



## **KENYA FILM CLASSIFICATION BOARD**

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### **STATEMENT BY THE KFCB CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER DR. EZEKIEL MUTUA (MBS) ON THE BAN ON ACCESS TO "THE BLUE WHALE GAME" ISSUED ON 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2017 IN KILIFI COUNTY**

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Our attention has been drawn to a social media game that is being used to manipulate children to perform dangerous activities through a fifty-day series of traumatising tasks. These include watching horrific movies and inflicting harm on oneself. The last level of the game, whose popular version is known as 'The Blue Whale Challenge', requires the participant who has gone through all the tormenting challenges to commit suicide in order to be regarded as the ultimate winner.


The Board is aware that the game has been online for some years. Its administrators, who are yet to be identified, have run variations of the game such as 'A Silent House', 'A Sea of Whale', 'Wake Me Up at 2.40am', among other social media versions. It is disturbing that the main target of this game is children, who are vulnerable on account of their limited level of judgment and high susceptibility to peer pressure.

As content regulator, KFCB is particularly concerned that the game is now accessible to children and teenagers in Kenya. Last week, a sixteen-year-old committed suicide in Kamkunji, Nairobi under what preliminary Police investigations believe to be the influence of the game. Unfortunately, the gaming application is gaining popularity among children, particularly in urban areas where the level of Internet connectivity is high.

Over the past few weeks, the Board has been receiving complaints from parents and various stakeholders in the education sector, expressing great concern about the psychological and physical dangers the game is posing to children. In light of these concerns, the Board would like to state as follows as investigations continue:

1. The Board has ordered for an immediate withdrawal of the game from all social media sites in Kenya and asked all Internet Service Providers to ensure it is not accessible in Kenya.

2. Anyone found allowing children to play the Challenge will be arrested and prosecuted in line with the Film and Stage Plays Act Cap222. Under this Act, it is illegal to expose children to any content that is suitable for adults only. In this regard, the Board is already working closely with the law enforcement agencies to ensure the game is not available in any public facility, including cyber cafes and gaming joints across the country.
3. The Board has written to Facebook, Twitter, and all other social media platforms where the presence of the game has been reported, calling on the networks to disable it. We have also written to Google and asked them to be on high alert of the game on YouTube and other platforms managed by the Internet company. Further, the Board has advised the Communications Authority of Kenya Film Classification Board to take action against any social media sites operators allowing the distribution of such dangerous games.
4. The Board will liaise with the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) to find ways of blocking access to social media gaming applications that pose dangers to children locally under the Child Online Protection (COP) Programme. Under this initiative, Internet Service Providers will be expected to flag out and block access to suspicious online gaming applications in the country.
5. Following the rising concerns on online child safety, the Board has scaled up its Media Literacy Programme in a bid to educate children in schools across the country on how to navigate the dangers of harmful content on the Internet. In the programme, KFCB seeks the support of teachers, parents, members of the public and the media in creating more awareness on online safety.
6. Finally, we urge parents and teachers to be vigilant and monitor the sites children are accessing over the Internet. We call on parents to be particularly keen on the use of mobile devices by children as the gadgets are the most accessible to children. We also encourage parents and the public in general to report should they notice any child exhibiting unusual behaviour through the Board's hotline number 0711222204 or the nearest Police Station. This will help in facilitating access to psychological support services for any child who may have been affected mentally by playing the games.

  
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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**