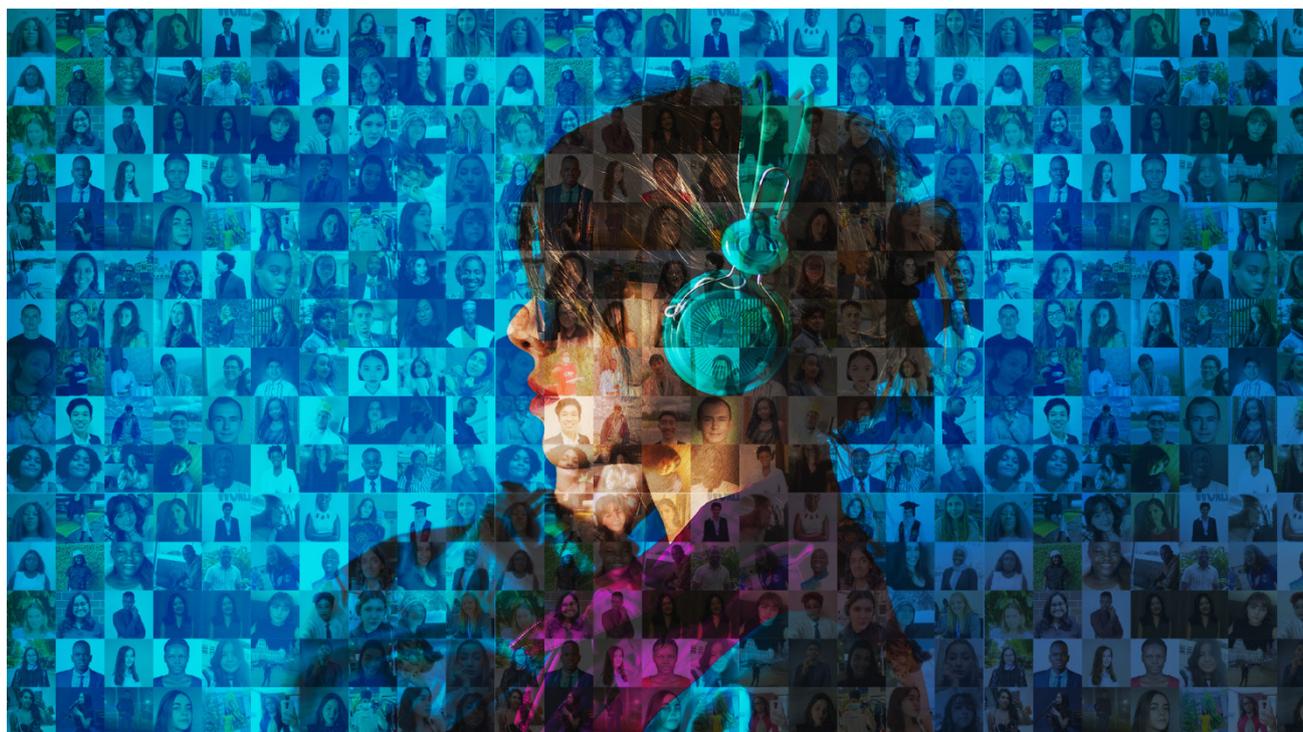# 2022 Generation Connect
Youth Call to Action

My Digital Future

I am the youth of the world in 2022. I am the first generation of digital natives and carry the voices of many different young people around the world – community workers, entrepreneurs, researchers, students and young professionals from various backgrounds from all regions.

I was born in an era of unprecedented technology innovation and disruption. As I come of age, I want to be able to enjoy the digital world fully, safely and inclusively.

In the digital space and in society, I want to be seen and heard and have a seat at the decision-making table. I am concerned at some of the decisions currently being taken in my name, as I have to live with these choices and their consequences. I have the will, values and ambition to shape my future and the one of the future generations.

I engaged in the Generation Connect Global Consultations to amplify my voice in digital development and send an urgent clarion Call to Action to you, the leaders of today's world.

