16 August 2021

**26th Session of the Advisory Committee**

**Institute for NGO Research Statement on**

**New and Emerging Digital Technologies**

**Delivered by Anne Herzberg**

Thank you.

We thank the Advisory Committee for its detailed report. As noted in the Committee’s report, the creation and growing influence of new digital technologies has had many beneficial impacts for human rights. However, these technologies have several detrimental aspects that must be addressed not only by technology companies, but also by policy makers.

Issues that require further examination include the spread of hate speech and violent incitement and the use of technology in armed conflict.

Regarding hate speech and incitement, social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook apply inconsistent policies allowing bad actors to target minorities and spread hate speech and violent incitement. The platform Tik Tok has been used in recent months to disseminate attacks on Orthodox Jews in both Jerusalem and New York. Astroturfing, anonymity, and bots amplify these harmful images and messages. Some of the worst offenders are state actors such Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeni, who with impunity promotes antisemitism and holocaust denial, and threatens genocide against Israel and the Jewish people.

We therefore urge the Committee to promote and recommend that technology companies, UN agencies, and governments to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Association definitions on antisemitism and holocaust denial and distortion to guide the development of public policy, regulations, and product terms of service.

In armed conflict, while these technologies can be used to provide early warning mechanisms, such as the rocket alert system in Israel, digital technologies have also been used to threaten and target civilians. For instance, in the May 2021 conflict in Israel and Gaza, Hamas repeatedly used social media to identify civilian targets for rocket and RPG attacks and to threaten and terrorize the Israeli civilian population.

We therefore recommend that the Committee more closely examine all aspects of digital technology and armed conflict and recommend that member states and UN bodies do so as well.

Thank you.