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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau | | | |
| Preparations for the WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit | | | |
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| **Summary:**  The ITU Youth Strategy will offer opportunities for young people to participated in ITU meetings, make their voices heard, engage with ITU members, and contribute to ITU work. The Strategy includes the plan to organize a “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” back-to-back with WTDC-21. The Summit will focus on building a strong engagement of youth in preparation for the Conference 21, and to bring the voices of young people into the WTDC-21 discussions, sessions, and activities. Preparations of the Youth Summit are underway and coordinated by the ITU Youth Task Force and the Participate Working Group.  **Action required:**  TDAG is invited to note this document.  **References:**   * Document TDAG-20/3/INF/2-E: Draft Concept Note WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit * Document TDAG-20/16-E: Draft Youth Strategy * Resolution 198 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference; Resolution 37 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017); Resolution 67, (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017); Resolution 76 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference; ITU-D Objective 4 on inclusive digital society; ITU-D study group Question7/1 * <https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ITU_Youth_Strategy.pdf> | | | |

1. **Background**

The global COVID-19 pandemic crisis has exposed the fundamental role that digital solutions play to ensure the continuity of key public services. Youth have been particularly disrupted by this crisis, in particular in the area of face-to-face education. This experience has confirmed that digital technologies must lie at the very heart of our efforts to reach the 17 Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) by 2030.

To recognize this context, the ITU Youth Strategy has included in its activities the organization of a “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” before WTDC-21. The Summit will focus on building a strong engagement of youth in preparation for the Conference, and on bringing the voices, perspective and creativity of young people into the WTDC-21 discussions, sessions, and activities.

1. **Participants – leave no one behind**

The participants to the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” will be youth from all over the world, but especially from developing countries. The Summit will mobilize representatives from ITU Member States, along with representatives from youth-led organizations, the private sector and academia, who will join an event designed as a multi-stakeholder engagement platform. The conference will be designed as a hybrid event that will allow participants to join both physically, as well as remotely.

The Summit will put a special emphasis in ensuring diversity and inclusion and, to this end, the organizers will encourage the participation of young women, people with disabilities and representatives from indigenous communities. 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.

1. **Goals of the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit”**

The Summit will have the following goals:

* To achieve meaningful 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;
* To attain 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;
* To 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;
* To implement, through the organization of the Summit, the ITU Youth Strategy, which was adopted by ITU Members during TDAG-20;
* To be aligned with the vision and objectives of the United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030 – working with and for young people.

With the organization of the Summit, the following results are expected:

* A “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” Declaration, which will be submitted to WTDC-21;
* A WTDC-21 and Youth Summit preparatory process;
* Regional and global meaningful youth engagement before and during the Youth Summit and WTDC-21;
* Follow up after the Youth Summit and WTDC-21, with the ongoing implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy.

1. **Youth Summit Format, Content and Design**

The Youth Summit will be organized under the theme of WTDC-21: “Generation Connect: Connecting the unconnected to achieve sustainable development”. This overarching theme will be further developed to cover sub-themes linked to the BDT thematic priorities, the areas of interest resulting from the engagement in youth consultations, as well as with the 17 SDGs and the UN Roadmap on digital cooperation.

The Summit may include activities such as: panel sessions lead and organized by youth, dialogue between youth and ITU elected officials and Members, inter-generational debates with WTDC participants, digital testimonials, bootcamp sessions, hackathons, workshops, challenges, trainings, local trips to visit tech hubs in Ethiopia, as well as fishbowl sessions with a mentor. Regional virtual hubs would be set up and to facilitate joining the Summit.

For the virtual aspect of the Summit, different online platforms are being reviewed, considering the importance of ensuring that the solutions to be selected should be available and accessible to all target participants.

1. **Engagement strategy**

The success of the Summit will depend on setting up a solid engagement strategy, built around the Participate pillar, different actions, and engagement groups:

ITU Youth Task Force

ITU has appointed 37 youth focal points from the BDT, TSB, BR and General Secretariat in ITU headquarters, as well as ITU regional and area offices, to effectively coordinate and mainstream efforts related to the implementation of the Youth Strategy. The task force has been divided in three working groups, based on the Youth Strategy pillars: Empower, Engage and Participate.

The Participate working group has been focused on the preparations of the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” and has met on a regular basis since October 2020.

Generation Connect Regional Youth Groups

In line with the Youth Strategy, youth from each region have been called upon to contribute to the preparatory process for WTDC-21 and the Regional Preparatory Meetings (RPM). Six Generation Connect Regional Youth Groups have been established and presented at the different RPMs between January and April 2021, through side events and plenary sessions.

The members of each Regional Youth Group have been tasked to develop a document providing their views on the regional priorities of relevance to each region, as well as challenges and opportunities, which have been shared as an input to the respective RPM. Members of each Regional Youth Group have been selected through a competitive process and worked in their own capacity as individuals.

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

A consultation process with young people has been developed and began with the first RPM in Europe, in January 2021. Members of the Generation Connect Regional Youth Groups are being asked to brainstorm and guide the BDT in the design, content, and format of the Summit.

As part of the Summit preparatory process, online consultations have been undertaken through platforms such as the Generation Connect website and virtual communities, as well as in the recent ECOSOC Youth Forum, which took place on 6-8 April 2021.

Generation Connect Visionaries Board

The Generation Connect Visionaries Board was assembled to offer strategic guidance to ITU on our youth-related work as we implement the ITU Youth strategy and advocate for meaningful youth engagement. The work of this board will be instrumental to the organisation of the WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit. The Board is comprised of ITU representatives, 8 young leaders and 8 high-level appointees, working together towards the board’s strategic objectives. The first meeting of the Board was held on 14 April 2021.

Youth Summit Communications Strategy

The engagement plan for the Summit will be supported through a draft Youth Summit communications strategy built around the following objectives: build momentum and awareness among diverse young people and youth organisations towards the Youth Summit, increase wider cognisance of the ITU’s vast work on youth and its initiatives, utilise the Generation Connect Visionaries Board, Regional Youth Groups and the Generation Connect virtual community to engage more young people before, during and after the Summit.

The communication strategy will be divided into three phases: pre-promotion; promotion during the Youth Summit and WTDC-21, and post promotion.

Partner engagement

Partnerships are crucial for sustainable and meaningful implementation of the Youth Strategy and the organization of the Youth Summit. BDT intends to work with ITU members and relevant organizations, networks and interested donors (development banks, foundations, private-sector entities) that are strategically focused on supporting youth development and empowerment.

Three different partnership options have been drafted, to attract partners to participate and support the Youth Summit, such as: organizer of interactive workshops/sessions/pocket trainings; sponsor of youth delegations, the overall event, as well as specific activities (i.e. lunches, prizes; exhibitors, which will have a dedicated area in the partners space to show what they do and interact with participants.

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