You, decision makers around the world, have been the digital pioneers. You carry the power and the responsibility to accelerate digital development everywhere for all and build on it towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda.
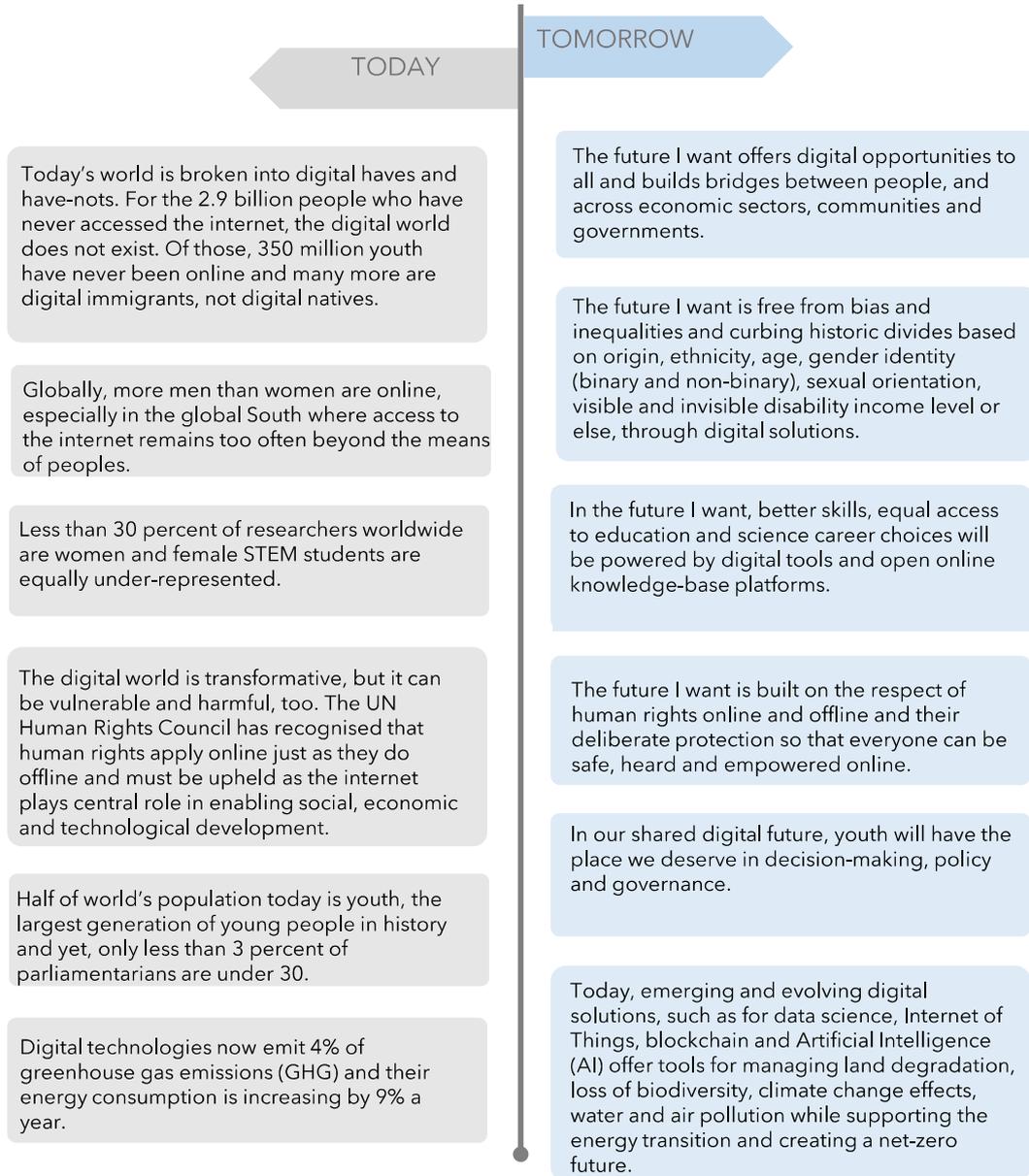
Your actions today define my future education, employment and environment. Your inaction can arrest the power of the digital transformation and leave me behind.

The time to act is now. At stake is my very future.

I.   TOWARDS A BETTER DIGITAL FUTURE FOR ALL, FOR THE PLANET

The digital world is transforming rapidly and changing governments, economies and communities in turn. But old and new issues challenge social progress and economic development and throw a shadow on my future. Will the promise of the digital future be lost to me?

I recognize that digital technologies are not the solution to all concerns, but I believe that their transformative power creates more opportunities than it brings challenges.

