behind these campaigns. Finding solutions to disincentivize the organized creation and spread of disinformation and hate speech.
- 3) Recognizing local contexts is essential for the development of effective resolutions. As there is no one-size-fits-all solution, country-based regulations and codes are imperative.
- 4) Generative AI is a significant concern as the form and quality of disinformation continues to evolve, they become highly difficult to verify. Furthermore, AI models are inherently biased as they are trained with largely Western data. Thus, in order to use AI as a solution, they should be trained with a broad range of regional data to address local contexts effectively.

- 5) Transparency becomes a core value that needs to be held by all parties, especially platforms.
- 6) Ensuring the quality of media and journalists is paramount to creating a healthy information ecosystem.
- 7) The digital information ecosystem involves a broad range of stakeholders, each with their own respective interests. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential for a fair distribution of responsibilities. Sustainability and comprehensiveness should be a main focus in devising efforts.
- 8) As each stakeholder plays a distinct role within the intricate web of the digital ecosystem, the global Code can help establish a strong foundation of shared understanding of the digital space and its challenges. This is central to preventing miscommunication and to foster the creation of efforts that are both tailored to specific needs and mutually complementary, contributing collectively to a comprehensive approach.

The constructive dialogue provided valuable insights from diverse perspectives and experiences that will serve as a foundation for comprehensive measures to mitigate challenges to information integrity. The insights gained from this consultation session will be used to inform the development of the Code of Conduct leading up to the Summit of the Future in 2024. As we grapple with the ever-evolving threats to information integrity, it becomes clear that as a society, we carry the responsibility to purposefully foster a healthy digital space.