

# United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund



## Child Victims of Online Grooming and Trafficking: Addressing the Gaps in Protection Mechanisms

### Message from the Dais

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Dear delegates,

As your chair, **Chaza Kazem**, a Computer and Communications Engineering student at AUB, and your co-chair, **Riad Berjawi**, a Grade 12 student at Collège du Sacré-Cœur, we are excited to welcome you to UNICEF, where we will be discussing *"Child Victims of Online Grooming and Trafficking: Addressing the Gaps in Protection Mechanisms."* During recent years, the internet has become an integral part of our lives. It has provided children with learning opportunities and more communication alternatives, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, it has also introduced cyber grooming as a new method for pedophiles and traffickers to perform their abuse. The anonymity and reach of the internet have made it easier for predators to target and manipulate young individuals, often with devastating consequences.

Despite the growing awareness of these issues, significant gaps remain in all protection services around the world. Many existing frameworks are outdated or insufficient to address the complexities of such cybercrimes.

Every child has the right to express themselves freely on social media platforms; however, this right should be preserved and protected. Internet users do not often realize the consequences of their actions unless done, specifically with children who are more vulnerable to developing mental complications. Some children prefer staying home because the outside is not a safe place, until they face hate speech, cyberbullying, and finally grooming. Then, after being exploited for

trafficking purposes, they are found lonely, lost, and unaware of what to do.

Show us what your countries have done concerning protecting children and propose detailed, promising solutions that will stop this issue.



We wish you good luck, and we want everyone to participate, contribute, and finally have some fun!

We are more than excited to see you!

-UNICEF Dais Members

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## Introduction to the Committee

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The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is an agency of the United Nations that was created in 1946 to help children after World War II. UNICEF operates in over 190 countries by working with governments, NGOs, and communities to create protective environments for children. It also provides healthcare, nutrition, education, and emergency relief during crises like wars or natural disasters. This agency is funded by voluntary donations from governments, the private sector, and civil societies <sup>[1][2]</sup>.



UNICEF focuses on the following goals:

- Saving children's lives and defending their rights
- Helping children fulfill their potential
- Promoting the equal rights of women and girls
- Ensuring special protection for disadvantaged children
- Helping developing countries prioritize children's needs and improve their services

## Rules of Procedure

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This committee will operate on the basis of the regular BEYMUN rules of procedure. Delegates are required to use the following motions:

### 1. Setting the Agenda

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to set the agenda in favor of Topic A/B. "

Yet, this motion will not be used in the conference since there is 1 topic.

### 2. Speaker's List

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to open the Speaker's List with a speaker's time of [Y] seconds. "

### 3. Moderated Caucus

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to suspend the debate and move into a moderated caucus to discuss '[Subtopic Y]' for a total time of [Z] minutes, with a speaker's time of [W] seconds. "

### 4. Unmoderated Caucus

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to suspend the debate and move into an unmoderated caucus to [form blocs and alliances / discuss resolutions/work on the working paper or draft resolution / discuss the crisis] for a total time of [Y] minutes. "

## **5. Consultation of the Whole**

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to suspend the debate and move into a consultation of the whole to discuss [the recommendations elaborated in the previous unmoderated caucus / the crisis] for a total time of [Y] minutes. "

## **6. Adjourn the Meeting**

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to adjourn the meeting for [Y] minutes for the purpose of [a lunch break / a coffee break]. "

## **7. Solicit a Third Party**

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to solicit [Third Party Y], as they possess relevant information or expertise regarding [Subtopic Z / the crisis]. "

## **8. Press Conference**

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to suspend the debate and move into a press conference to discuss [a resolution related to Y / the crisis] for a total time of [Z] minutes. "

## **9. Extend the Time of the Unmoderated Caucus**

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to extend the duration of the current unmoderated caucus by [Y] minutes. "

## **10. Introduce the Draft Resolution**

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to introduce the draft resolutions with a speaker's time of [Y] seconds per author or co-sponsor. "

## **11. Close Debate and Move into Voting Procedure**

"The delegate of [Country X] motions to close the debate and move directly into voting procedure. "

(Note: This motion requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

## Written Motions:

1. **Right of Reply:** Delegates can request the right of reply to another delegate who has offended their country. There is no right of reply to a right of reply.
2. **Appeal to the Chair's Decision:** If the delegates feel that the chair has made an unfair decision, the delegates can send it as a note to the Chair.