TODAY	TOMORROW
Today's world is broken into digital haves and have-nots. For the 2.9 billion people who have never accessed the internet, the digital world does not exist. Of those, 350 million youth have never been online and many more are digital immigrants, not digital natives.	The future I want offers digital opportunities to all and builds bridges between people, and across economic sectors, communities and governments.
Globally, more men than women are online, especially in the global South where access to the internet remains too often beyond the means of peoples.	The future I want is free from bias and inequalities and curbing historic divides based on origin, ethnicity, age, gender identity (binary and non-binary), sexual orientation, visible and invisible disability income level or else, through digital solutions.
Less than 30 percent of researchers worldwide are women and female STEM students are equally under-represented.	In the future I want, better skills, equal access to education and science career choices will be powered by digital tools and open online knowledge-base platforms.
The digital world is transformative, but it can be vulnerable and harmful, too. The UN Human Rights Council has recognised that human rights apply online just as they do offline and must be upheld as the internet plays central role in enabling social, economic and technological development.	The future I want is built on the respect of human rights online and offline and their deliberate protection so that everyone can be safe, heard and empowered online.
Half of world's population today is youth, the largest generation of young people in history and yet, only less than 3 percent of parliamentarians are under 30.	In our shared digital future, youth will have the place we deserve in decision-making, policy and governance.
Digital technologies now emit 4% of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and their energy consumption is increasing by 9% a year.	Today, emerging and evolving digital solutions, such as for data science, Internet of Things, blockchain and Artificial Intelligence (AI) offer tools for managing land degradation, loss of biodiversity, climate change effects, water and air pollution while supporting the energy transition and creating a net-zero future.

II   I AM READY, COMMITTED AND CONFIDENT

The road ahead may be challenging but I am your ally in action.

- I am ready to take on my own responsibilities, use my resourcefulness and spare no effort to move the local, national and global digital agenda forward.
- I will use my voice to advocate for the positive changes I want to see and lead the transformation of societies and economies.
- I am Generation Connect championing human rights, equality and dignity online by leveraging the power of digital technologies and the internet.
- I will learn as much as I can so I can educate others, beginning with my immediate community.

- I will share my knowledge and raise awareness of the advantages and risks of the digital world because knowledge gives us the upper hand.
- I will innovate and use digital technologies and the internet for social good and climate action, for fueling entrepreneurship and shaping circular economies, at the local, regional and global level.
- I will promote cultural diversity as well as gender and disability inclusivity through open and accessible digital tools and the internet.
- I will work with governments, academia, the private sector, not-for-profit organizations, communities of practice and across youth networks and engage in global efforts to leverage multilateralism in building a digital future where everyone thrives.

I own your legacy and I will leave my own mark upon it, mindful of the future generations.

III   YOUR ACTIONS, MY FUTURE

I believe a better digital future is possible only if we act – now, together.

Many policies, governance models and implementation mechanisms need renewal in the digital age and can be upgraded with the support of digital tools and the internet for social engagement, decision-making and leadership, enabling the meaningful inclusion of youth and other under-represented groups.

Decisive action is needed to ensure that the asks below are met **by 2025**.

1.   Digital policies

I call on all governments to

a.   **Prioritize digital policies and ensure policy coherence across government and economic sectors** to leverage the power of connectivity and digital technologies for sustainable development.

b.   **Adopt sound infrastructure policies** to support investment and promote more diversified sources of financing for digital connectivity and the energy transition.

c.   **Uphold human rights online** and develop frameworks for navigating the internet safely, expressing oneself freely, requiring consent for online transactions, accessing social and economic opportunities and creating value using digital technologies, tools and the internet.

d.   **Craft frameworks for digital public goods** to amplify the positive impact of digital technologies and the internet on development, such as open-source software, open data, open AI models, open standards and open content along with national frameworks for consumer and data protection, and cybersecurity.

e.   **Overhaul innovation and Research and Development (R&D) policies** to leverage responsible tech-led innovation for digital entrepreneurship across sectors and the development of smart sustainable cities.

f.   **Integrate an environmental perspective in infrastructure and cross-sector tech policies and** enact regulations in key areas such as hardware and software manufacturing, energy consumption, e-waste and the use of renewable energy across the economy.

g.   **Mainstream a technology perspective into sectoral policies,** such as in education, health, finance, trade, agriculture and other economic policies to leverage digital technologies, tools, data and the internet for development.

h.   **Develop frameworks for integrating social and environmental considerations** (such as Responsible Business Conduct policies, human rights considerations, youth and gender equality perspectives) **in digital tools and services** by governments, and encourage the inclusion of such considerations by the private sector and communities.

