|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C25/32-E** |
| **16 May 2025** |
| **Original: English** |
|  |  |
| Report by the Secretary-General |
| MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND INITIATIVES IN ITU |
| **Purpose**The objective of this document is to inform the ITU Council about meaningful youth engagement in ITU, across several initiatives and programmes.**Action required by the Council**The Council is invited to **take note** of the report.**Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**Excellence in human resources and organizational innovation.**Financial implications**Within the allocated budget 2024-2025. ITU Members are invited to financially support ITU youth programmes and initiatives through voluntary contributions.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**References**[*Resolution 198*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-198-E.pdf) *(Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference; Council Document* [*C24/31*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0031/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.

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

A. Fostering Youth Empowerment and Advancement in ITU

**Overview of ITU staff of youth group 35 (≤ 35) and under 30 (≤ 30):** With a slight improvement from 2024, as of April 2025, 12.6 per cent of ITU Staff with permanent/continuing/fixed term/short-term contract holders is under the age of 35 (≤35) and 4.3 per cent of ITU staff with Permanent/Continuing/Fixed term/Short term contract holders is under the age of 30 (≤30). This information includes the junior-level positions in the JPO programme and reflects a mayor improvement.

**Empowerment of ITU staff** through the Youth Task Force. In 2024, the Youth Task Force strengthened its advisory role, contributing to reviews such as Service Orders, and established an Internal Youth Network to engage young professionals across the organization. It also advocated for youth inclusion in ITU activities, enhancing its visibility and advocated for intergenerational dialogue. Key outcomes included work on mobility and succession planning, collaboration with the ITU Transformation Office/Change makers programme, and two deliverables: contributions to ITU’s succession plan and young staff’s role in shaping ITU’s future, and the integration of young professionals into staffing tables at major ITU conferences to enhance career development opportunities.

**Junior professional officers (JPOs)**: The JPO programme is dedicated to junior level positions. A JPO is recruited at P2 grade, where 3 years of work experience is required. In February 2025, ITU had 7 JPOs. JPOs are fully funded by a Member State for 2 years of assignment in ITU Headquarters (HQ) or in an ITU field office. The ITU secretariat would like to thank the Administrations of Australia, China, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America for their support for the JPO programme. This programme benefits all ITU Sectors and the General Secretariat.

**ITU Young Professional Programme:** Following the launch of the first ITU Young Professional Programme (ITU-YPP), more than 3 500 applications were received and reviewed. Six P1 positions, financed by the ITU-YPP fund, were placed in the General Secretariat, BDT, BR, and TSB. The ITU secretariat would like to thank the Administrations of Japan and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for their support to the ITU-YPP fund.

**Internship programme:** In 2023, ITU welcomed 142 interns from 44 different countries. ITU would like to thank Germany (Carlo Schmid Programme) and China (China Scholarship Council) for their sponsored internship programmes.

B. Advocacy and meaningful youth engagement

In 2024, members of the **ITU Secretary-General’s Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** actively contributed to global efforts on connectivity and digital inclusion. YAB consulted youth networks —such as through an International Youth Day survey— to gather insights on emerging technologies and digital solutions. In 2024, YAB submitted five reports with youth-focused recommendations on topics including AI, space, submarine cables, and climate action. Two meetings with the Secretary-General were held to discuss youth engagement strategies and trends in digital development, with a focus on sustainability and infrastructure.

The BDT advanced youth inclusion in digital development by empowering **184 new Generation Connect Youth Envoys (GCYE)** from 64 countries, amplifying their voices through global platforms such as the **ITU Global Youth Summit 2025 (GYS-25)**. GCYEs played active roles in ITU-led activities and decision-making, transforming into impactful digital changemakers through tailored mentorship and self-paced learning. GCYEs were actively engaged in **consultations** ahead of GYS-25, ensuring youth priorities were integrated into the event.

The **Global Youth Summit 2025 (GYS-25),** held in Varadero, Cuba, brought together over 400 participants from 31 countries from all six ITU regions, under the theme “Youth voices amplified for the creation of a more inclusive and interconnected digital world.” Over three days and 12 dynamic sessions, youth shared initiatives, engaged in intergenerational dialogue, exchanged best practices, built networks, and co-created solutions on digital inclusion, connectivity, online safety, ethical AI, and the future of work. Key outcomes included elevating youth voices in ICT policymaking, strengthening digital skills for meaningful participation in the digital economy, reinforcing ITU’s role in youth-driven digital education and employment, and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship for sustainable development.

