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| **Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG)**  **27th Meeting, Geneva, 23 November 2020** | C:\Users\comas\AppData\Local\Temp\Rar$DRa0.735\jpg\ITU official logo_blue_RGB.jpg |
|  | **Revision 2 to** |
|  | **Document** **TDAG-20/3/INF/****2-E** |
| **3** | **7 December 2020** |
|  | **English only** |
| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau | |
| DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE WTDC-21 GENERATION CONNECT GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMIT | |
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Please find attached the draft concept note related to the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit”.

**BACKGROUND**

Youth and children with access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) are coming of age as digital natives, the early adopters of ICTs and better positioned to harness the power of digital technologies in new and imaginative ways.

ICTs can enhance education, reduce youth unemployment, and promote social and economic development. Youth can only leverage the transformative power of ICTs, however, when they have access to ICTs and are equipped with a range of digital skills to use them to their benefit.

Young people comprise the largest single population group in the world today, with a total of around 1.8 billion youth globally, close to 90% of whom live in developing countries. Africa’s youth population is estimated to increase from about 1.2 billion in 2015, to 2.2 billion by 2050. About 41% of the people in the African continent are below 15 years old, while another 19% are youth between 15 and 24 years old. Youth, in many developed and developing countries, especially girls and young women, face disproportionate exposure to poverty and unemployment.

Youth have the right to achieve full economic, social and digital inclusion. ICT is a tool through which youth can substantively contribute to, participate in, and leverage their social and economic development. Connected to each other like never before, young people want to contribute to their communities, proposed innovate solutions and drive social progress and change.

**DESCRIPTION – WTDC-21 GENERATION CONNECT GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMIT**

A “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” will be held before WTDC-21, on 6 and 7 November 2021, in the African Union headquarters, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Summit will focus on meaningfully youth engagement, consultations, collaboration, empowerment, participation and calls for action, aimed at bringing the voices of young people into the WTDC-21 discussions, sessions and activities.

The United Nations celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2020, and due to the global Covid-19 pandemic crisis the international community is no longer in any doubt that digital technologies must lie at the very heart of our efforts to reach the 17 Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs). Youth will play a crucial role.

Young people will debate and brainstorm on how technologies can be harnessed to advance progress towards the SDGs and propose, with their unique cultural and personal perspectives and experiences, how the power of technology can change the world – build, back, better!

Involving young people is particularly important to the work of ITU, because youth are the natural adopters of technology. Young people are the ones who will inherit the world that technology is now shaping. It is vital that ITU hears to their voices, listens to what they want from technology and that they become part of the solution to the challenges the world is facing.

The Summit will have serious, open, and frank discussions, where youth can discuss and share what is good about technology, and what worries them. By taking this approach, by fully engaging youth, from the design, the content to the format of the Summit, ITU will get a truly meaningful youth roadmap for the future.

The energy and potential of youth, as well as their intuitive grasp of technology, could be the game changer we need in our efforts to harness the power and potential of ICTs, to close the digital divide, to accelerate progress towards global equality, and to create the world we want.

**Participants – leave no one behind**

The participants to the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” will be young delegates between 14 and 25 years old from all over the world, but especially from developing countries. In addition, ITU will also invite young people from youth led organizations, the private sector and academia.

Young people will be able to participate in the conference, both physically as well as remotely. We will invite young adults between 18-25 years old to attend the Summit either physically or virtually while younger persons, between 14-17 years old, will be invited to participate remotely.

WTDC-21 should leave no one behind. Accordingly, the Summit will encourage the participation of young women, young people with disabilities and young indigenous people. The Summit will also include the voices of young people that are not connected and are currently not being empowered through technology. The Summit will be designed to ensure that each participant is fully included in the meetings, discussions, events, and activities.

**A youth consultation process to design the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit”**

A consultation process with young people is being developed and will begin early in 2021, in which we will engage youth to brainstorm and guide the BDT in the design, content, and format of the Summit.