2.   Governance in the digital age

I call on national and local decision makers to

a.   **Give youth a seat at the decision-making table by creating genuine leadership roles for youth in formal governance processes** across legislative and executive bodies, such as youth voting members of steering committees or working groups, youth envoys, advisors or youth shadow boards.

b.   **Make sure that meaningful participatory approaches are integrated by-design into every policy, program, or project** for the digital transformation, in particular involving youth and other vulnerable groups traditionally under-represented based on their gender, disability or else.

c.   **Create new, readily accessible digital spaces designed with youth and historically marginalised groups to enable broader consultation and more open and inclusive decision-making and governance processes**, in particular for scoping, designing, implementing and the evaluation of digital policies through online tools, in particular official information and citizen participation platforms, opinion polling and online tools for crowdsourcing of issues and solutions.

d.   **Develop robust frameworks for measuring the outcomes and impact of digital, tech, youth and gender policies** and carry out regular, transparent monitoring and evaluation processes across government bodies.

e.   **Support the development of and enforce industry codes of conduct** to better protect the data, integrity and digital rights of youth, children and everyone online.

f.   **Adopt a data-informed and stakeholder-informed approaches to policy and decision making,** leveraging the intersection of economic, social and environmental data and the latest digital solutions to make sense of it, such as big data analytics and AI.

g.   **Develop adequate law enforcement capacity** to tackle issues related to the implementation of digital policies as well as ensure that digital technologies used for law enforcement respect human rights**.**

3.   Digital strategies and programmes

3.1 Engaging youth in preparing the future

I call on all governments, private sector and civil society to

a.   **Co-create an overarching national youth strategy together with youth,** identifying clear objectives, measurable targets and viable engagement mechanisms in key government processes.

b.   **Invest in the creation of youth-driven networks and leverage their engagement** in major decisions and initiatives, such as on open government, climate change, social justice and digital development.

c.   **Enable youth to lead, design and implement** youth-for-youth initiatives as well as public policies, programmes and projects, through targeted financing, mentoring, adequate digital platforms and tools, and promote the public visibility and recognition of their contribution.

d.   **Monitor and measure youth engagement** in national decision-making processes and youth economic empowerment based on a framework defined in the

youth strategy and with youth, transparent data-informed processes and periodic reviews by youth networks.

e. **Co-design an operational framework for mental health to minimize risks and avoid the harmful effects of digital media and the internet on children and youth,** such as creating networks for medical and psychological counselling on online addictions, providing support to victims of online bulling and harassment, creating channels for whistle-blowing, and carrying out awareness raising campaigns.

3.2 Transforming education and building digital skills, youth's digital superpowers

I call upon all governments and academia to

a. **Design and develop digital skills policies and strategies** that are evidence-based and specific to the national and local context to enhance education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth.

b. **Identify and prioritize new sources of financing** high-quality, tech-enabled and gender-inclusive education and digital skill building programmes, and engage new partners in developing and delivering such curricula.

c. **Collaborate across government ministries and levels,** in particular between the ICT Ministry and the Ministry of Education, to connect schools, provide shared access facilities and implement national digital skills development campaigns and programmes.

d. **Increase the offer, inclusiveness and accessibility of educational centres, opportunities and curricula** blending traditional and non-traditional, digital and tangible, online and offline, tools and approaches in formal and vocational training programmes, such as boot camps, ideathons and hackathons, gamification, discussion circles, webinars, platforms for knowledge dissemination and co-creation.

e. **Review the quality standards for curricula development and training** to enhance the quality, openness, adaptability and practical relevance of curricula for students and teachers through digital tools, open-source software, open data, and integrate such curricula and standards in school programmes.

f. **Strengthen STEM+ programmes, digital art and sports** and integrate them across academic disciplines, including social sciences, to ensure that training programmes and curricula adequately prepare youth for the jobs of the digital economy across sectors.

g. **Revisit academic curricula and blend responsible digital innovation and digital entrepreneurship tools, content and skills** across disciplines to improve graduates' employability.

h. **Integrate digital channels and curricula in vocational training** to diversify training opportunities in all walks of life and create learning-to-earning opportunities for youth, especially from vulnerable groups.

i. **Promote diverse role models in training design and delivery** to support the development of new social and professional behaviours free from bias, reinforcing individual identities and the shaping of career aspirations.

j. **Integrate emerging technologies in regularly funded R&D programmes and grant schemes** to maximize their sustainable and responsible use for public good, in particular in the area of AI-enabled digital solutions and quantum computing.

3.3 Creating decent jobs and livelihoods for youth

I call upon all governments and the private sector to

a. **Build sustainable, innovation-driven ecosystems for the digital economy** to enhance business opportunities, digital entrepreneurship and the creation of decent jobs and livelihoods for youth as a driver for achieving development goals.

b. **Create synergies, pool resources and coordinate efforts across the ecosystem** (e.g., between government bodies, financiers, established private sector players, start-ups, civil society, academia and youth networks) to leverage policy, finance and technology innovation in the transformation of economies and redefining the national, regional and global job market.

c. **Identify new, more inclusive financing sources for tech-enabled business ventures** by creating a network of different types of financiers with diverse investment portfolios such as traditional, non-traditional and development banks, and **provide equal access to finance to** start-ups and SMEs regardless of gender, age, disability, origin, ethnicity or other personal characteristics.

