



Youth Strategy

Roadmap to 2021 and beyond

1. Background

Youth and children with access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) are coming of age as digital natives. As early adopters of ICTs, they are uniquely placed to harness the power of digital technologies in new and imaginative ways.

ICTs can enhance education, reduce youth unemployment and promote social and economic development. However, for youth to benefit from this transformative power of ICTs, they must be equipped with a range of digital skills and have affordable access to connectivity.

The world today is home to around 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24, with close to 90 per cent of them living in developing countries. In Africa, where the population is 1.2 billion, about 41 per cent of the people are below 15 years old while another 19 per cent are youth between 15 and 24 years old. Youth, in many developed and developing countries, especially girls and young women, face disproportionate exposure to poverty and unemployment.

Youth have the right to achieve full economic, social and digital inclusion. ICTs are tools through which both young women and men can substantively contribute to, participate in and leverage their social and economic development. Connected to each other like never before, young people want to contribute to their communities, propose innovative solutions and drive social progress and change.

2. Vision

A world where every young person is connected, benefits from the digital economy and digital transformation, and is fully empowered through access to and use of ICTs.

3. ITU and the United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030 – working with and for young people

This Youth Strategy needs a strong alignment with the vision and objectives of the *United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030 – working with and for young people*. It will also be fully aligned with the shared global vision reaffirmed in Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference under the Connect 2030 Agenda, envisaging an information society, empowered by the interconnected world, where telecommunications/ICTs enable and accelerate social, economic and environmentally sustainable growth and development for everyone.

The secretariat has been engaging in regular dialogues with the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Ms Jayathma Wickramanayake and her office.

The secretariat will participate in the High-Level Steering Committee of the UN Youth Strategy to ensure that the ITU Youth Strategy is fully aligned with the UN Youth Strategy and to increase the effectiveness of ITU work in youth engagement, development and empowerment.

The secretariat will engage more consistently with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. As the UN specialized agency in ICTs, ITU has a mandate, which includes several elements that are particularly relevant to youth. Thus, we should play a primary role in

promoting youth engagement and dialogue within the UN system, with a special focus on technology for development.

The UN International Youth Day is an opportunity for ITU and its membership to highlight and promote our youth ICT-related activities.

In addition, around 20 UN organizations and agencies are now implementing youth-related strategies, programs, initiatives, campaigns and activities. Examples include: the global strategy on “Rights and choices for all adolescents and youth”, launched in 2019 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); the “Youth Advocacy Guide”, launched in 2019 by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the “Youth Forum” of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); the “Youth Financial Inclusion” programme of the United Nations Development Fund (UNCDF); “Youth Guides” and youth employment strategies of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the World Bank Group’s “Youth Innovation Fund”; the “Youth Spaces Initiative” of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and the “Youth Initiative Campaign” of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). ITU is encouraged to become an active player in the implementation of youth-related initiatives and activities.

4. ITU mandate

ITU has a clear mandate to contribute to the inclusion and empowerment of youth in the digital society as noted in the references above. In addition,

Resolution 198 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information and communication technology, mandates ITU:

- to continue to engage with youth in outreach, through communications, capacity building and research, from the perspective of digital inclusion;
- to maintain a youth perspective in the implementation of the ITU strategic plan and financial plan for 2020-2023 as well as in the operational plans of the Sectors and the General Secretariat;
- to build on the initiatives carried out over the past four years and to accelerate youth empowerment in ITU as a whole, within existing budgetary resources, so as to ensure capacity building and promotion of youth;
- to continue to ensure that the youth perspective is incorporated in the work programs, management approaches and human resources development activities of ITU, and to submit an annual written report to the Council on progress made.

Resolution 76 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference, on promoting information and communication technologies among young women and men for social and economic empowerment, instructs:

- the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) to continue to support the development of activities, projects and events aimed at promoting ICT applications among young women and men, in particular in the areas of employment, entrepreneurship and education, and thereby contribute to youth educational, social and economic development and empowerment, taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- that the established ITU-D objective on digital inclusion will continue to support the work promoting ICTs to young women and men.

5. Objective of the Youth Strategy

The Youth Strategy aims to improve and have a real impact on 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 Fit4Purpose and to reduce the youth digital divide.

BDT proposes to implement a comprehensive strategy towards the World Telecommunication Development Conference in 2021 (WTDC-21) and beyond, in order:

- to mainstream youth engagement and participation in the work of ITU to support the achievement of the overall goals of the Union;
- to encourage youth participation in ITU programs, events and activities, as well as contribute to the decision-making processes, for example through TDAG;
- to promote ICT youth-related policies within ITU Member States to ensure inclusiveness and empower youth, particularly in developing countries;
- to engage in regular dialogue and consultations with youth and undertake concrete actions;
- to incorporate a youth perspective in the implementation of the ITU strategic plan.

Partnerships are crucial for sustainable and meaningful implementation of the Youth Strategy.

BDT intends to work with ITU members and relevant organizations, networks and interested donors (development banks, foundations, private-sector entities) that are strategically focused on supporting youth development and empowerment.

Efforts will be made to:

- engage with all ITU Sectors in order to coordinate the implementation of the Youth Strategy throughout the Union,
- coordinate closely within the United Nations system, in the implementation of the Youth Strategy
- include the existing ITU work related to digital inclusion, such as girls and young women, aboriginal youth and young people with disabilities
- to acknowledge young people's context, such as socioeconomic status and geographical regions.

For this purpose, the activities and efforts proposed in the Youth Strategy are grouped around three areas of action.

EMPOWER: Supporting youth empowerment by creating a community of young leaders.

ENGAGE: Bringing young people together to engage with ITU and its members.

