



SAFER INTERNET DAY COMMEMORATION 5TH FEBRUARY, 2019

The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) in collaboration with the ICT Association of Malawi (ICTAM) is calling for increased awareness on the importance of safety and protection on the Internet as Malawi joins the international community in commemorating this year's Safer Internet Day (SID) on Tuesday 5th February, 2019.

Over the years, Safer Internet Day (SID) has become a landmark event in the online safety calendar growing beyond its traditional geographic zone and is now celebrated in approximately 130 countries worldwide. Malawi held its first ever commemoration of the day in 2018 which resulted in the formation of a Committee charged with the responsibility of looking into online safety. It is composed of various stakeholders including civil society, government, academia and private sector.

From cyberbullying to social networking, each year Safer Internet Day aims at raising awareness of emerging online issues and chooses a topic reflecting current concerns. This year's theme is **"Together for a better internet"**. It is hoped that this will encourage individuals to create a better Internet by developing four, critical skills called the 4Rs: **Respect, Responsibility, Reasoning and Resilience**

- **Respect**– I treat others and myself the way I like to be treated.
- **Responsibility** – I am accountable for my actions and I take a stand when I feel something is wrong.
- **Reasoning** – I question what is real.
- **Resilience** – I get back up from tough situations.

MACRA in partnership with ICTAM, mHub, YONECO and Facebook is calling upon all stakeholders in Malawi to observe the day and help to raise awareness about the importance of promoting safer internet especially among young people in Malawi. The

government, through the National ICT Master Plan and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III, has placed ICT and infrastructure development as key priority areas and highlighted a number of areas within the sector with a focus on improving the human capital, responsive ICT legal framework and universal access to ICT services. As more and more Malawians are being connected to the Internet world, there is a need for various stakeholders to play a major role in sensitizing citizens on how they can stay safe and protect their online identity. Every half a second, every day, a child goes online for the first time – tapping into all the great opportunities the Internet has to offer, but facing grave risks. This is a call for us to protect them from sexual exploitation, cyberbullying and the misuse of their private information.

As human rights experts flag the need to tackle online child sexual abuse and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) urges greater worldwide collaboration to ensure what has become a priority for many countries, Malawi also joins the global call for child online safety. New technologies are easing the production and proliferation of child abuse material, with new exploitative activities appearing such as the live streaming of child sexual abuse on demand. The quantification and identification of cases are made difficult by the possibility of concealing illegal activities on the Internet. The harm caused to child victims is amplified when images of abuse and exploitation go viral.

Considerable progress has been made in recent years in addressing risks and harms while maximizing opportunities offered by new technologies to prevent online abuse and empower children. There is need to scale up these efforts by connecting through a truly global alliance to develop an empowering, safe and inclusive digital agenda for children.

As we commemorate this year's Safer Internet Day, MACRA also calls upon all stakeholders in Malawi to take an active role in helping address the challenges of low internet literacy levels in the country. According to ITU, in 104 countries, more than 80% of the youth population is online. In developed countries, 94% of young people aged 15-24 use the Internet compared with 67% in developing countries and only 30% in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Out of the 830 million young people who are online, 320 million (39%) are in China and India. Nearly 9 out of 10 young individuals not using the Internet live in Africa or Asia and the Pacific. We therefore need an empowering, inclusive and safe Internet for all children in Malawi.

This digital divide between us and the increasingly Internet connected world must be a focus for both government and the private sector to support growth and reduce poverty by embracing ICT to the core. Together we can create a better internet for Malawi and for all.

The planned activities to commemorate the day here in Malawi include a press briefing and education outreach to secondary schools through radio and TV programmes.