Key activities undertaken in 2024 **by region** during the reporting period include:

 In the **Africa Region**, a mentorship ceremony linked GCYE alumni with the new envoys and youth generated policy recommendations through regional consultations and research.

 In the **Americas Region**, youth engagement was spotlighted during the Sub-regional Seminar “Priorities for Youth in the Digital World: Jobs and Education”, held in Chile in May 2024. In the context of WTISD, representatives from Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile joined forces with telecom industry leaders —Entel, WOM, and Claro— to explore this year’s theme, “Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development.” Youth Envoys contributed to discussions on national digital strategies, reinforcing their role in shaping an inclusive digital future.

 In the **Arab Region,** the Arab Regional office organized the Arab Region Passing the Torch Event, held online on 1 July 2024. With 20 Arab youth envoys participating, the event underscored the importance of youth involvement in digital innovation. Key themes included mentorship, active participation in ITU events, and driving partnerships.

 In the **Asia-Pacific**, targeted efforts included the recruitment of 21 new Youth Envoys from seven countries. Through regional onboarding, tailored training sessions, and active participation in forums such as WTSA-24 in India, the Global Innovation Forum in Malta, and the ITU-MIIT Seminar in China —youth participants gained valuable skills and platforms to contribute meaningfully to global digital dialogues. The “Passing the Torch” ceremony, held on July 11, was a vibrant moment of intergenerational exchange, uniting 41 Youth Envoys to celebrate achievements and reinforce leadership continuity. In partnership with Huawei, 10 Youth Envoys also joined the "Seeds for the Future 2024" programme in China, where they received hands-on exposure to advanced technologies including AI, 5G, and green tech.

 In the **Europe Region**, the Girls in ICT Day Europe 2024 event, held virtually under the theme “Leadership,” inspired girls across the region to pursue STEM careers by connecting them with role models and practical tools for success. Developed in consultation with youth, the event amplified the voices of the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group and showcased how young women are shaping digital transformation, while addressing the barriers they continue to face. At the Com-ITU plenary of CEPT, new appointed Youth Envoys were introduced to European representatives, fostering recognition and dialogue. In Albania, Youth Envoys contributed to the Digital Agriculture Strategy through the DART project, embedding youth perspectives in national policy.

In March 2024, the first cohort of **Generation Connect Youth Leadership Programme** (GCYLP) was selected from over 5 000 applicants. In June, thirty fellows attended a week-long Development Programme in Geneva and Zurich, receiving training in leadership, innovation, and project management. Each fellow was awarded a USD 5 000 grant to implement digital development projects in their communities, supported by yearlong monthly mentoring and reporting sessions. In 2024, the GCYLP Secretariat facilitated the active participation as speakers of fellows in various global events such as the ITU Digital Skills Forum in Bahrain, ITU Global Innovation Forum in Malta, the ITU-D Study Groups 1 meeting, COP29 in Azerbaijan and the World Internet Conference (WIC) in China. These engagements enabled fellows to expand networks and secure additional funding —totalling USD 750 000 across five fellows— for project sustainability. The youth-led digital development projects' evaluations are underway, with top-performing initiatives eligible for an additional USD 5 000 scale-up grant. In March 2025, the BDT Director launched applications for the second cohort of GCYLP fellows at the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona, Spain.

ITU Standardization Bureau (TSB) has been championing meaningful youth engagement on AI. The [**ITU AI/ML Challenge**](https://aiforgood.itu.int/about-us/aiml-in-5g-challenge/) is a flagship collaborative platform that enables students, researchers, and developers to design AI models for real-world use cases —including geospatial AI and communication networks. In 2024, the challenge featured 13 problem statements and attracted 4 196 participants, resulting in over 30 000 submissions that supported ITU's standardization work.

The [**Robotics for Good Youth Challenge**](https://aiforgood.itu.int/robotics-for-good-youth-challenge/) is a global educational robotics championship engaging students aged 10‑18 to develop robotics-based disaster response solutions. The 2024-2025 edition involves 7 000+ participants from 20 countries, 35 per cent of whom are from Least Developed Countries. The Grand Finale will be held at the AI for Good Global Summit 2025.

The AI for Good Youth Zone at the AI for Good Global Summit 2024 hosted practical workshops and hands-on sessions focused on AI and robotics. Bringing together educators, students, and professionals, nine workshops were facilitated by 11 partners over two days, attracting 300 participants, including kids and professionals. The Youth Zone provided interactive and collaborative learning experiences, covering topics from AI EdTech robots to disaster robotics and autonomous vehicles. Workshops by EPFL provided hands-on experience with AI, computer vision, and machine learning, demonstrating how smart cars detect and analyse their environment.

