



WSIS+20 High Level Event 2025: Youth Special Track

Summary

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has always embraced a multistakeholder approach, ensuring that voices from across sectors and generations are reflected in global digital cooperation. Within this inclusive framework, youth engagement has become a key dimension of the WSIS process, supported through a dedicated Youth Special Track at the annual WSIS Forum. This important tradition was continued at the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025, held from 7 to 11 July 2025, provided a pivotal moment to reflect on two decades of progress, challenges, and renewed commitments to inclusive digital development.

On 7 July, the opening day of the High-Level Event, the Youth Special Track brought together over 300 youth participants from all regions of the world for a full day of intergenerational and youth-led engagement.

The special track was organised by WSIS/ITU, in collaboration with other stakeholders, including the UN Graduate Study Program (GSP), CSEDS, GYLDC, ICDC, ICANN, IEEE, ISOC, Microsoft, Shanghai Green Light-Year, SDG Solution Space of the University of Geneva, and USCIB. The dedicated track featured nine dynamic sessions, including a Multilateral Intergenerational High-Level Dialogue, a Knowledge Café on Youth Building the Digital Future – WSIS+20 Review and Beyond 2025, four thematic workshops focused on youth capacity building, digital skills, inclusion, and information technology, an Outcome Session consolidating key messages, a side event titled ReModelUN Trialogue, and a Youth Networking Reception.

The WSIS+20 Youth Special Track served as a vibrant and forward-looking platform within the broader High-Level Event, amplifying the voices, perspectives, and innovations of young people. Grounded in the WSIS principles of equity, inclusion, and multistakeholder collaboration, participants explored the transformative potential of digital technologies in advancing education, fostering inclusive artificial intelligence, and empowering youth worldwide. Across all sessions, emphasis was placed on the need for responsible governance, ethical safeguards, and strengthened international cooperation to ensure a human-centric digital future.



The discussions and key outcomes from the Youth Special Track are captured in this, which contributes directly to the WSIS+20 The discussions and insights captured during the Youth Special Track are consolidated in this [WSIS+20 Youth Special Track Outcome Report](#), which directly contributes to the WSIS+20 Overall Review at the United Nations General Assembly, to be held on 16–17 December 2025 in New York. This report offers concrete, youth-driven input to help shape a more inclusive and intergenerational WSIS process beyond 2025.

Key topics that emerged during the discussions include:

Institutionalizing Youth in Digital Governance

A central theme across the Youth Special Track was the call to institutionalize structured and sustained youth engagement within WSIS processes. Young leaders emphasized that meaningful participation must go beyond symbolic representation and ensure co-decision-making power in digital policy frameworks. Participants proposed tangible mechanisms to formalize youth involvement—such as appointing Youth Co-Chairs, Rapporteurs, and establishing permanent youth representation in WSIS governance structures. Youth voices were also seen as critical to co-creating trustworthy AI standards, fair data practices, and technology solutions that advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Institutionalizing youth participation in AI governance, policy co-creation, and ethical oversight was identified as a key priority. The dialogues further highlighted the need to foster empathy, trust, and shared values across generations to achieve a truly inclusive digital transformation.

Inclusive AI, Local Knowledge, and Sustainable Innovation

Building on WSIS Action Line C8’s emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity, the Youth Special Track spotlighted youth-led innovations advancing inclusive AI and context-aware digital solutions. Examples included AI tools trained in indigenous and local languages, assistive technologies for hard-of-hearing communities, and climate data platforms co-developed with grassroots actors. These initiatives reflect the WSIS vision of “digital for development” and align closely with WSIS Action Lines on ICT applications in education, environment, and accessibility (WSIS Action Lines C7). Discussions called for more human-centric and sustainable approaches to emerging technologies. Participants proposed stronger metrics to evaluate the ethical and environmental impacts of AI, and championed the idea of “net-positive technology,” where societal benefits outweigh environmental costs. Circular design principles, ethical audits, and modular innovation hubs were highlighted as



key strategies to ensure that technology development remains inclusive, locally informed, and globally relevant.

Digital infrastructure, capacity and skills

The Youth Special Track reaffirmed the critical importance of sustained investment in digital infrastructure, equitable access, and capacity development, in alignment with WSIS Action Lines C2, C3, and C4. Participants emphasized the urgent need to launch global digital skills initiatives to equip youth for the rapidly evolving demands of future economies, particularly in areas shaped by artificial intelligence and green technologies.

To ensure long-term and inclusive youth engagement, participants proposed the creation of a continuous WSIS Youth Programme, offering structured pathways for training, mentorship, and policy involvement across regions. They stressed that institutional commitment and accountability are essential to ensure that young people are not merely beneficiaries of digital transformation, but also its architects, co-creators and decision-makers in its advancement.

Awareness-Raising and Localizing WSIS

Throughout the sessions, youth participants raised concerns about the limited visibility and accessibility of WSIS at the local level. To address this, they called for partnerships with local organizations to help disseminate WSIS principles and discussions in accessible formats and local languages.

A proposal was made to establish a WSIS Youth Grassroots Fund to support community-based storytelling, innovation, and civic participation. Youth also advocated for the expansion of grassroots tech networks, including the scaling of modular innovation hubs and community-led digital solutions built on open data and shared standards.

A rights-based approach to digital inclusion focusing on connectivity, privacy, and digital safety was reaffirmed as a core priority for advancing WSIS action lines in the years ahead.

Toward an Intergenerational WSIS+20 and Beyond 2025

The WSIS+20 Youth Special Track demonstrated the energy, creativity, and commitment of young people to building a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable digital future. Their active participation and their commitment to regional follow-ups, awareness-raising, and institutional collaboration was both welcomed and appreciated.



Youth contributions have enriched the WSIS+20 process and reaffirmed the indispensable role of young people in multistakeholder digital governance. Looking ahead, the WSIS community is encouraged to build on this momentum by ensuring that youth are meaningfully engaged at all levels—local, regional, and global—as we approach the WSIS+20 Review at the United Nations General Assembly in December 2025 and beyond.

The leadership, insights, and values of youth will remain essential in advancing the WSIS vision for the next generation and beyond.