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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 524**

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**524. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

Considering the increase in human trafficking from our shores and the increase in the number of children being murdered, what steps is her department taking to put a stop to social media pages, such as Facebook where persons are selling children, thereby bypassing legal adoption processes? NW567E

**REPLY:**

(i) The department has taken the following steps to put a stop to social media pages, such as Facebook where persons are selling children, thereby bypassing legal adoption processes are as follows:

(a) Continuous education and awareness-raising programmes in a form of webinars, radio talk shows, twitter space discussions in order to increase understanding of online use, advantages and risks as well as abuse taking place on online platforms, violating the rights of children. These awareness and education programmes target the general public, including children, child ambassadors and caregivers.

(b) The department closely monitors and analyse social media platforms identifying and addressing complaints and matters of concern for the department, responding and referring to relevant programmes for intervention.

(c) The department collaborates and partners with government departments, non-governmental organizations, Domestic Internet Service Providers, law enforcement, privacy experts, and technology companies who assists to develop realistic mandatory regulations for filtering and formal reporting mechanisms within online platforms, including social media and instant messaging platforms. The department recently celebrated Safer Internet Day in Gqeberha in collaboration with UNICEF, Films and Publications Board, SAPS, Department of Basic Education, Communications and Digital Technology, as well as MTN.

There is also strengthened integrated response by the multi-stakeholders who are empowered with current updated knowledge and skills to recognise risky online situations and to effectively deal with challenging situations when confronted with cases of online violation of children. The partnership with helplines and hotlines facilitates reporting and response for appropriate services.

(d) The department also undertakes training and capacity building of relevant stakeholders in government and non-governmental organizations on legislation relevant to adoption services, trafficking of children and online safety of children as well as roles and responsibilities with regard to identification, reporting, referral and rendering of appropriate services in order to address online violation of children, trafficking or illegal adoption.

(e) Training on the provision of the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Person and the Children’s Act interfaces with the legal processes of adoption, illegal methods used in trafficking and online violation of children. The specific roles and responsibilities of respective government departments and non-governmental organizations are outlined in the Guidelines for the Prevention of and response to Child Exploitation according to legislative mandates.

(f) The department is in a process of establishing the Coordinating Structure for online safety comprising of government departments, non-governmental organizations, Internet Service Providers, law enforcement, privacy experts, and technology companies.

(g) UNICEF is providing technical support to the department through appointment of secondment to DSD, to support the development and implementation of the Model of National Response for protection of children on and offline platforms, as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the Disrupting Harm Study.