The [Young AI Leaders Community](https://aiforgood.itu.int/young-ai-leaders-community/) platform was launched at WTSA-24. This community of youth aged 18-30 now includes 350+ members across 89 hubs in 46 countries, empowering grassroots AI changemakers and supporting peer collaboration and learning.

The **AI for Good Innovation Factory** special edition on “[Meet Young Innovators Revolutionizing Agrifood Systems in the Global South](https://aiforgood.itu.int/event/meet-young-innovators-revolutionizing-agrifood-systems-in-the-global-south/)” was convened in partnership with the World Food Forum (WFF) to spotlight entrepreneurial and youth-led AI startups addressing agricultural challenges in the Global South, providing global visibility and investor access.

Youth engagement was a focus at [WTSA-24](https://www.itu.int/wtsa/2024/), with targeted initiatives introduced to the side-event programme to attract young participants. Key activities included:

 [Robotics for Youth Challenge India](https://aiforgood.itu.int/event/robotics-for-good-youth-challenge-india/#:~:text=The%20Robotics%20for%20Good%20Youth%20Challenge%20is%20an%20UN%2Dbased,Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20(SDGs).) is the National Event of the Robotics for Good Youth Challenge in India, which brought together 250 students from 51 teams across India to showcase their robotics solutions in disaster response. The winning teams will participate in the Grand Finale in Geneva at the AI for Good Global Summit 2025. The event was organized on Thursday, 17 October in New Delhi, India, by the ITU in partnership with IIT Delhi – IHFC and in collaboration with CDOT.

 The [two-day AI Bharat 5G/6G Sandbox Hackathon](https://challenge.aiforgood.itu.int/match/matchitem/95) brought together students and young experts worldwide.

 A special session on youth participation in standards development during the [*ITU Kaleidoscope 2024: Innovation and digital transformation for a sustainable world*](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/academia/kaleidoscope/2024/Pages/default.aspx), held from 21 to 23 October 2024 in New Delhi, India, brought together a wide range of participants from universities, industry and research institutions brining, engaging students aged 18 and above.

 Member States approved the adoption of a new youth-focused Resolution [WTSA-24 Resolution 107](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-t/opb/res/T-RES-T.107-2024-PDF-E.pdf) ‘’Enhancing the engagement of the next-generation experts in the standardization activities of the ITU Standardization sector”.

 Launched in May 2025 in celebration of the International Year of Quantum, [the Future Leaders in Quantum](https://aiforgood.itu.int/the-future-leaders-in-quantum-hackathon/) (FLIQ) hackathon serves as a platform to engage youth in quantum technologies.

Youth engagement in Metaverse, IoT, and SSC&C activities includes:

 Recognition of student and faculty winners of the Global Connect IoT competition during the SG20 Closing Plenary (Geneva, 15-24 January 2025).

 Launch of the [UN Citiverse Challenge](https://www.itu.int/metaverse/virtual-worlds/1st-un-citiverse-challenge/) in February 2025: a platform designed to foster youth involvement and innovation. It invites students and startups to reimagine the future through the citiverse and digital public infrastructure.

 At the [2nd UN Virtual Worlds Day 2025 (Turin, Italy, 11-12 June 2025): Empowering Young Leaders for a Global Future](https://www.itu.int/un-virtual-worlds-day/2025/),youth innovators showcased virtual worlds, AI, and digital twin solutions that can help to implement the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact.

 The [United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) Thematic Groups](https://u4ssc.itu.int/thematic-groups/) are open to all stakeholders committed to shaping smarter, more sustainable urban futures. U4SSC welcomes the participation of students from diverse fields, including those with an interest in AI in cities, city platforms, and smart city development.

The Radiocommunication Bureau (BR), committed to supporting youth, has strengthened its agreements with academic institutions and expanded youth involvement within the department by increasing internship opportunities for both students and young professionals.

The ITU secretariat is working continuously to strengthen relations with academic institutions in terms of research support and student engagement, especially ITU Academia.

ITU actively participated in the ECOSOC Youth Forum in New York from 15 to 17 April, through the co-organization of two side events on AI and meaningful youth engagement.

ITU established a Gender & Youth Office (GYO) reporting to the Secretary-General. It is now operational and led by a Senior Gender and Youth Advisor, appointed in February. An Associate Youth Programme Officer was hired in May 2025.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_