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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau | | | |
| Second 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. Its aim is 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, which was initially submitted to TDAG-21, has been updated with the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy since then.  **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 * Document TDAG-21/23-E: Update on the implementation of the ITU 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 2022 (WTDC) and the Generation Connect Global Youth Summit. The Generation Connect website was launched: <https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/>.

To further increase the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy, a Generation Connect July 2021-July 2022 plan was drafted and is currently being implemented. The main objectives are: to solidify the long-term sustainability of the regional youth groups; increase the active engagement of the Generation Connect Visionaries Board; to continue to identify opportunities for young people to learn about the ITU, and to meaningfully engage across ITU events, activities and initiatives; to identify and collaborate with new partners and donors toward the delivery of the youth strategy; to co-design the Generation Connect Youth Summit with strong youth representation and deliver a clear, strong mandate for youth in the Addis Ababa action plan.

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

A first 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. Six of these pitches, including the ITU Generation Connect Podcast, the E-Waste Iconathon, Youth 4 ICT Emergency Preparedness, the Youth4Cyber Initiative, the Mapping the World’s Offline Population project, and the Generation Connect Video Pitch Challenge are currently being implemented as part of ITU thematic priorities work.

A second training on “Co-Design with Youth” was delivered on June 2021, which trained ITU staff in the co-design concept, as an approach to engage with youth as equal partners in the decision making, design, delivery, and evaluation of Generation Connect initiatives and events.

1. **ITU Youth Task Force**

ITU has appointed more than forty Youth Task Force members 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 the G-STIC video pitch competition for original and innovative solutions, which 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. The working group has also developed a proposal for an ITU Mentorship Program for youth, and plans to launch this in the coming months.

1. **Engage pillar**

The Engage working group launched a pilot initiative to involve students in ITU’s work through the Research Agenda with universities. This initiative will help to raise awareness about ITU’s work and brand among young people; build long-term relationships with universities and provide additional value to academia membership; prepare a young generation of experts who are informed about the latest trends in ICTs, policy, regulatory issues and key areas of ITU’s work; train young experts in how to prepare relevant documents/submit contributions to ITU meetings and increase participation of young people in ITU’s meetings and activities.

The information was shared with all Academia members and other interested universities. Research is now ongoing at the Graduate Institute on Climate Change and at the American University on Digital Inclusion. Additionally, the EU Business School has expressed interest in the topic of public-private partnerships. Regional Offices have been briefed on the project and outreach to academic members has continued. 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 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit in June 2022.

The Engage working group has researched and developed a proposal, with the support of ITU HRMD, 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, updating the 6-month break in service for interns, allowing internship extension options and creating an intern mentorship programme.

**Participate pillar**

The Participate working group has focused on the participation of youth in ITU events and activities, as well as running regular consultations with youth on thematic priorities. Youth have actively participated as speakers in various regional and global events and initiatives, such as TDAG-21, GSR-21, Road to Addis, Emerging Technologies Week, ECOSOC Youth Forum, WSIS Forum, Kofi Annan Change Makers Week, Youth Lead Innovation Festival, UNIDO LKDF Forum 2021, among others.

The working group has also been responsible for the initial preparations of the “Generation Connect Global Youth Summit” and met on a regular basis from October 2020 to July 2021. Since WTDC has been postponed, the Youth Summit will be now held before WTDC, on 4 and 5 June 2022, 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 discussions, sessions, and activities.

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 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. Members of each Regional Youth Group have been selected through a competitive and open process and worked in their own capacity as individuals.

As an input to the respective RPM, the members of each Regional Youth Group have developed a document providing their views on the priorities of relevance to each region, as well as challenges and opportunities.

The members of the Regional Youth Groups have actively participated as speakers in various regional and global events and initiatives, such as TDAG, GSR-21, Road to Addis, Emerging Technologies Week, ECOSOC Youth Forum, WSIS Forum, Kofi Annan Change Makers Week, Youth Lead Innovation Festival, UNIDO LKDF Forum 2021, among others.

The composition of the current Regional Youth Groups has been revised and a new call for applications is being considered, to increase the number of Youth Envoys in each region.

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

A consultation process with young people was launched in January 2021, where youth are being consulted on a regular basis in the design, development, and implementation of ITU youth initiatives.

In order to develop a first draft of the format, content and design of the Youth Summit, the Generation Connect Youth Summit Co-Design Team was established in July 2021. This team brings together not only ITU staff, but also Generation Connect Regional Youth Envoys, Generation Connect Visionaries Board Members and winners of the Generation Connect Video Pitch Competition. Over three virtual workshops, using the principles of the co-design training, the team has provided an initial set of ideas for the structure, content, outcomes, look-and-feel, participant selection, and communications aspects of the Youth Summit.

