



DELEGATION OF NEW ZEALAND

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

POSITION PAPER

The Impact of Beauty Filters and AI-Generated Imagery on Youth Mental Health and Body Image Standards

COMMITTEE	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW)
AGENDA	Beauty Filters & AI-Generated Imagery: Youth Mental Health and Body Image
COUNTRY	New Zealand

POSITION OF NEW ZEALAND

In 2025, New Zealand's Parliament opened an inquiry into online harm and received over 430 submissions from families, students, and mental health experts. That itself shows how serious this issue has become. It is no longer just an online trend. It is something young people are living with every day, and it needs to be treated as a public health concern.

430+

submissions received by New Zealand's 2025 parliamentary inquiry into online harm — from families, students, and mental health experts nationwide

Beauty filters and AI-generated imagery have completely changed what young people see as normal online. Perfect skin, edited faces, and unrealistic body standards are now everywhere. The problem is that most of the time, nobody even knows these images have been altered. For teenagers scrolling for hours every day, this creates constant pressure to look a certain way.

This pressure affects confidence and mental health. Research studied in New Zealand's inquiry linked this kind of online exposure to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and eating disorders. This is especially harmful for young girls, who often face stronger beauty expectations and social pressure.

New Zealand has already started taking action. Laws are being introduced against harmful AI-generated deepfakes, and Prime Minister Christopher Luxon has spoken about the dangers of cyberbullying, misinformation, and unhealthy body image online. At the same time, New Zealand's Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission has made it clear that banning content alone will not solve the issue. Young people also need education and support.

New Zealand believes this is not a problem one country can solve alone. Through committees like UNCSW, countries have the chance to work together and protect young people from harmful digital spaces. Existing efforts by UNICEF and the United Nations Human Rights Council show that international cooperation is already possible and necessary.

NEW ZEALAND PROPOSES

- Mandatory labels on filtered and AI-altered images so users know what is edited.
- Stronger rules for social media platforms and more transparency in algorithms.
- Funding for digital literacy programs in schools.
- Stronger legal action against harmful AI-manipulated content.
- International cooperation on common standards for AI and online safety.

New Zealand believes technology should help young people grow, not make them feel like they are not enough. This committee has the responsibility to act now and create a digital world that is safer, more honest, and healthier for future generations.