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| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C23/63-E** |
| **9 June 2023** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND INITIATIVES AT ITU | |
| **Purpose**  The objective of this document is to inform the ITU Council about youth engagement across several initiatives and existing programmes at ITU.  **Action required by the Council**  The Council is invited to **take note** of the report.  **Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**  Diversity and inclusion; excellence in human resources and organizational innovation.  **Financial implications**  None.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*Resolution 198*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-198-E.pdf) *(Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference;* [C23/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0035/en);[C23/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-INF-0006/en); | |

**1. Background**

Resolution 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information and communication technology, instructs the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that the youth perspective is incorporated in the work programmes, management approaches and human resources development activities of ITU, and to submit an annual written report to the ITU Council on progress made.

To address Resolution 198 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, the ITU Youth Strategy had been developed to promote youth at ITU and adopted in 2020. The Youth Strategy aims to improve 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 fit-for-purpose and to reduce the youth digital divide.

**2. Progress report on the implementation of Resolution 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)**

As of May 2023, only 9 per cent of ITU staff are under the age of 35 and hold fixed-term, continuing or permanent contracts; that number only increases to 12 per cent when including short-term contracts. Internships have increased in number since 2017 from 96 interns per year to 157 in 2022.

According to the McKinsey & Company 2019 report on closing the future-skills gap, bringing young people to ITU would particularly address the technical skills gap. These new skills, including data science, data privacy, crisis management, business continuity and ICT trends to name but a few, are required to meet ITU’s organizational priorities.

In order to address this, ITU is strengthening its efforts to promote and empower young people in its work and is currently working on several initiatives to ensure that youth perspectives are incorporated in ITU’s work, such as an internship programme, engagement/partnership with Academia to support youth through "university programmes", a young professionals programme, a youth task force, consultations with ITU staff/townhall meetings, junior professional officers (JPOs) and many other initiatives (see [C23/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-INF-0006/en)). ITU intends to develop a strong ITU youth engagement strategy.

There is a big opportunity for ITU to engage young people by pursuing succession planning and reviewing the potential skills gap, and therefore anticipating the organization’s future needs in terms of human resources. To this end, a complete review of existing programmes is ongoing, and new initiatives are being proposed to reinforce the presence and perspectives of youth in ITU activities.

The following incentives and mechanisms will further enhance youth participation and engagement in ITU.

1. **Internships**

ITU’s internship programme provides an invaluable opportunity for candidates to obtain further education and practical experience. Interns have the chance to develop their skills and aptitudes through direct exposure to the work of the Union and to a multicultural and inter-governmental environment. Internships are a professional experience with a strong career-development and training component. The organization can benefit from the enthusiasm, knowledge, skills and creativity of participants in the internship programme. For now, ITU internships are unpaid.

This programme is also willing to offer more opportunities in terms of training or participation in conferences, meetings, etc. to enable interns to benefit from the experience.

1. **Programmes with Academia**

ITU is exploring opportunities to formalize long-term relationships/partnerships with universities to engage students. Many universities offer such programmes where students would be placed for a few months at ITU to work on a specific project/business case and gain experience. This initiative would be very much aligned with the ITU priority to reinforce channels to attract young professionals and bring new technical skills to support ITU. It should also enable students to get academic credits out of these working/research groups. This programme will be open to ITU Academia and other interested universities.

1. **Young professionals programme**

The ITU Young Professionals Programme (ITU-YPP) is a new recruitment programme, whereby talented, qualified young professionals from developing countries between the ages of 21 and 30 are given an opportunity to start a career with the United Nations and contribute to ITU's work towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and universal connectivity. ITU-YPP aims to increase the number of young professionals at ITU and provide mentorship and learning opportunities for young professionals while forging a pathway for entry-level employment. ITU-YPP also seeks to employ young candidates from demographic groups that are under-represented at ITU, especially from LDCs, LLDCS and SIDs. Candidates will be selected based on the hiring rules and procedures of the ITU Human Resources Management Department (HRMD) and from public job vacancy notices. The first call for applications is planned to be launched in September 2023. Supporters of ITU-YPP will be featured on the ITU-YPP website.

1. **Regular consultations/townhall meetings**

A first townhall meeting for ITU young staff members (under the age of 35) was held on 9 May 2023. Over 100 young staff members were invited to share their ideas for a fit-for-purpose and fit-for-future ITU with the Secretary-General. The ideas from young staff members will be taken into consideration as part of efforts towards organizational excellence. It is planned to continue this effort to engage young people across ITU and take forward their ideas in the form of concrete recommendations. In addition, the Office of the Secretary-General and HRMD have started to organize meetings with interns to get their feedback on their expectations and the working environment. Similar meetings are now taking place for JPOs.

1. **Youth task force**

The first edition of the ITU Youth Task Force (ITU-YTF) was established in 2020, with a group of staff working together to effectively coordinate and mainstream youth engagement efforts across ITU, as mandated in the ITU Youth Strategy. The members received training in 2020 on United Nations meaningful youth engagement.

1. **JPOs and other initiatives** ([C23/INF/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-INF-0006/en))
2. **Generation Connect and other youth- and research-related activities**

The ITU secretariat continues to engage colleagues across the organization and coordinate the ongoing implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy, including the Generation Connect initiative. Generation Connect is an overarching initiative that aims to amplify youth voices in the digital development dialogue. In 2022, ITU organized the Generation Connect Global Summit in Kigali, Rwanda. There have been numerous activities which have supported participation and engagement of young people in ITU events and conferences, such as Generation Connect Youth Envoys in the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, Kaleidoscope conference, WSIS Generation Connect Youth Prize, GC-EUR Digital Jam, EQUALS and many more. More information on all youth-related initiatives is available in Council Document [C23/35](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0035/en).

**3.Funding and support**

Resolution 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) invites ITU Member States to support ITU activities in the field of ICTs for the social and economic development of youth, including, inter alia, through the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy and the Generation Connect initiative, if possible, with voluntary contributions and sponsorships. The ITU secretariat is currently seeking voluntary and in-kind contributions, such as training, to support several youth-related initiatives and in particular the JPO programme and ITU-YPP. All ITU Member States are encouraged to support and contribute to the extent possible.

* The ITU secretariat would like to thank the Administrations of Australia, China, Germany, Japan and Spain for their support for the JPO programme.
* The ITU secretariat would like to thank the Administrations of Japan and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for their support for ITU-YPP.

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