

## Global Principles for Information Integrity

### Why in news?

The United Nations Secretary-General recently unveiled the Global Principles for Information Integrity.

### What is information integrity?

- **Information integrity** - It entails a *pluralistic information space* that champions human rights, peaceful societies and a sustainable future.
- It holds within it the promise of a digital age that fosters trust, knowledge and individual choice for all.
- **Importance** - It empowers people to *exercise their right to seek, receive and impart information* and ideas of all kinds and to hold opinions without interference.
- In an increasingly complex digital information environment, this means enabling individuals to *navigate information spaces safely* with privacy and freedom.
- **Impact of technology** - It have in many ways *raised ambitions for the integrity of the information* ecosystem.
- It ensures that *freedom of expression is fully enjoyed* by providing accurate, reliable information, free from discrimination and hate.
- **Threats** - While these advances have enabled the mass dissemination of information, they have also *facilitated the spread of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech* risking the integrity of the information ecosystem.
- The erosion of information integrity can *undermine people's ability to exercise human rights* and can hamper efforts to achieve peace, prosperity and a livable future on our planet.
- It can *worsen the progress* in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular for countries in the global South.
- Groups in situations of vulnerability and marginalization are disproportionately affected.
- Efforts to exploit the information space to *undermine climate action* further highlight the urgency of the challenge.
- *Public figures* like activists, scientists and broadcasters have *become targets* of hate speech, threats and harassment.

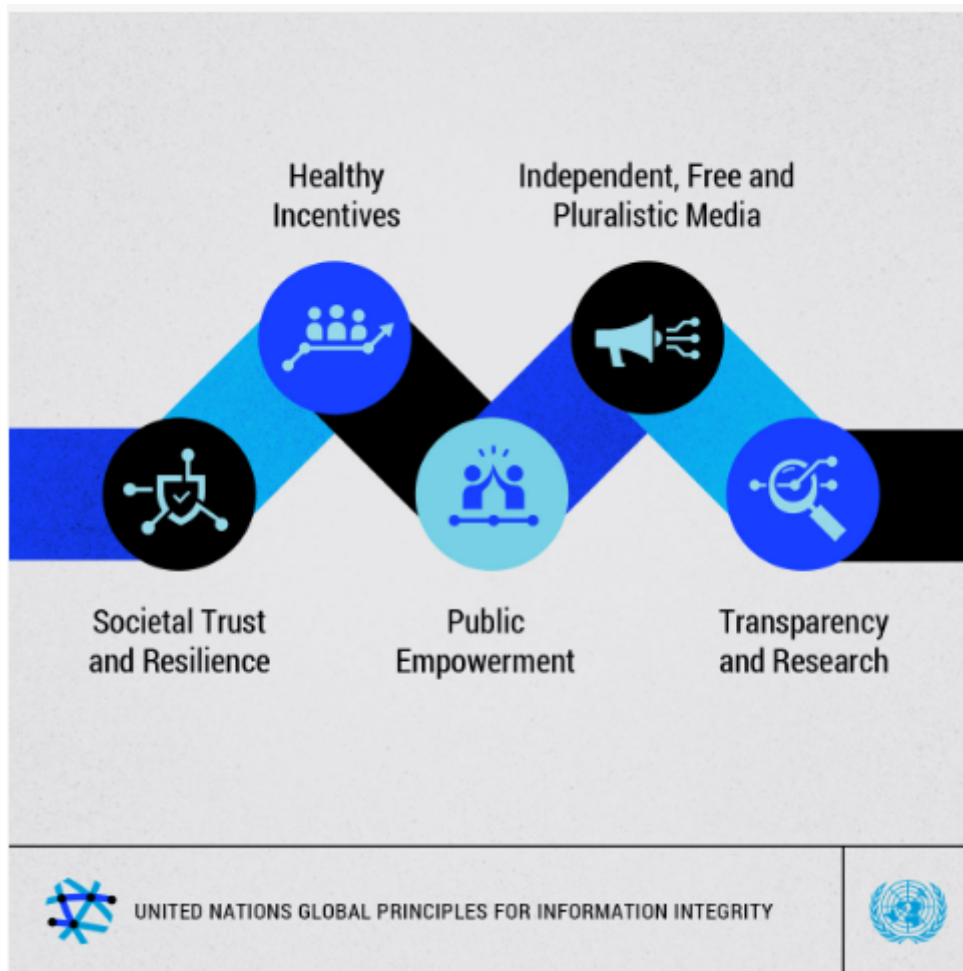
### What are the challenges in tackling Hate speech/ Misinformation?

