UN Global Principles for Information Integrity
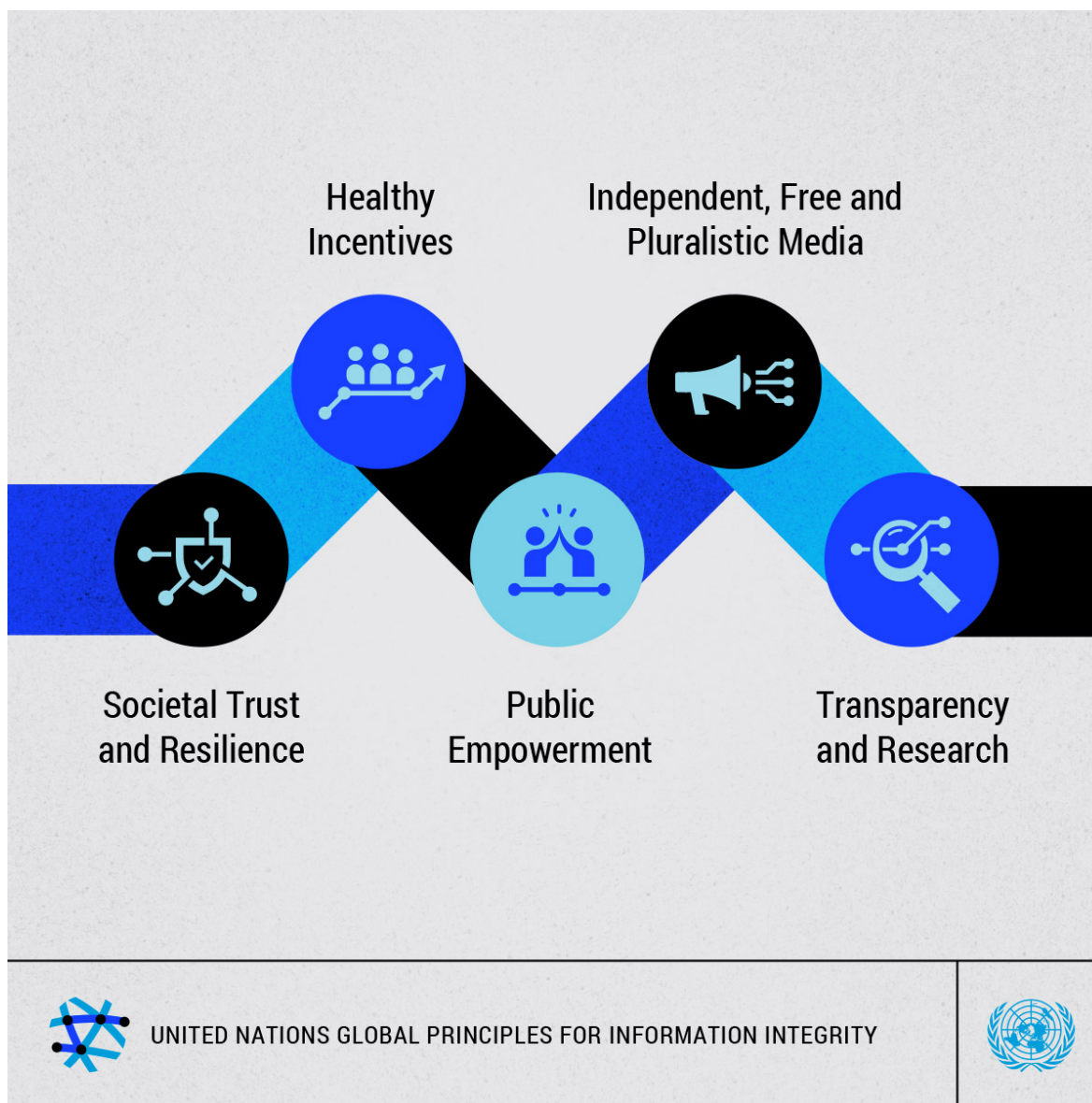
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Why in News?

Recently, the United Nations Secretary-General unveiled a set of '**United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity'** aimed at curbing the spread of **online misinformation**, disinformation, and hate speech.

- These guidelines are designed to address the widespread harm caused by false information on **digital platforms.**

What are the United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity?

