

## *I.T.U. – leaving no one behind.... I need a **T**elephone to connect to yo**U***

Connecting the world and beyond is the key driver for the ITU. Today, this is facilitated by movements in a digital world that increasingly connects us virtually while often aiding physical transport. But arguably, therein lies a possible misconnect, which this session seeks to explore...

### **Session overview:**

This session argues that while a digital divide across the globe exists, technology advancements also risk a further divide, not just in terms of marginalised populations but across and between generations.

Today, we increasingly refer to our point in history - the ‘Millennials, or Generation Y or Z;’ and it remains admirable and essential that we seek inclusivity in terms of inviting and listening to our youth at events such as WSIS.

But what about the generations that came before?

- The ‘Baby Boomers,’ or the ‘Traditionalists’ (*perhaps even more telling in terms of their ‘pseudonym’ – the ‘Silent Generation.’*)

The International Day for Older Persons is observed on October 1 every year. However, it was only observed for the first time in 1991. Despite the current international human rights framework, as late as 2024, it was recognized that more needs to be done to tackle the inequalities and violations faced by the older generation. In today’s society, this invariably includes, not only access to evolving, digital, technologies but the rights to have alternative options and not to be left behind or excluded.

There is no doubt that advancing technology aids the lives of so many, including an older or even elderly population but, globally, as this number grows, it risks leaving the ageing ‘Babies,’ also ‘Silent.’ While this segment of our world is not homogenous by any means, in many countries our seniors are also becoming more diverse, which brings with it increased challenges. Yet, at the same time ageism is becoming a perpetuated prejudice.

Though, conversely, there remains the potential that all older users are stigmatised as ‘technophobes’ or ‘digitally illiterate;’ while, it remains a fact, that some interfaces are poorly designed, and sometimes to the exclusion of older users.

### **Discussions within this proposed ‘open space’ session, looks to:**

- 1) Heighten these variable issues,
- 2) Gain critical insight and thoughts from the wider audience,
- 3) Propose solutions and/or,
- 4) Look at research opportunities to tackle related aspects and ensure.....

**‘no one gets left behind....’**

**As a starting and basic point – there will be a study on a simple function: the phone, as a means of communicating you to me!**



(A.I. Generated – CoPilot)

**NOTE:** this links into my session last year:

Back to the Future: Putting the “I” back into AI

And to my recent research and respective paper: which is centred around,

***A Society for all ages? Older People – Technology & Rights!***

*This research has investigated the advancement of technologies and the alignment to the progression of international human rights and protections across generations. Within this paper, commentary on the development of a fourth generation of rights, as well as the need for the proposed United Nations Treaty on the rights of older people to factor in technology progressions has been analysed.*

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**In this session: *the starting point is given to the 1980’s:*** When the Baby Boomers were growing up. It was a decade that was significant in terms of alerting us to the plight of ensuring our future was sustainable. It saw the publication of the Brundtland Report, relating to ‘Our Common Future;’ and, from a cultural perspective, 1985 also marked the film ‘Back to the Future,’ which considered the power of technology in terms of the ability to change the human destiny, this being facilitated through an advanced electric car. Putting the “I” back into AI – ensuring the ‘individual,’ not just the human, discussed the ‘*you and me*’ having an equitable voice and fair opportunity, regardless of culture and other differences - age, race, colour, disability, sex and sexuality. This inevitably means ensuring that technology advancements equally embrace diversity and remain an advantage and not disadvantage.

While, in this year's session the focus relates to human rights and whether these need to be revisited, especially for an ageing generations.

Today - ***the baby boomers have grown-up!***