PARTICIPATE: Fostering youth dialogue and participation in ITU activities and decision-making processes.

5.1 EMPOWER

Youth empowerment brings unique benefits to young people by equipping them with key competences and skills to be used for their own personal and career development.

○ *ICT Young Leaders Programme*

To explore the establishment of an ICT Young Leaders Programme by launching an international call for young people with outstanding achievements in the field of ICTs to become "ICT Young

Leaders” (an alternative suggested name for the programme is: “ITU Young Visionaries Programme”).

ICT Young Leaders would communicate, promote and organize – within their countries and communities – ICT-related youth programs, campaigns, initiatives and activities that aim to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The ICT Young Leaders network would also advocate for expanded and meaningful youth participation in international forums, both at the international and regional levels. Some of the representatives of the Young Leaders Programme would advise ITU on youth-related matters.

The secretariat would provide support for the coordination of the ICT Young Leaders Programme.

- *Capacity-building programs*

Propose to youth, digital skills and capacity-building programs through the Digital Transformation Centres and the ITU Academy. These efforts will provide guidance, understanding and feedback to ITU on relevant youth issues.

It is important to note that youth including young women and girls, wish to be equipped with skills relevant to close the digital gap that are normally not included in traditional educational settings.

- *Youth Innovation Challenges*

Promote the engagement of Academia with youth to find innovative ICT solutions for sustainable development.

Launch youth competitions to find innovative ICT solutions to address global challenges and support the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Young people will be encouraged to propose innovative ideas which address issues that matter most to them.

5.2 ENGAGE

Invite young people to engage with ITU and its members, to listen to their interests, concerns and voices in order to mainstream a youth culture into the work of the Union.

Overall, youth is excited to engage with international organizations, share their viewpoints and perspectives on societal issues. At the same time, young people feel it is important that they receive feedback on their inputs, creating pathways for mutual exchange and collaboration.

- *Internships and Young Professionals Programme*

Since January 2019, BDT has hired 55 interns (under 30 years old on average) working across divisions and departments, both at ITU headquarters and in regional offices. Interns have contributed positively to BDT work, with fresh and innovative ideas. The practice of hiring young interns will be continued.

Encourage the establishment of a Young Professionals Programme (YPP) – a recruitment initiative for talented, highly qualified young professionals to start a career in ITU.

- *Appointment of Youth focal points*

BDT will appoint youth focal points from each of its departments at ITU headquarters and from each regional office to effectively coordinate and mainstream efforts related to the implementation of the Youth Strategy.

- *Research agenda*

Youth will be invited to suggest ICT-related research ideas, to be considered by Academia, which aim to address global development challenges and find innovative solutions. The research results will be shared with ITU and all its members.

- *ITU Youth Staff Network (YSN)*

Consider establishing a youth staff network within ITU to encourage youth inclusion across all Sectors, promote youth staff engagement, foster training and mentoring opportunities for ITU young staff, and invite young staff to provide ideas and suggestions that will be shared with ITU management for the benefit of the Union.

It is important to highlight that young people seek long-term inclusion in courses, internships and programs, which are aligned with their career goals. Young staff wish also to relate to adult mentors, who can offer relevant advises related to career counselling, useful skills and interest development for future job opportunities.

5.3 PARTICIPATE

The Youth Strategy will offer opportunities for young people to participate in ITU meetings, make their voices heard, engage with ITU members and contribute to ITU work.

The global issues that young people are interested in and impact their lives are diverse, ranging from a lack of quality education to concerns related to privacy. Other trending issues of interest include good health and well-being, environmental issues, lack of economic opportunity and employment, and gender equality and empowerment of girls. Through the implementation of the Youth Strategy, young people will be given the opportunity to speak out on what matters to them and engage with ITU.

- *Youth TDAG (Telecommunication Development Advisory Group)*

Convene a “Youth TDAG” during the annual TDAG meeting, where young people would discuss matters related to ICTs and youth. The “Youth TDAG” meeting could focus on ICT trends relevant to youth, as well as assess the achievement of youth-related objectives and resolutions adopted by WTDC and by other ITU conferences. Participants in “Youth TDAG” would be young delegates invited by ITU members and would be joined by several ITU Young Leaders.

- *Regional youth forums*

Foster the organization of youth-related regional meetings, where young people would discuss ICT-related trends, opportunities and challenges in their regions, and share with ITU members their perspective on the world. This could be done back to back with the regional development forums and/or regional preparatory meetings.

These efforts will also guide ITU and its members in the preparations for the World Telecommunication Development Conference in 2021 (WTDC-21) on possible new youth-related resolutions, objectives and actions.

- *WTDC-21 Youth Summit (World Telecommunication Development Conference)*

Discussions are under way with the host country Ethiopia to organize a “WTDC-21 Youth Summit” in order to review and discuss the main development challenges facing youth, and the priorities, strategies and action plan of BDT with respect to youth. Like “Youth TDAG”, participants in the

WTDC-21 Youth Summit would be young delegates invited by ITU members, together with several ITU Young Leaders.

- *ITU Futurecasters: Global Young Visionaries Summits*

Building on the success and impact of the ITU Futurecasters: Global Young Visionaries Summit, held in January 2020, BDT plans to organize similar summits in 2021 and 2022 in Geneva, with the participation of high school students from all around the world.

Students would debate on how technologies can be harnessed to advance progress towards the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and discuss, from their unique cultural and personal perspectives, how the power of technology can change the world positively. Results of each summit would be presented to TDAG.

- *Consultations*

Throughout the year, young people will be consulted, through online and face-to-face consultations, to give feedback and inputs on the implementation of the Youth Strategy.