- **Volume and Speed** - The rapid spread of information online means that *harmful content can go viral* before it is identified and removed.
- **Anonymity and pseudonymity** - Users can easily create anonymous or pseudonymous accounts, making it *challenging to hold individuals accountable* for spreading hate speech or misinformation.

- **Legal and Regulatory Gaps** - The need to *balance free speech with the regulation of harmful content* poses legal and ethical dilemmas.
- **Technological Limitations** - The constant evolution of technology and tactics used by malicious actors *requires continuous updates and improvements* to monitoring tools.
- **Diverse Linguistic and Cultural Contexts** - India's linguistic and cultural diversity makes it difficult to develop and implement a one-size-fits-all approach to detecting and combating hate speech and misinformation.
- **Resource Constraints** - Law enforcement and regulatory agencies may lack the necessary resources, training, and expertise to effectively tackle online hate speech and misinformation.
- **International Dimensions** - Misinformation and hate speech can originate from outside India's borders, complicating efforts to address these issues solely at the national level.
- **Privacy Concerns** - Measures to track and monitor online content can raise privacy concerns, leading to debates about the appropriate balance between security and individual privacy rights.

### What is UN's Global Principles for Information Integrity?

- **Background** - It was initiated in the *2021 UN report Our Common Agenda*, which envisioned future global cooperation and multilateral action.
- **Guidelines** - It offers a holistic framework to guide multi-stakeholder action for a healthier information ecosystem.
- **Objectives** - To *address the escalating threats* posed by misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in the digital realm.
- To *create healthier and safer information environments* that uphold human rights and promote peaceful societies and a sustainable future.
- **Framework** - It consists of *five principles* for strengthening information integrity, each of which include recommendations for key stakeholder groups.
  - Societal Trust and Resilience
  - Healthy Incentives
  - Public empowerment
  - Independent, free and pluralistic media
  - Transparency and Research



## What are its key recommendations?

- **Combating disinformation and hate speech** - All stakeholders, including governments, tech companies, advertisers, and media, should *avoid using, supporting, or amplifying disinformation and hate speech* for any purpose.
- **Promoting media freedom** - Governments should ensure timely access to information, maintain a free, viable, independent, and plural media landscape, and *provide strong protections for journalists, researchers, and civil society*.
- **Enhancing Tech Company responsibilities** - Technology companies *should incorporate safety and privacy* by design in all products, apply policies consistently across countries and languages and to protect groups often targeted online.
- Additionally, they should *prioritise crisis response* and support information integrity during elections.
- **Ethical AI development** - AI developers need to ensure AI applications are designed, deployed, and used ethically and safely, *upholding human rights*.
- **Reforming business models** - Implement business models that do not rely on programmatic advertising and prioritise human rights, privacy, and safety.
- *Users should have greater control* over their online experiences and personal data.
- **Transparency in advertising** - This will ensure their budgets do not inadvertently fund disinformation or hate and do not undermine human rights.
- **Data transparency and accountability** - Tech companies and AI developers should ensure meaningful transparency allowing access to data while respecting user privacy,

commission independent audits, and co-develop accountability frameworks.

- **Protecting children** - Special measures should be taken to protect and empower children, with governments providing resources for parents, guardians, and educators.

### Measures by India in tackling Hate Speech/ Misinformation

- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000** - *Sections 66A and 69A* deal with offensive messages and blocking of websites in the interest of national security and public order.
- **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** - *Sections 153A, 153B, 295A, and 505* address various forms of hate speech, promoting enmity between different groups, and incitement to violence.
- **POCSO Act** - It addresses the spread of child sexual abuse material, which is often linked with misinformation and hate speech.
- **Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code, 2021** - These guidelines require social media platforms and digital news publishers to follow certain regulations to curb the spread of misinformation and hate speech.
- **Fact-Checking Units** - The Press Information Bureau (PIB) and other government agencies have established fact-checking units to verify and counter false information.
- **Collaboration with Social Media Platforms** - The government collaborates with social media companies to flag and remove harmful content.
  - Platforms are required to appoint grievance officers to address complaints about hate speech and misinformation.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns** - Initiatives like the “#ThinkBeforeYouShare” campaign aim to promote responsible online behavior.
- **Technological Interventions** - Use of artificial intelligence and machine learning by various agencies to detect and remove hate speech and misinformation online.
- **Law Enforcement Actions** - Establishment of cybercrime units within police departments to track and act against online hate speech and misinformation.
- **International Cooperation** - Collaboration with international organizations and other countries to tackle cross-border hate speech and misinformation.
- **Judicial Interventions** - It has taken a proactive role in cases involving hate speech and misinformation, issuing directives to the government and tech companies to take stringent action.

### References

1. [Down To Earth| Launch of UN Framework for Tackling Misinformation](#)
2. [UN| UN Global Principles for Information Security](#)