Global Principles for Information Integrity

Why in news?

The United Nations Secretary-General recently unveiled the Global Principles for Information Integrity.

What is information integrity?

- **Information integrity** – It entails a *pluralistic information space* that champions human rights, peaceful societies and a sustainable future.
- It holds within it the promise of a digital age that fosters trust, knowledge and individual choice for all.
- **Importance** – It empowers people to *exercise their right to seek, receive and impart information* and ideas of all kinds and to hold opinions without interference.
- In an increasingly complex digital information environment, this means enabling individuals to *navigate information spaces safely* with privacy and freedom.
- **Impact of technology** – It have in many ways *raised ambitions for the integrity of the information* ecosystem.
- It ensures that *freedom of expression is fully enjoyed* by providing accurate, reliable information, free from discrimination and hate.
- **Threats** – While these advances have enabled the mass dissemination of information, they have also *facilitated the spread of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech* risking the integrity of the information ecosystem.
- The erosion of information integrity can *undermine people's ability to exercise human rights* and can hamper efforts to achieve peace, prosperity and a livable future on our planet.
- It can *worsen the progress* in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular for countries in the global South.
- Groups in situations of vulnerability and marginalization are disproportionately affected.
- Efforts to exploit the information space to *undermine climate action* further highlight the urgency of the challenge.
- *Public figures* like activists, scientists and broadcasters have *become targets* of hate speech, threats and harassment.

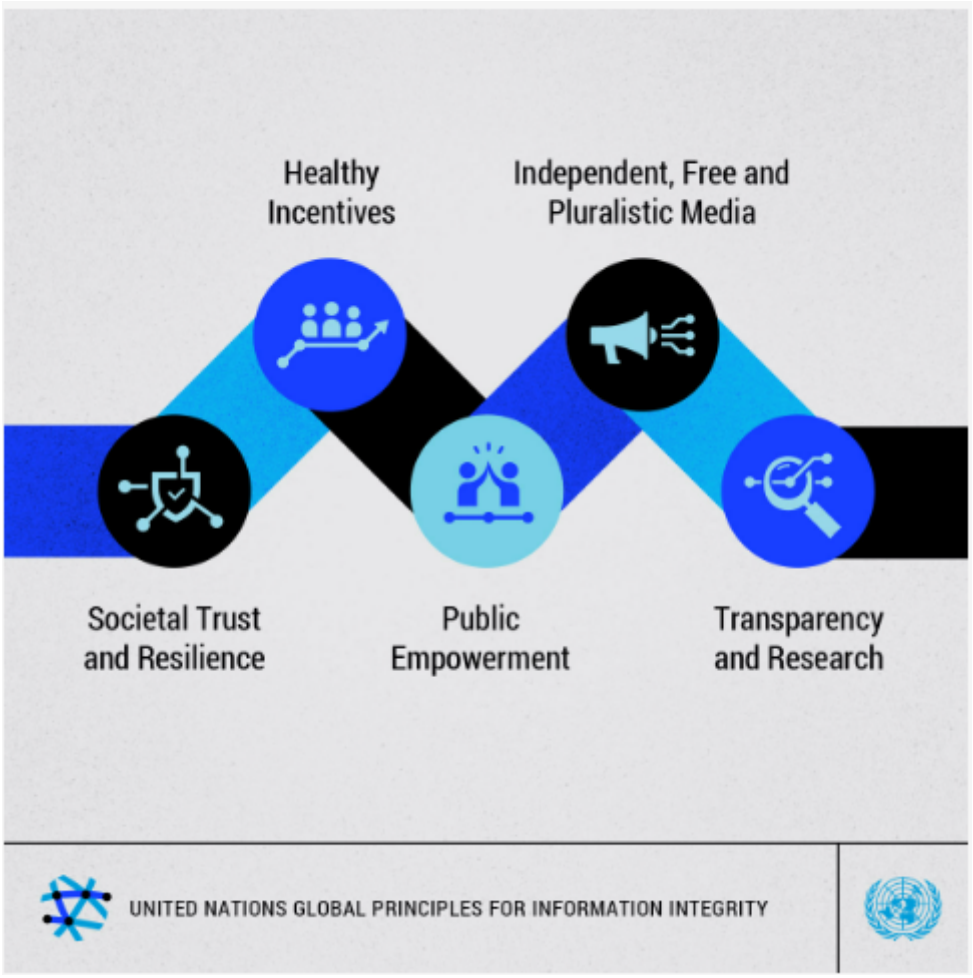
What are the challenges in tackling Hate speech/ Misinformation?

