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**SPEECH BY CHRISTOPHER WAMBUA, Ag. CEO, KENYA FILM CLASSIFICATION BOARD, DURING THE DIGITAL PARENTAL LITERACY PROGRAM LAUNCH HELD AT THE SAROVA STANLEY HOTEL, ON 7<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023 AT 7:30 AM.**

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*Mr. Ismail Madey, Principal Secretary, State Department for Youth Affairs and the Arts,  
Representatives of Google and TikTok*

*Representatives of various State Agencies*

*Distinguished Guests*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

*Good morning!*

It is my pleasure this morning to welcome you all to the launch of the Parents' Digital Literacy Programme (PaDiL), an initiative of KFCB in collaboration with Netflix, Google and Tik Tok. The key objective of the initiative is to enhance the capacity of parents and caregivers to guide children on how to consume audio-visual content responsibly as well as utilize digital spaces safely. The Programme also seeks to create awareness on the effects of media content and emerging technologies on children.

Parents and caregivers are indeed critical points of contact for children and hence the need to arm them with skills that they can use to help the young ones under their care to navigate the digital space safely. This has also become critical and urgent in light of digital transformation, which has result in an increase in devices that connect to the internet in our homes.

Knowledge of software solutions embedded in these devices by parents and caregivers is key in ensuring our children's online safety. It is gratifying to note that all our partners in this programme, have either instituted parental control mechanisms on their respective

platforms or created safe online spaces for children. These solutions play a critical role in ensuring that children at various stages of development are protected against access to inappropriate material online.

More specifically, Google, through the YouTube Kids, for instance, offers family friendly content along with parental controls that can set time limits on apps and turn off search functionality.

TikTok, on the other hand, has a series of safety features and functionalities meant to protect young users on the platform. Users under the age of 13 can, for instance, watch videos without interacting with strangers through the comment page. On the same application, 13 to 15 year-olds have accounts that are private by default through which they can create and share videos but only friends can comment on them. At the same time, 16 to 17 year-olds can have public accounts on Tik Tok, that allow them to live stream and send direct messages, but with default restrictions in respect to buying, sending or receiving digital gifts.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

If parents were aware of these and other safety features and guided their children appropriately, our children would be safer online. Indeed, we would not have witnessed unnecessary deaths caused by online crazes or ‘games’ such as the **Blue Whale challenge**, a suicide game which targeted teenagers around the world by setting 50 tasks to be accomplished within 50 days.

Recently, social media sites resorted to using human teams to preview videos, instead of algorithms as the **blackout challenge** trend reverberated across the internet. In this challenge, also known as the choking game, children were dared to establish how long they could hold their breath. It is reported that this challenge saw at least 15 children lose their lives unnecessarily within a period of 18 months. In August 2021, the **milk crates challenge** took over the internet and saw adults break their limbs while attempting to play the game.

**Dear partners,**

Art is a powerful tool that shapes character and builds values. Research has revealed that children who grow up exposed to violent content are more likely to mature into violent adults. In the same vein, studies have shown that exposure to lewd content results in vulgar youth and communities in general.

More recently, a 2021 UNICEF study titled '**Disrupting Harm in Kenya: Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**', revealed that caregivers used the internet less than their children, thus limiting their ability to guide children appropriately.

Further, the report highlighted that **two-thirds** of internet-using children had not been taught how to stay safe online. The study also highlighted that 57% of children had shared their personal information with strangers, while 42% reported having accessed sexual images or videos on their social media feeds. Most disconcerting was the finding that 16% of children had actively searched for sexual-related content online with 33% inadvertently accessing such content.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As the Government agency mandated by law to examine and classify film audio-visual content for age-appropriateness as well as to give consumer advice on responsible content consumption, we have continued to address the afore-cited gaps through diverse initiatives in line with the emerging trends/issues.

The programme we are launching today is part of our initiatives geared towards protecting children from exposure to inappropriate audio-visual content . Through this collaborative programme, it is our intention to address gaps such as limited knowledge on the effects of media content consumption among parents, caregivers, and guardians as well as inadequate knowledge on the available media distribution platforms. Further, the programme will address lack of knowledge on standards of media content, content classification and its

rationale. It will also seek to deal with the challenge of limited awareness on the availability of safety tools on Video on Demand (VODs) and Over the Top (OTT) audio-visual platforms, among other knowledge gaps.

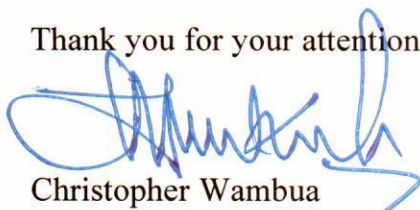
I am gratified to note that this launch coincides with the 10th Edition of the global Safer Internet Day themed: **‘Together for a better Internet’**. This theme resonates well with our joint commitment as partners of PaDiL programme to make the Internet better and safer for children.

**As I conclude,**

I would like to once more thank all the partners for the shared commitment in ensuring the success of this programme. As the Board, we are committed to working with like-minded partners on initiatives geared towards protecting children from exposure to inappropriate content.

With those remarks, it is now my pleasure and humble duty to invite our Chief Guest, the Principal Secretary, State Department for Youth Affairs and the Arts, Mr. Ismail Madey, to make his remarks and officially launch the ‘PaDiL’ programme.

Thank you for your attention.



Christopher Wambua  
**Ag. CEO, Kenya Film Classification Board**