d. **Simplify administrative processes for creating start-ups,** provide online business registrations services, lower fees to reduce time to market and associated costs.

e. **Enable support networks for youth tech start-ups and digital social entrepreneurs** to provide business model scoping and acceleration, business mentorship programmes, targeted skill building, seed financing or partnership schemes.

f. **Create safe experimental spaces** for young entrepreneurs to allow prototyping, testing and scaling-up of digital products and services under flexible or no regulation for a limited period where new technologies or business models could be trialed and fine-tuned at minimal cost.

g. **Provide financial and non-financial incentives** for businesses developing digital solutions in the area of **the circular economy and the creation of green jobs**, in particular for youth.

h. **Minimize the harmful effects of digital and emerging technologies on people and the planet** by engaging businesses to adopt ethical and rights-respecting technologies and frameworks for corporate social responsibility while reaping the benefits of digital tools and the internet for global social and economic good at the local, national and global level.

i. **Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship by local companies – localizing digital innovation –** to ensure that the benefits of new digital solutions are shared with the local community, and prevent brain drain and innovation transfer to ecosystems providing more favourable conditions.

j.   **Create more leadership roles for youth across the public and private sector** and meaningfully involve youth in strategic and business planning activities and decisions.

k.   **Recruit young and diverse talent** regardless of gender, disability or origin, and craft meaningful career paths to leverage the full potential of inclusive and engaged workforce in the digital economy, including through paid internships, mentorship programmes, on-the-job training, expert missions and regular jobs.

4.   Transforming culture and communities

I want to positively transform my community and work with all stakeholders at the local level to

a.   **Advocate for the inclusive and responsible adoption** of digital technologies and the internet by the community and **mobilize resources** for grassroot youth-led and innovative initiatives.

b.   **Create social support systems for youth from vulnerable, marginalized or traditionally under-represented groups** to take part in the life of the community through social media or other digital channels, and connect them to formal governance mechanisms and public services.

c.   **Grow peer-to-peer support networks**, especially youth networks and not-for-profit organizations at the grassroot level, **to promote digital literacy and skills** in local communities and among young people.

d.   **Design and carry out online and offline awareness campaigns on key topics related to youth engagement and empowerment in the digital economy and society**, including the protection of personal data and children's rights online, online violence and addiction, the ethical use of digital media and technologies, and the accuracy and reliability of information online.

e.   **Co-design and carry out together with youth online awareness campaigns on key topics related to issues of concern to young people**, including adolescent rights, mental and reproductive health, domestic violence and social stigma related to disability, gender or else.

f.   **Make visible in the public space and online a new generation of digitally savvy local role models with diverse profiles** with regards to gender and gender identity, age, disability, origin, income level, etc. to promote a culture of acceptance and mutual respect among the local community.

g.   **Support the creation and online dissemination of more and more relevant, high-quality local content, content in local languages and indigenous knowledge**, by national and local stakeholders.

h.   **Co-create with youth locally appropriate digital platforms** for information and knowledge sharing, networking, formal and informal training, and economic activities to expand youth's access to information, learning and economic opportunities.

5.   Joining the movement towards a Global Digital Compact

I call on United Nations (UN) organizations and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to

a.   **Mainstream meaningful youth and gender-inclusive engagement**, especially of young people from marginalized or vulnerable groups and from developing and least-developed countries, in all levels of the work across the UN system, and regularly monitor progress on their goals and targets leveraging the system-wide implementation of **Youth2030, the UN Youth Strategy** and the **ITU Youth Strategy**.

b.   **Create synergies and support youth-led joint initiatives between ITU and other UN organizations to** meaningfully engage youth in international decision-making processes, in line with the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap of Digital Cooperation.

c.   **Build a strategic multi-stakeholder alliance with** the private and public sector, academia, civil society, and community members to open pathways for sustainable digital development through open and transparent online consultations or other digital channels, thus advancing the recommendation of the Our Common Agenda recommendation on Global Digital Compact.

d.   **Develop partnerships with the donor community and the private sector** to implement youth-driven initiatives to close digital divides at the local, national and global levels.

e.   **Increase the visibility of Generation Connect at the national, regional and global level** and raise awareness about opportunities for youth to engage in international youth networks and processes.

f.   **Develop a Generation Connect strategy to follow up on this Call to Action and propose benchmarks for its roll-out**, through inclusive and transparent youth-driven process.

The challenges ahead may be many, but the unity of our action and our determination to leave no one behind can make a difference in shaping our shared digital future.

Join the movement of the 2022 Generation Connect Global Youth Call to Action and start building our shared digital future today.