- **Volume and Speed** – The rapid spread of information online means that *harmful content can go viral* before it is identified and removed.
- **Anonymity and pseudonymity** – Users can easily create anonymous or pseudonymous accounts, making it *challenging to hold individuals accountable* for spreading hate speech or misinformation.

- **Legal and Regulatory Gaps** – The need to *balance free speech with the regulation of harmful content* poses legal and ethical dilemmas.
- **Technological Limitations** – The constant evolution of technology and tactics used by malicious actors *requires continuous updates and improvements* to monitoring tools.
- **Diverse Linguistic and Cultural Contexts** - India's linguistic and cultural diversity makes it difficult to develop and implement a one-size-fits-all approach to detecting and combating hate speech and misinformation.
- **Resource Constraints** – Law enforcement and regulatory agencies may lack the necessary resources, training, and expertise to effectively tackle online hate speech and misinformation.
- **International Dimensions** – Misinformation and hate speech can originate from outside India's borders, complicating efforts to address these issues solely at the national level.
- **Privacy Concerns** – Measures to track and monitor online content can raise privacy concerns, leading to debates about the appropriate balance between security and individual privacy rights.

What is UN's Global Principles for Information Integrity?

- **Background** – It was initiated in the ***2021 UN report Our Common Agenda***, which envisioned future global cooperation and multilateral action.
- **Guidelines** – It offers a holistic framework to guide multi-stakeholder action for a healthier information ecosystem.
- **Objectives** – To *address the escalating threats* posed by misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in the digital realm.
- To *create healthier and safer information environments* that uphold human rights and promote peaceful societies and a sustainable future.
- **Framework** – It consists of ***five principles*** for strengthening information integrity, each of which include recommendations for key stakeholder groups.
    - Societal Trust and Resilience
    - Healthy Incentives
    - Public empowerment
    - Independent, free and pluralistic media
    - Transparency and Research



What are its key recommendations?

- **Combating disinformation and hate speech** – All stakeholders, including governments, tech companies, advertisers, and media, should *avoid using, supporting, or amplifying disinformation and hate speech* for any purpose.
- **Promoting media freedom** – Governments should ensure timely access to information, maintain a free, viable, independent, and plural media landscape, and *provide strong protections for journalists, researchers, and civil society*.
- **Enhancing Tech Company responsibilities** – Technology companies *should incorporate safety and privacy* by design in all products, apply policies consistently across countries and languages and to protect groups often targeted online.
- Additionally, they should *prioritise crisis response* and support information integrity during elections.
- **Ethical AI development** – AI developers need to ensure AI applications are designed, deployed, and used ethically and safely, *upholding human rights.*
- **Reforming business models** – Implement business models that do not rely on programmatic advertising and prioritise human rights, privacy, and safety.
- *Users should have greater control* over their online experiences and personal data.
- **Transparency in advertising** – This will ensure their budgets do not inadvertently fund disinformation or hate and do not undermine human rights.
- **Data transparency and accountability** – Tech companies and AI developers should ensure meaningful transparency allowing access to data while respecting user privacy,

commission independent audits, and co-develop accountability frameworks.

- **Protecting children** – Special measures should be taken to protect and empower children, with governments providing resources for parents, guardians, and educators.

Measures by India in tackling Hate Speech/ Misinformation
• **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000** – *Sections 66A and 69A* deal with offensive messages and blocking of websites in the interest of national security and public order. • **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** – *Sections 153A, 153B, 295A, and 505* address various forms of hate speech, promoting enmity between different groups, and incitement to violence. • **POCSO Act** – It addresses the spread of child sexual abuse material, which is often linked with misinformation and hate speech. • **Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code, 2021** – These guidelines require social media platforms and digital news publishers to follow certain regulations to curb the spread of misinformation and hate speech. • **Fact-Checking Units** – The Press Information Bureau (PIB) and other government agencies have established fact-checking units to verify and counter false information. • **Collaboration with Social Media Platforms** - The government collaborates with social media companies to flag and remove harmful content. • Platforms are required to appoint grievance officers to address complaints about hate speech and misinformation. • **Public Awareness Campaigns** – Initiatives like the "#ThinkBeforeYouShare" campaign aim to promote responsible online behavior. • **Technological Interventions** - Use of artificial intelligence and machine learning by various agencies to detect and remove hate speech and misinformation online. • **Law Enforcement Actions** – Establishment of cybercrime units within police departments to track and act against online hate speech and misinformation. • **International Cooperation** – Collaboration with international organizations and other countries to tackle cross-border hate speech and misinformation. • **Judicial Interventions** – It has taken a proactive role in cases involving hate speech and misinformation, issuing directives to the government and tech companies to take stringent action.

References

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2. UN| UN Global Principles for Information Securit

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