As part of the Summit preparatory process, online consultations, crowd-sourcing platforms, face-to-face meetings, or sessions during TDAG and the Regional Development Forums may be organized.

During the Summit itself, youth will be encouraged to look for creative, bold, innovative, ambitious solutions that harness technology to overcome some of today’s biggest global challenges, and to build, back, better. Examples of the proposed challenges will include:

* How can ICTs accelerate the implementation of the sustainable development goals?
* How can we close the digital divide?
* How can we connect the youth that are unconnected?
* How cam ICTs help bridge the gap in access to education?
* How can ICTs offer more job opportunities to youth?
* How can we ensure that young people, regardless of gender, ability, location (young women, young people living with disabilities, youth from rural regions, indigenous youth etc.) are equipped with the necessary digital skills to ensure their full and effective participation in the digital economy?
* How can we overcome the gender digital divide, which is keeping women and girls from fully benefiting from the power and potential of technology?
* How should young people deal with the e-waste problem? How do we prevent the materials in e-waste from irrevocably polluting and even poisoning our environment?
* What potential is there to expand the application of AI technologies, while also guaranteeing privacy, autonomy, and quality of services?
* What are the challenges that need to be overcome in using ICTs to deliver high quality, affordable and accessible services, for young people in low-resource and remote areas?

**Potential Outcomes of the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit”:**

The Summit should have concrete, meaningful and impactful outputs, which can be incorporated into the WTDC-21 deliberations and outputs, and which help to guide BDT and ITU’s efforts to fully and effectively incorporate youth perspectives into its work. Accordingly, the following outcomes are proposed.

* Submit to WTDC-21 a draft ***WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit Declaration***, approved by the young participants, with recommendations and a strong call for action to all ITU Members States and Sector Members, to adopt and support in 2021 and beyond creative, innovative and ambitious solutions, that harness technology to overcome today’s biggest global challenges, especially for youth.
* Selected youth who participated in the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” may also take part in different sessions of WTDC-21, as part of their national delegation.
* Promote among youth, multilateralism, and the important role that the UN and other international organizations, such as ITU, play in the implementation of the SDGs.
* Encourage the role of youth in national and international policy and decision making for sustainable development.
* Ensure in the preparatory process and during the Summit, meaningful and inclusive youth engagement (youth, gender, ethnicity, economic situation, disability, etc.)

**ITU MANDATE**

The achievement of this Summit, will support the ITU mandate to include and empower youth in a digital society:

**Resolution 198 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference**: for the “Empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information and communication technology” mandates:

* “ITU continue to engage with youth in outreach, through communications, capacity building and research, from the perspective of digital inclusion”;
* “to maintain a youth perspective in the implementation of the ITU strategic plan and financial plan for 2020-2023 as well as in the operational plans of the Sectors and the General Secretariat”;
* “to build on the initiatives carried out over the past four years and to accelerate youth empowerment in ITU as a whole, within existing budgetary resources, so as to ensure capacity building and promotion of youth”;
* “to continue to ensure that the youth perspective is incorporated in the work programs, management approaches and human resources development activities of ITU, and to submit an annual written report to the Council on progress made”.

**Resolution 76 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of WTDC**, “Promoting information and communication technologies among young women and men for social and economic empowerment”, which states:

* that “the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) […] shall continue to support the development of activities, projects and events aimed at promoting ICT applications among young women and men, in particular in the areas of employment, entrepreneurship and education, and thereby contribute to youth educational, social and economic development and empowerment, taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
* that “the established ITU-D objective on digital inclusion will continue to support the work promoting ICTs to young women and men”.

The Summit will also be fully aligned with Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference under the Connect 2030 Agenda, envisaging an information society, empowered by the interconnected world, where telecommunications/ICTs enable and accelerate social, economic and environmentally sustainable growth and development for everyone.

**ITU and the United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030 – working with and for young people**

The ITU Youth Strategy and the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” is aligned with the vision and objectives of the United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030 – working with and for young people.

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