- These principles form the foundation of a vision for a more **humane information ecosystem**. The initiative aims to prioritise **human rights** and support sustainable development, climate action, democracy, and peace.
- The **5 Global Principles for Information Integrity** are as following:
    - **Societal Trust and Resilience:** Building societal trust and resilience to counteract the spread of misinformation and hate speech.
    - **Independent, Free, and Pluralistic Media:** Ensuring **media independence, freedom,** and diversity to support high-quality journalism and diverse viewpoints.
    - **Healthy Incentives:** Creating incentives that promote truthful and constructive content while discouraging the spread of harmful misinformation.
    - **Transparency and Research:** Enhancing transparency and supporting research to understand and mitigate the impact of misinformation and to develop effective solutions.
    - **Public Empowerment:** Empowering the public with the tools and knowledge to **critically assess information, protect their rights,** and participate in the information ecosystem responsibly.

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UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL PRINCIPLES FOR INFORMATION INTEGRITY

Initiatives Taken Combat Misinformation and Disinformation

- Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021
- Disaster Management Act 2005
- Epidemic Diseases Act 1897
- Information Technology Amendment Rules, 2023
- Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

What are the Challenges Associated with Humane Information Ecosystem?

- **Speed and Scale of Misinformation Spread:** Digital platforms and AI technologies have accelerated the spread of **misinformation** and **hate speech, causing rapid and widespread harm.**
  - For example State media outlets in **Venezuela** spread **pro-government messages** through **AI-generated deepfake videos.**
- **Impact on Social Cohesion and Democracy**: False narratives and distortions undermine **social cohesion, breed cynicism, disbelief,** and **disengagement,** and **damage the integrity** of elections.
  - According to the **Global Risk Report 2024, misinformation** and **disinformation** are

among the **top five risks** identified.

- **Reinforcement of Prejudices:** Opaque algorithms create **information bubbles** that reinforce prejudices, including [racism], **misogyny,** and various forms of discrimination.
    - For example **algorithms creat eco-chamber effec**t which tend to show **users content** similar to what they've engaged with before.
    - It reinforces preconceived views or biases, making it harder for them to consider alternative viewpoints.
- **Targeting of Vulnerable Groups:** Women, refugees, migrants, minorities, and activists often face targeted harassment and humiliation.
- **Monetisation of Harmful Conten**t: Advertisers and the **PR industry** often profit from harmful content, exacerbating the spread of misinformation.
- **Weak Protections for Journalists**: Journalists face threats and lack strong protections, which impacts their ability to report accurately and freely.

Misinformation, Disinformation and Hate Speech

- **Misinformation:**
    - Misinformation is **false or inaccurate information shared without intending to cause harm**.
        - Example of misinformation is when someone **shares an outdated weather forecast**, believing it to be current.
- **Disinformation:**
    - Disinformation refers **to intentionally false or misleading information** that is disseminated with the purpose of deceiving or misleading others.
    - **Example: A fake news website publishes a fabricated story** about a public health crisis to cause panic and distrust among the population.
- **Hate Speech:**
    - **Hate Speech** refers to **offensive discourse targeting a group or an individual based on inherent characteristics** such as race, religion, or gender, and that may threaten social peace.
    - It typically involves **epithets, malicious stereotypes**, and **statements** intended to incite **hatred or violence** against a particular group.

Way Forward

- **Accountability of Big Tech Companies**: Big Social Media companies must acknowledge the damage their products cause and take steps to mitigate harm by changing business models that profit from disinformation and hate.
- **Responsible Advertising and PR Practices:** Advertisers and PR agencies should stop monetising harmful content, seek clients who do not mislead or harm the planet, and work to strengthen information integrity.
- **Improving Content or Information Standards in Media:** Media outlets should raise content or Information standards to ensure quality journalism based on facts and reality, and find advertisers who support truthful content.
- **Government Commitment to Free Media:** Governments should commit to creating and maintaining a free, independent, and plural media landscape, ensuring strong protections for journalists, and upholding human rights in regulations.
- **Public Empowerment:** The public should demand accountability, choice, and control over their information environments to ensure free expression without fear of attack and to avoid being manipulated by algorithms.
- **Collective Action**: Collaboration among all actors, including tech companies, advertisers, media, governments, and the public, is crucial **to protecting information integrity and achieving the** [Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).]

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the "United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity" and how they aim to address the challenges posed by online misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech.

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