## Points:

- **Point of Order:** Used to correct a procedural or factual mistake. Interruptive, but do not overuse it.
- **Point of Personal Privilege:** Request to leave or adjust comfort (e.g., temperature). Interruptive.
- **Point of Inquiry:** Ask about the rules or current stage. Interruptive.
- **Point of Information:** Ask a question when the floor is open. Not interruptive.
- **Point to Instigate a Debate:** Challenge another delegate's resolution stance. Interruptive and subject to chair's approval.

## UNICEF's Relation to the Topic

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Many adult users exploit social media and the Internet to deceive children and adolescents. Accordingly, by collaborating with governments and tech companies, UNICEF strives to make the Internet a safe place for children to learn, socialize, and express themselves. Furthermore, it promotes national efforts to combat online child sexual exploitation and assists in providing services to victims <sup>[3]</sup>.

## Mapping the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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The sustainable development goals are a set of 17 global goals created by the United Nations in 2015 to address the world's biggest challenges by the year 2030. The United Nations agencies try to find solutions that support the achievement of the SDGs. The topic of addressing the gaps in protection mechanisms concerning child

victims of online grooming and trafficking falls under the following SDGs:

- **SDG #4:** “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”
- **SDG #16:** “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”



## Introduction to the Topic

With the rise of the digital age, the exploitation of children and underage victims has widened through online grooming and trafficking. Predators are now using social media, gaming platforms, and other communication tools to target minors virtually. This form of exploitation poses unique challenges in combating such crimes due to the serious gaps in protection mechanisms <sup>[4]</sup>.



### **What is Online/Cyber Grooming?<sup>[5]</sup>**

Online grooming is a type of abuse that occurs when adults communicate with minors with the intent of soliciting them for sexual exploitation or abuse – whether the contact remains online or leads to in-person encounters. Grooming is a process that develops gradually, as the abuser slowly gains the target's trust by identifying their needs and vulnerabilities. Once trust is established, the abuser starts to increase inappropriate demands using manipulation and emotional control. In many cases, this form of relationship is often kept secret. It can escalate into serious psychological trauma and physical abuse.

### **Relation Between Online Grooming and Child Trafficking: <sup>[4][6]</sup>**





Online grooming and child trafficking are closely linked forms of exploitation. In many cases, grooming serves as an entry point to trafficking. Traffickers currently use technology to deceive and pressure victims into sending sexual images and videos of themselves. Afterward, the victim has no control over who views the content. The threat of sharing or selling these images is a powerful blackmail tool to keep the victim under the trafficker's control. Furthermore, traffickers exploit digital platforms, particularly the dark web, to hide illegal materials related to trafficking and operate anonymously, evading law enforcement.

