As I said on 8 April: “The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most dangerous challenges this world has faced in our lifetime. It is above all a human crisis with severe health and socio-economic consequences.

The World Health Organization, with thousands of its staff, is on the front lines, supporting Member States and their societies, especially the most vulnerable among them, with guidance, training, equipment and concrete life-saving services as they fight the virus.

It is my belief that the World Health Organization must be supported, as it is absolutely critical to the world’s efforts to win the war against COVID-19.

This virus is unprecedented in our lifetime and requires an unprecedented response. Obviously, in such conditions, it is possible that the same facts have had different readings by different entities. Once we have finally turned the page on this epidemic, there must be a time to look back fully to understand how such a disease emerged and spread its devastation so quickly across the globe, and how all those involved reacted to the crisis. The lessons learned will be essential to effectively address similar challenges, as they may arise in the future.

But now is not that time.”

As it is not that time, it also not the time to reduce the resources for the operations of the World Health Organization or any other humanitarian organization in the fight against the virus.
As I have said before, now is the time for unity and for the international community to work together in solidarity to stop this virus and its shattering consequences.

New York, 14 April 2020

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United Nations
Secretary-General Message

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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VIDEO MESSAGE ON COVID-19 AND MISINFORMATION
(14 April 2020)

As the world fights the deadly COVID-19 pandemic – the most challenging crisis we have faced since the Second World War – we are also seeing another epidemic -- a dangerous epidemic of misinformation.

Around the world, people are scared. They want to know what to do and where to turn for advice.

This is a time for science and solidarity.

Yet the global ‘misinfo-demic’ is spreading.

Harmful health advice and snake-oil solutions are proliferating.

Falsehoods are filling the airwaves.

Wild conspiracy theories are infecting the Internet.

Hatred is going viral, stigmatizing and vilifying people and groups.

The world must unite against this disease, too.
The vaccine is trust.

First, trust in science.

I salute the journalists and others fact-checking the mountain of misleading stories and social media posts.

Social media companies must do more to root out hate and harmful assertions about COVID-19.

Second, trust in institutions — grounded in responsive, responsible, evidence-based governance and leadership.

And trust in each other. Mutual respect and upholding human rights must be our compass in navigating this crisis.

Together, let’s reject the lies and nonsense out there.

Today I am announcing a new United Nations Communications Response initiative to flood the Internet with facts and science while countering the growing scourge of misinformation -- a poison that is putting even more lives at risk.

With common cause for common sense and facts, we can defeat COVID-19 -- and build a healthier, more equitable, just and resilient world.

Thank you.

Video Link:

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UNICEF
Press Release

Children at increased risk of harm online during global COVID-19 pandemic - UNICEF

Newly released technical note aims to help governments, ICT companies, educators and parents protect children in lockdown

NEW YORK, 15 April 2020 – Millions of children are at increased risk of harm as their lives move increasingly online during lockdown in the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF and partners said today.

“The coronavirus pandemic has led to an unprecedented rise in screen time,” said Global Partnership to End Violence Executive Director Dr. Howard Taylor. “School closures and strict containment measures mean more and more families are relying on technology and digital solutions to keep children learning, entertained and connected to the outside world, but not all children have the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to keep themselves safe online.”

More than 1.5 billion children and young people have been affected by school closures worldwide. Many of these students are now taking classes as well as socializing more online. Spending more time on virtual platforms can leave children vulnerable to online sexual exploitation and grooming, as predators look to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic. A lack of face-to-face contact with friends and partners may lead to heightened risk-taking such as sending sexualized images, while increased and unstructured time online may expose children to potentially harmful and violent content as well as greater risk of cyberbullying.

UNICEF together with its partners, Global Partnership to End Violence against children, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), WePROTECT Global Alliance, World Health Organization (WHO), and World Childhood Foundation USA, is releasing a new technical note aimed at urging governments, ICT industries, educators and parents to be alert, take urgent measures to mitigate potential
risks, and ensure children’s online experiences are safe and positive during COVID-19.

“Under the shadow of COVID-19, the lives of millions of children have temporarily shrunk to just their homes and their screens. We must help them navigate this new reality,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “We call on governments and industry to join forces to keep children and young people safe online through enhanced safety features and new tools to help parents and educators teach their children how to use the internet safely.”

The preliminary recommended actions to mitigate online risks for children during COVID-19 include:

- **Governments:** Bolster core child protection services to make sure they remain open and active throughout the pandemic; train health, education and social service workers on the impacts that COVID-19 may have on child well-being, including increased online risks; step up awareness raising and educational initiatives on child online safety, and make sure social service providers, schools, parents and children are aware of local reporting mechanisms and have support numbers of local helplines and hotlines.

- **Information technology industry including social networking platforms:** Ensure online platforms have enhanced safety and safeguarding measures, especially virtual learning tools, and that they are clearly accessible to educators, parents and children; promote and facilitate child safety referral services and helplines; develop standard moderation policies that are aligned with children’s rights; employ built-in protection measures while innovating as appropriate, and provide internet connectivity to improve access for disadvantaged children in low-income households.

- **Schools:** Update current safeguarding policies to reflect the new realities for children learning from home; promote and monitor good online behaviours and ensure that children have continued access to school-based counselling services.
- **Parents**: Ensure children’s devices have the latest software updates and antivirus programs; have open dialogues with children on how and with whom they are communicating online; work with children to establish rules for how, when, and where the internet can be used; be alert to signs of distress in children that may emerge in connection with their online activity, and be familiar with school district policies and local reporting mechanisms and have access to numbers of support helplines and hotline handy.

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**About UNICEF**
UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

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