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| Update on the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy | | | |
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| **Summary:**  The ITU Youth Strategy was presented and adopted by ITU Members at TDAG, 2-5 June 2020. The ITU Youth Strategy aims to improve and have a real impact on the lives of young people around the world and to ensure meaningful participation of youth in ITU as key stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It seeks to be Fit4Purpose and to reduce the youth digital divide. The three pillars of the Youth Strategy are: Empower, Engage and Participate.  This document presents an update on the implementation so far of the ITU Youth Strategy.  **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) and Resolution 169 (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> | | | |

**Background**

The ITU Youth Strategy aims to improve and have a real impact on the lives of young people around the world and to ensure meaningful participation of youth in ITU as key stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It aims to be Fit4Purpose and to reduce the youth digital divide. The ITU Youth Strategy needs a strong alignment with the vision and objectives of the United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030 – working with and for young people. ITU has a clear mandate to contribute to the inclusion and empowerment of youth in the digital society as noted in the references above.

The ITU Youth Strategy aims to: mainstream youth engagement and participation in the work of ITU to support the achievement of the overall goals of the Union; encourage youth participation in ITU programs, events and activities, as well as contribute to the decision-making processes; promote ICT youth-related policies within ITU Member States to ensure inclusiveness and empower youth, particularly in developing countries; engage in regular dialogue and consultations with youth and undertake concrete actions; incorporate a youth perspective in the implementation of the ITU strategic plan. For this purpose, the activities and efforts proposed in the Youth Strategy are grouped around three areas of action:

EMPOWER: Supporting youth empowerment by creating a community of young leaders.

ENGAGE: Bringing young people together to engage with ITU and its members.

PARTICIPATE: Fostering youth dialogue and participation in ITU activities and decision-making processes.

The below actions have been so far implemented related to the ITU Youth Strategy:

1. **Generation Connect Initiative**

Generation Connect was launched in November 2020, as the overarching initiative of the ITU Youth Strategy on the journey to World Telecommunication Development Conference 2021 (WTDC-21) and the WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit. The Generation Connect website was launched: <https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/>.

1. **Capacity Building on Meaningful Youth Engagement**

A training on Meaningful Youth Engagement for UN staff was delivered to ITU staff between October and November 2020. A total of 174 ITU staff attended the training, including top management, members of the ITU Youth Taskforce, and professional and administrative staff from ITU Headquarters and all ITU offices in the regions.

This training was followed in December 2020 by two ‘Pitch for Youth’ workshops. Teams developed and proposed concrete ideas to an ITU jury for youth engagement initiatives implementable within the ITU Youth Strategy. Promising initiatives, such as the ITU youth podcast, the E-Waste Iconathon, Youth 4 ICT Emergency Preparedness and the Youth for Cyber Initiative were identified and have been integrated into the 2021 BDT workplan for various thematic priorities.

1. **ITU Youth Task Force**

ITU has appointed 37 youth focal points from BDT, TSB, BR and General Secretariat in ITU headquarters, as well as ITU regional and area offices, to effectively coordinate and mainstream efforts across ITU, related to the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy. The task force has been divided in three working groups, based on the ITU Youth Strategy pillars: Empower, Engage and Participate. The working groups have met on a regular basis since October 2020.

1. **Empower pillar**

The Empower working group collaborated with IEEE Entrepreneurship and in March 2021 launched a video pitch competition for original and innovative solutions, that holds great potential for achieving the SDGs. The Empower working group has also prepared a submission guidelines document and an online form, detailing the process and information required for the sharing of opportunities on the Generation Connect Facebook and LinkedIn Group pages. Additionally, the working group has undertaken a mapping exercise to identify the programs/initiatives that would be suitable and have interest in sharing their opportunities via the Facebook and LinkedIn group pages.

1. **Engage pillar**

The Engage working group launched a pilot initiative to engage students in ITU’s work through the Research Agenda with universities. This initiative will help to raise awareness about ITU’s work and ITU’s brand among young people; build long-term relationship with universities and provide additional value to academia membership; prepare a young generation of experts that are informed about the latest trends in ICTs, policy, regulatory issues and key areas of ITU’s work; train young experts how to prepare relevant documents/submit contributions to ITU meetings and increase participation of young people in ITU’s meetings and activities. So far, the information was shared with all Academia members and other interested universities. Several universities expressed interest and the first steps towards engagement have been taken. ITU-D Study Groups have also been updated on the progress as we hope that the findings can be shared and integrated later in the year. The research findings of students are planned to be presented at the WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit in November 2021.

Finally, the Engage working group has been developing a proposal, with the support of HRMD, which focusses on improving the ITU internship programme and establishing an ITU Young Professionals Programme, as outlined in the ITU Youth Strategy. The proposal includes a draft YPP programme, creating more P1/P2 positions, removing, or reducing the 6-month break in service for interns, allowing internship extension options and creating an intern mentorship programme.