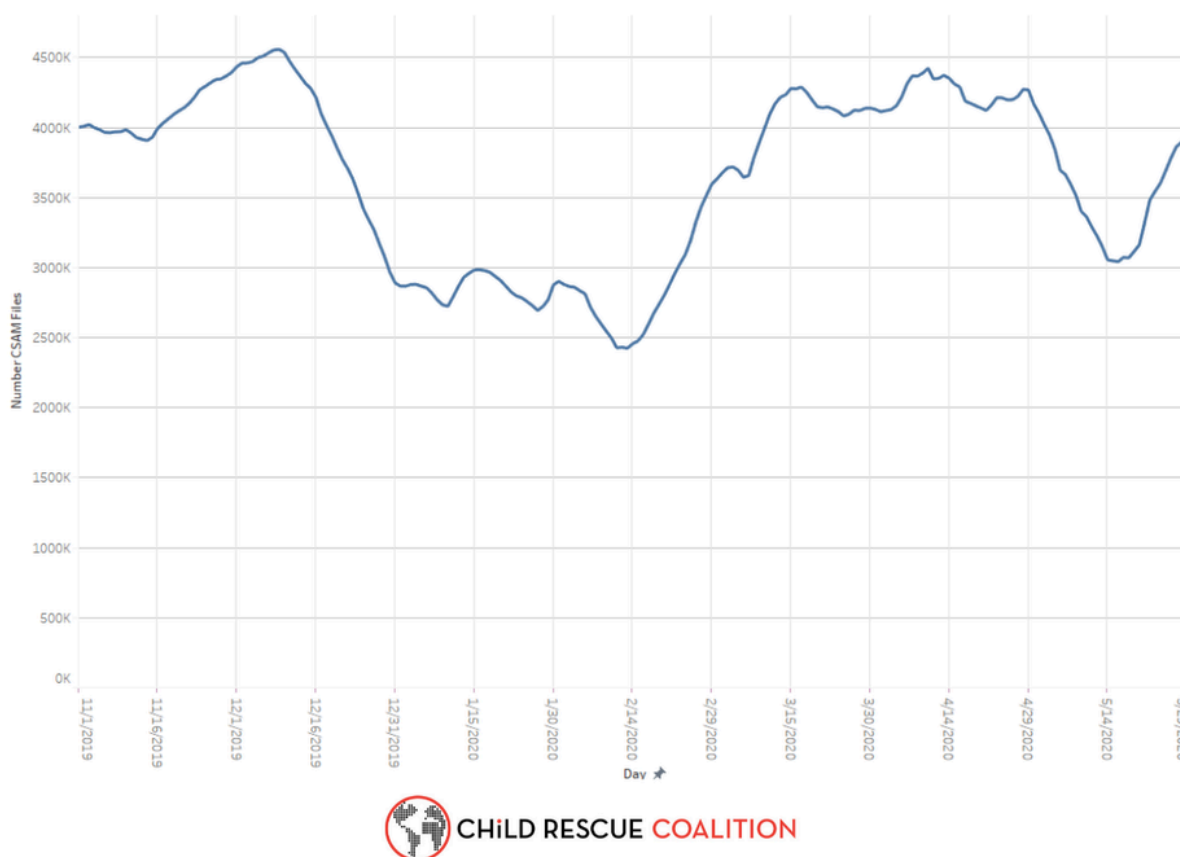
## Topic in Depth

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**Cyber Grooming During COVID-19:** <sup>[7]</sup>



## CSAM Sharing on Selected Peer to Peer Networks during COVID-19



The COVID-19 pandemic created a perfect environment for expanding cyber grooming, with the closure of schools and other support services. Virtual socializing on social media and messaging apps became the dominant alternative to face-to-face socializing. This huge dependence on the internet, especially by minors, has increased the risks of online sexual exploitation, to the extent that Interpol has reported a dramatic increase in the illegal consumption of child sexual exploitation material after the pandemic, as illustrated in the following graph.

### Role of Corruption in Facilitating Trafficking: <sup>[8]</sup>

Corrupt officials in recruitment agencies, immigration offices, border control, and government investigations often accept bribes to produce false documents and visas, and ignore illegal border crossings, consequently facilitating traffickers' movement of victims across borders. Additionally, banking regulators and financial investigators may ignore suspicious transactions, enabling traffickers to launder their illegal profits. Within the law enforcement domain, corrupt officers may tip off traffickers about possible raids, destroy evidence, or "fail" to investigate cases in exchange for payoffs. Prosecutors and judges may delay trials, dismiss charges improperly, or impose lenient sentences due to bribes or political pressure.

