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To All Media Houses

Commercialization, Profiling of young Oswald regrettable

Child Online Africa is by this statement expressing delight and appreciation to well-wishers and philanthropists who concertedly spent some time last time last week, sharing words of encouragement and also showing other forms of good will and gestures to young Oswald for his heartwarming message to his mother prioritizing the gift for Mrs. Ernestina Appiah in a letter which later became a sensation to Ghanaians both offline and on Social media.

As an organization that is concerned about the rights and wellbeing of children online, we have no qualms with Ghanaians leveraging on digital platforms in sending goodwill messages to this brilliant boy who deserves every bit of the gifts showered on him during his dream come through “Our day”.

Unfortunately , Child Online Africa has noticed an unhealthy trend and attempt by some private enterprises to commercialize the profile of young Oswald ostensibly for profit and other peculiar gains This act is regrettable and goes against the fundamental rights of the child for which some provisions within domestic laws as well as in the **United Nations Convention On the Rights of the Child General comment No.25 Section 42** requests that *“States parties should prohibit by law the profiling or targeting of children of any age for commercial purposes on the basis of a digital record of their actual or inferred characteristics, including group or collective data, targeting by association or affinity profiling. Practices that rely on neuromarketing, emotional analytics, immersive advertising and advertising in virtual and augmented reality environments to promote products, applications and services should also be prohibited from engagement directly or indirectly with children”*.

We do not intend to name and shame any organization which we have found culpable in this act, especially as their support for young Oswald was in good faith. COA’s statement should serve as a reminder to all of us that the rights of the child in the digital environment ought to be respected and protected.

Child Online Africa; an organization working to ensure the digital rights protection of children, would like to bring the following to the attention of everyone:

- ❖ Parents should not by any chance start pursuing their children to or use this young man as the standard for measuring their own children’s performance.

- ❖ The parents of the young man should guard against the child being exploited for business purposes based on **Article 4 of the Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child** as well as the **Section 12 of the children's Act of Ghana (Act. 560)**.
- ❖ We see several businesses making offers to the child as well as the school, we wish to remind them to ensure their action does not violate Article 15 of the African Charter or the **Section 87 of the Children's Act nor Section 65 of the Cybersecurity Act of 2020 (Act.1038)**.
- ❖ We saw some negative comments to extent of mocking this young man for the continues 'favour' on the young man's life. We wish to remind the public that this young man did not plan anything neither did he anticipate the huge outpouring of love on him for his special day. Therefore, we entreat to celebrate the good side of this whole situation and learn the lesson but should you have anything critical of the young man, choose not to speak because that simple act of obedience will go a long way to contributing to a **BETTER internet**.
- ❖ Some industry players have also offered to give internet supply to the school and to the young man, we wish to bring to their attention that much as we acknowledge their contribution to be in good faith, we wish to remind them to ensure these supplies upholds the rights, dignity and safety of these users, not only that they should be proactive in promoting positive impact on the safety and wellbeing of the end users of their supply.
- ❖ The fact that the school has been brought to the limelight, they have a lot of work to do with this exposure not only for the young man but for the larger school community. They need to ensure they put in place safety measures which are integrated and consistent with all features and channels the school uses.

There are good sides to this issue, let us amplify the good and eliminate the negativity as far as this Oswald's rights, dignity, safety and wellbeing are concerned. A wise person once wrote:" A child is going to remember who was there, not what you spent on them because children outgrow a toy and outfits but they never outgrow time and love."

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SIGNED

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