1. **Participate pillar**

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

Discussions within the Participate Working Group have so far determined that a hybrid meeting format (both virtual and physical) will be implemented. The Youth Summit may include activities such as: panel sessions led and organized by youth, dialogues 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 join the Summit. For the virtual aspect of the Summit, different online platforms are being reviewed, such as Swapcard.

As far as content is concerned, it has been discussed to align the theme of the Youth Summit with the theme of WTDC-21: “Generation Connect: Connecting the unconnected to achieve sustainable development”. It has also been considered to associate with the content of the BDT thematic priorities and based on the youth consultations, choose the top themes to be discussed. In addition, it is important to align the content of the Youth Summit to the 17 SDGs, the UN Roadmap on digital cooperation, the Road to Addis series and the current technology trends.

1. **Generation Connect Regional Youth Groups**

In line with the ITU 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, through side events and plenary sessions.

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

1. **Youth consultation process to design the “WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” and other initiatives**

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 Youth Summit.

As part of the Youth 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. Youth have also been consulted on a regular basis in the design and development of the Generation Connect website and other ITU youth initiatives.

1. **Generation Connect Visionaries Board**

The Generation Connect Visionaries Board was convened to offer strategic high-level guidance to ITU youth-related work as ITU implements the Youth strategy and advocates for meaningful youth engagement. The work of this Board will be instrumental to the organisation of the WTDC-21 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit and the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy. The Generation Connect Visionaries Board consists of one ITU representative, 8 young leaders and 8 high-level appointees, working together towards the board’s strategic objectives. The first meeting of the Generation Connect Visionaries Board was held on 14 April 2021.

1. **ITU as the new co-chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development**

Since March 2021, ITU is the new co-chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) for a one-year mandate. IANYD is a network consisting of UN entities, represented at the headquarters level, whose work is relevant to youth. The aim of the Network is to increase the effectiveness of UN work in youth development by strengthening collaboration and exchange among all relevant UN entities, while respecting and harnessing the benefits of their individual strengths and unique approaches and mandates. ITU’s primary objectives as co-chair of the IAYND are to implement clear actions related to meaningful youth engagement in a systematic, strategic, and coordinated way; focus on reducing the youth digital divide; improve the lives of youth around the world and contribute to ensuring youth participation within the ITU and UN system.

1. **Participation in the ECOSOC Youth Forum in April 2021**

ITU conducted on 6 April 2021 a side event at the ECOSOC Youth Forum called Generation Connect: Young People Shaping the Digital Agenda, which was co-organized with the UN Major Group for Children and Youth. The event was also supported by the Youth Science-Policy Interface (SPI) Platform, United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (UN IANYD) Youth Caucus and the Netherlands with their Youth at Heart Strategy. ITU also co-lead on 7 April 2021 in the thematic session: Peace & Inclusion - SDG 10 & SDG 16, organized by UNODC, Global Youth Caucus, ITU, UNESCO, UNICEF and OSGEY.

1. **New Generation Connect Virtual community**

In February 2021, ITU launched on Facebook and LinkedIn the new Generation Connect Virtual communities. Youth from the different Generation Connect Regional Groups, as well as other initiatives and events are invited to join. Information on the different activities of the Generation Connect Initiative is being shared on a weekly basis, as well as other initiatives, such as the Kofi Annan Changemakers Initiative.

1. **Road to Addis series – Digital Inclusion and Youth Events**

As part of the Road to Addis series, ITU organized the event: Connect2Include: Include2Connect, which was held on 18 March 2021 and was focused on digital inclusion, with a strong participation of youth. Another Road to Addis event specifically on youth, will be organized on 12 August, which is International Youth Day. Each of the remaining events of the Road to Addis also include a strong component related to youth, as one of the Road to Addis enablers.

1. **Resource mobilization and partnerships efforts for the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy Youth Summit**

Partnerships are crucial for sustainable and meaningful implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy and the organization of the Youth Summit. ITU is working with its 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, areas, prizes; exhibitors, who will have a dedicated area in the partners space to show what they do and interact with participants.

1. **Collaboration with the UN Youth Envoy office**

ITU has been making strong efforts to work closely with the UN Youth Envoy office and ensure that the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy is fully aligned to the vision and objectives of the United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030 – working with and for young people.

The UN Youth Envoy, Ms Jayathma Wickramanayake accepted to be part of the Generation Connect Global Visionaries Board and confirmed to support Girls in ICTs celebration in 2021 and to continue to co-organize in 2021 the Talking Tech Women series of interviews.

ITU has actively taken part in the UN Youth Envoy office working group, on matters such as the Youth 2030 First Stocktake Report and the Youth 2030 Joint Rolling Work Plan 2021-2022.

1. **Implementation of the I-CoDI youth challenge**

In 2020 ITU organized the I-CoDI youth challenge, with members of the ITU Youth Task Force and young people outside of ITU. The winning solution has now been adapted into the Generation Connect Video Pitch Challenge: “How can we connect the unconnected to close the digital divide?”, which will be launched in May 2021.

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