## **Anonymity Tools and Encrypted Platforms:** <sup>[9]</sup>



Cyber groomers and traffickers remain anonymous online by using virtual private networks (VPNs) to mask their IP address, utilizing the Tor browser, which is a secure browser that encrypts data, as well as encrypted email services and anonymous payment systems to help keep their identity unknown. They may also use multiple devices with different IP addresses or create fake identities to disguise themselves further. Messaging applications that use end-to-end encryption—such as WhatsApp and Signal—further complicate efforts to trace communications. These services prevent third parties, including law enforcement, from accessing message content. Features like "disappearing messages" and "view once" for photos and videos enable traffickers to hide evidence of contact between themselves and their victims.

## **Lack of Specific Criminalization of Online Grooming:** <sup>[10]</sup>

While sexual abuse and intentions to meet a child in person are criminalized in most countries, many countries have neglected to consider virtual alternatives as a crime. Many laws do not recognize cyberbullying as a standalone offense; instead, they rely on related terms such as child pornography or sexual abuse, without accounting for the full grooming process—including manipulative conversations and psychological coercion. This results in legal loopholes that allow online grooming to go unpunished.

## **Lack of Technical Equipment and Training:** <sup>[9]</sup>

The lack of technical equipment and training poses a significant challenge in updating protection mechanisms. Specialized hardware and software are expensive and require constant updates and high-priced licensing agreements to keep up with the speed of technological change, making them inaccessible to many countries, especially low-

income ones. Additionally, there is a substantial gap in technical expertise among law enforcement officers, particularly in handling digital evidence and complex cybercrime cases. Such investigations often demand specialized knowledge beyond the scope of traditional policing.

### **The Role of Social Media and Gaming Platforms as Grooming Tools: <sup>[11]</sup>**



Social media has become a major tool for child trafficking and grooming. At the same time, many children often use fake ages to access different social media platforms and stay on trend, while criminals exploit these platforms by creating fake identities to groom minors and lure them into dangerous situations, including trafficking. In addition to that, many gaming platforms such as Roblox, PUBG, Fortnite, and other games that contain private and group chatting, easily allow predators to gain a child's trust after several games and interactions, which often leads to sextortion.

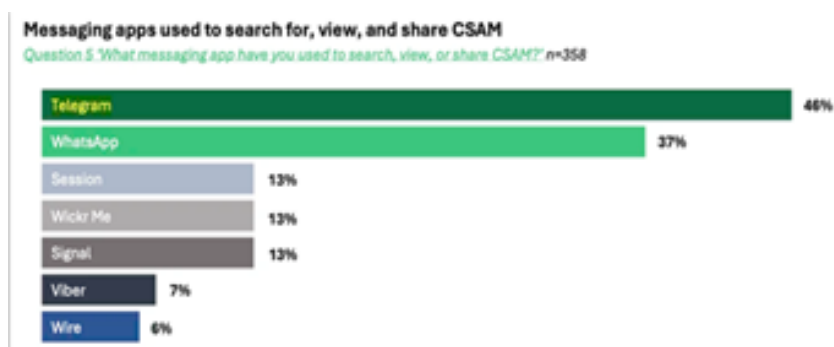
### **Using Technologies to Facilitate Child Trafficking: <sup>[12]</sup>**

Technology offers traffickers strong anonymity, which enables them to operate at a lower risk than in the past. Before the rise of technology, human trafficking relied on hidden, physical networks to connect with buyers, making transactions slower and more exposed. Now, the

internet allows traffickers and consumers to communicate, negotiate, and conduct business online while remaining virtually untraceable. Moreover, disposable, prepaid phones are a go-to tool for traffickers since these phones do not require ID or credit checks; criminals can buy them with cash, use them to contact victims and clients, and then discard them before law enforcement can track the number. The lack of registration data and the ease of swapping SIMs make it nearly impossible for authorities to link these devices to traffickers, enabling covert operations.

## **Using Internet Platforms to Share and Live Stream Child Pornography:**

[13]



Pedophiles are increasingly able to exploit online streaming services such as Skype to watch live footage of child sex abuse. Skype's lax live streaming policies have made it a go-to platform for livestreaming child exploitation, where predators use its loopholes to direct abuse without leaving any detectable traces. Similarly, Telegram has become a top platform for sharing child sexual abuse material (CSAM), with studies showing that 46% of offenders use its private channels and encrypted chats to trade illegal content. Both apps also enable sextortion networks, including disturbing cases where cults and predators coerce minors into livestreaming sexual abuse.