The theme of the Youth Summit : “Generation Connect: Connecting the unconnected to achieve sustainable development”, is aligned with the theme of WTDC. 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 Visionaries Board**

The Generation Connect Visionaries Board (GCVB) was assembled in January 2021 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 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, and the second meeting was held on 8 September 2021. The advice of the Board has so far been instrumental to the organisation of the Generation Connect Global Youth Summit and the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy.

The Generation Connect Visionaries Board established “The Partnerships Working Group”. This group of GCVB members is dedicated to attracting and foster partnerships with organizations, to directly contribute to the implementation of the Generation Connect Initiative and the organization of the Youth Summit.

1. **ITU as the current 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 fifty-five United Nations entities, 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.

ITU has co-chaired three regular IANYD meetings, where matters such as a new UNESCO lead working group on Meaningful Youth Engagement was established, discussions aiming to provide guidelines and best practices adapted to different categories of youth development stakeholders and different contexts have taken place and several capacity building proposals are being discussed.

1. **Generation Connect Virtual communities**

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 ITU events, professional opportunities for youth, as well as on the different activities of the Generation Connect Initiative have been shared on a regular basis. A third Virtual Community on Instagram is under consideration.

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

The ITU Road to Addis series has included a strong youth component, as one of the Road to Addis enablers. Young leaders and Generation Connect Visionaries Board members have participated throughout all the events of the series.

A Road to Addis event specifically on youth was organized on 12 August 2021, on the occasion of International Youth Day. The aim of this event was to encourage participation of Youth as equal partners alongside the leaders of today’s digital change, as well as discuss the importance of empowering young people with the skills and opportunities to advance their vision of a connected future.

The Road to Addis: Partner2Connect Meeting took place on 20 September 2021, in the margins of the 76th UN General Assembly, to launch of the Partner2Connect Coalition and to share the main takeaways of the first part of Road to Addis series. The event had strong youth participation from the Generation Connect Visionaries Board, Youth Envoys and young ITU staff.

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

Partnerships are crucial for the 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.

A Partnerships Framework has been established to narrow down the types of partnerships needed for the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy: Resource Mobilisers, to provide financial support towards the delivery of the Strategy; Youth Mobilisers, to reach out and engage with young populations; and Generation Connect Collaborators, to collaborate on the co-design, delivery, and evaluation of Generation Connect initiatives.

Different partnership options will be given to support the Youth Summit with in-kind and/or financial contributions, such as: covering the costs of travelling to Ethiopia for youthparticipants, sponsoring the Summit and specific activities, as well as organizing interactive workshops/sessions/ trainings.

The Generation Connect Visionaries Board established “The Partnerships Working Group”. This group of GCVB members is dedicated to attracting and fostering partnerships with organizations, to directly contribute to the implementation of the Generation Connect Initiative and the organization of the Youth Summit.

Outreach and engagement with potential partners and donors for BDT activities is ongoing. Potential sources of funding include Member States, foundations, the private sector, and UN Pooled Funds. Other potential partners include youth organizations and academia.

In June 2021, ITU partnered with the Kofi Annan Foundation for the “Kofi Annan Changemakers project”, in order to work closely together on how real impact on the lives of young people around the world can be achieved , as well as to ensure meaningful participation of youth as key stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Other organizations we are partnering with are the United Nations Mayor Group on Children and Youth; UNICEF Generation Unlimited; the Global Youth Mobilization (an alliance of the Big 6 Youth Organizations with 250 million young members) and the Global Benchmark Alliance.

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

ITU has been making strong efforts to work closely with the Office of 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, is part of the Generation Connect Global Visionaries Board. On International Youth Day, 12 August 2021, the UN Youth Envoy was a speaker on the Road to Addis Youth2Connect event.

ITU has taken part in the UN Youth Envoy office’s Youth 2030 Working Group, on matters such as the Youth 2030 First Stocktake Report and the Youth 2030 Joint Rolling Work Plan 2021-2022. In June 2021, ITU contributed to the Action Guide Task Team, Strengthening Internships Task Team, and the Youth2030 Dashboard. The Youth2030 Dashboard aims to visualize scores, time trends, geographic snapshots, and other performance insights on the annual Youth2030 reporting, and thus to make public the progress on the implementation of Youth2030.

ITU co-created the Digital Technology session of the UN Youth Envoy’s #YouthLead Innovation Festival. The session, which took place on 13 August 2021, received inspiring contributions from the keynote speaker, the solutions presenters and the engaging conversation with the experts, which featured both Generation Connect Visionaries Board and Generation Connect network members.

Moving forward, an exciting collaboration is underway with the Office on how online efforts are helping children be safer and enhance child protection.

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 was launched in June 2021.

Nine winners were selected in August 2021. Winning pitches focused on Technology and Network Development, Cybersecurity, Digital Inclusion, Climate Change and Environment, and Capacity Building. The nine winners have since joined the Generation Connect Virtual Communities and the Youth Summit Co-Design Team. The winning videos will be featured at the Generation Connect Global Youth Summit.

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