## **Cultural and Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities:**

[14]

Cultural and socioeconomic factors make children vulnerable to online grooming. This is especially dangerous for homeless and runaway children due to a lack of stable protection. Traffickers often trade food or accommodation for sexual abuse or hard labor. Additionally, many exploitation cases occur in orphanages and among migrants, displaced people, and refugees. Their safety is especially at risk due to language and cultural barriers, in addition to the unstable circumstances they are living in. Furthermore, marginalized groups like

LGBTQ+, prisoners, and people with disabilities are getting increasingly isolated due to biases, racism, and homophobia, thus increasing their vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

### **Role of Technology Companies:** <sup>[15][16]</sup>

Technology companies, especially platform developers, have an important role concerning offering a child-friendly environment for young users and establishing certain restrictions and limits based on user age. This includes preventing dangerous activities like cyberbullying, exploitation, and hate speech. However, these companies often fail to do these tasks due to insufficient investment in safety-focused research and development. For example, Meta has faced legal action over allegations of promoting explicit sexual content for children on their website, which highlights the role of these companies concerning minors and even their future.

### **Mental Health and Online Grooming:** <sup>[17][18]</sup>

#### **Causes:**

Many groomers share similar qualities and needs, much like their victims. The loneliness and the isolation of the target make them vulnerable to groomers who often desire power and domination. Also, the need for money and the need for sexual or abusive relations, stemming from past experiences, can create a connection rooted in grooming and trafficking. Many groomers were once victims themselves, which underscores the role of parental guidance and protection. Parents must teach their children about online predators, so that they will always be equipped with the knowledge in case a situation arises.

#### **Effects:**



Groomers act with specific intent, and the victim often has something the groomer wants. Consequently, the victim is found 'lost' after the groomer takes what he claimed he had. The child carries the shame of the events, believing they could have prevented what happened. Continuous self-blaming can lead to the development of mental problems like anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

### **Importance of Psychological Support:**

Many researchers claim that victims experience short-term and long-term mental health challenges, including stress and self-harm. This is due to both their trauma and the internet's role in amplifying these mental health issues through global reach, permanence, and easy access. Victims who are aware that their situation has been circulated to people often experience continuous embarrassment and fear. Thus, short and long-term rehabilitation services and psychological support are crucial in these cases. However, difficulty lies ahead because many of the victims are embarrassed by their situation, and there is often a lack of trained professionals.

### **Case Studies**

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## **Hair Zone Case:** <sup>[19][20]</sup>



In May 2024, George Moubayyed, a Lebanese TikTok influencer and hairdresser who owned the Hair Zone salon in Beirut's Sabtieh neighborhood, was publicly exposed for grooming and trafficking approximately 30 minors. Using his social media fame and the salon as a front, Moubayyed and his accomplices lured children by promising them TikTok fame, gifts such as clothes, or paid collaborations. They would also invite their victims to the salon or to private gatherings where they drugged and sexually assaulted them, all while filming these abuses as a form of blackmail for the children and their families. In some cases, victims were forced into bringing friends or participating in further abuse, and some were trafficked abroad. The gang also sold footage of the abuse on the dark web, profiting from their crimes.

The Lebanese authorities began their investigations about a month before the case became public, after several families filed complaints with Lebanon's Public Prosecutor's Office. The Lebanese Internal Security Forces worked closely with the judiciary to identify suspects and victims, and at least nine suspects have been arrested, including three TikTok influencers. However, several key figures, such as Paul Mouchi (known as "Jay") and Peter Naffah, remain fugitives, with Interpol involved in efforts to confiscate them abroad. Tragically, the case has had severe consequences for the victims, including at least one reported suicide. The Hair Zone case has exposed serious gaps in child protection and online safety in Lebanon and has introduced new techniques for child grooming and trafficking using the internet.

## **The Nth Room Case (South Korea, 2018–2020):** <sup>[21][22]</sup>



The Nth Room is a network of group chats on Telegram, which was led by Moon Hyung-Wook (alias: god) and Cho Jubin (alias: the Doctor), where young girls and women were forced into sexual slavery. Moon created the first Nth Room and enslaved various girls and women by threatening them with blackmail after hacking their media accounts, where he forced them to perform sexual acts in front of the camera. In just one of Moon's Nth Room chat groups, over 3,000 sexual videos and images were shared. However, Moon's goal was not to collect profit; in fact, he was merely interested in collecting any profit. Moon was driven by sadistic pleasure, finding pleasure in the torture and degradation of his victims. Despite this, his 'Gotham Room' still charged users 10,000 won (about \$7) per entry. The Korean authorities have identified at least 21 victims linked to Moon's crimes, many of whom were minors.

On the other hand, Cho Jubin turned the Nth Room into a twisted business where he charged one million won and upwards to 1.5 million won (above \$1000) for entry to his VIP rooms. Cho used a different technique than Moon to lure his victims, whom he refers to as 'slaves', where he would promise them opportunities to earn money then would start demanding sexual photos and threatening them if they did not comply with his demands. He would humiliate these victims by manipulating them into filming explicit content. Cho used to force his victims to carve 'slave' or 'doctor' into their skin and to commit several torturous acts on themselves in his Rooms. In November 2020, Moon was sentenced to 34 years in prison by the Seoul Central District Court, and Cho Ju-bin received a 42-year prison sentence, while weaker penalties were given for viewers, highlighting gaps in digital sex crime laws.

## International Actions

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### **WePROTECT Global Alliance:**<sup>[23]</sup>

WeProtect Global Alliance is an international alliance including 103 governments, as well as multiple companies and organizations. Its

main goal is to create a safer digital world that protects children from being sexually exploited and abused online. Following each global summit, an agenda is developed to guide the members on actions that should be taken.

### **The Lanzarote Convention :<sup>[24]</sup>**



The Lanzarote Convention was developed by the Council of Europe, and it was signed and ratified by all the Council's member states. It aims to protect children against sexual exploitation and abuse. Moreover, it includes measures to be taken for the prevention of such crimes, including the protection of victims, as well as the laws and sanctions that could be considered against groomers.

### **The 2019 Economic and Social Council Resolution 2019-20:<sup>[25]</sup>**

The Economic and Social Council submitted to the General Assembly a resolution concerning Countering child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse online. It included criminalizing online child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and combatting cybercrime. Additionally, it encouraged countries to enhance reporting systems related to child trafficking and grooming. It also marked the importance of creating victim support programs that offer psychological care, social reintegration, and trauma counseling

## **Questions to Consider**

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- What procedures has your country done to combat child grooming and trafficking?
- What are some basic measures that parents can take to protect their children against such forms of exploitation?
- What are some major gaps in your country's protection mechanisms against child grooming?
- How can UNICEF provide a safe online space for children and minors?

- What are some previous measures that UNICEF has taken to combat child cyber grooming and trafficking
- Did your country sign the Lanzarote Convention?
- What signs do predators look for when grooming or exploiting a child?
- What are the signs that indicate a child is facing cyber abuse?

## Recommendations

- Delegates are recommended to search for different online grooming tactics and techniques that are used on minors and children.
- Delegates are recommended to understand the reason why many members of the Hair zone case are still on leash to identify gaps in protection mechanisms.
- Delegates are recommended to look up the “Kayleigh Haywood” case.
- Delegates are recommended to check if their country is in the WePROTECT Global Alliance.
- Delegates are recommended to find resolutions to tackle the gaps present in the provided case studies.
- Delegates are recommended to find short and long-term solutions to fight online grooming and trafficking.
- Delegates are recommended to search about cyber hacking and its relationship with child grooming and trafficking.

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## Suggested Links

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