

## Annex 1

### Generation Connect: An Overview

As digital natives, youth of today hold the keys to unlock a more inclusive digital future. According to ITU's 2023 Facts and Figures, almost 80% of people aged between 15 and 24 use the internet compared to only 65% internet use among the rest of the general population. Youth are therefore not only essential stakeholders to engage in digital development discussions, but they are also driving digital change in their own communities around the world.

Generation Connect was established in 2020 as the flagship initiative of the ITU Youth Strategy, in line with the United Nations Youth 2030 Agenda, with the mission to engage global youth and encourage their participation as equal partners alongside the leaders of today's digital change, empowering young people with the skills and opportunities to advance their vision of a connected future. Generation Connect aims to engage all young people across the world, in the digital development agenda, no matter where they come from.

The implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy and Generation Connect is guided by WTDC Resolution 76 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) *Promoting information and communication technologies among young women and men for social and economic empowerment* and PP Resolution 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) *Empowerment of youth through telecommunication/ information and communication technology*. There are 7 references to the ITU Youth Strategy and 5 references to Generation Connect in these ITU Resolutions.

#### **Generation Connect: Youth Envoys, Visionaries Board, and Virtual Communities**

In the United Nations Secretary General's Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3 on Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-making Processes (2023), Generation Connect Youth Envoys initiative and the Generation Connect Visionaries Board was mentioned as a positive example of meaningful youth engagement in the UN System.

Generation Connect is taking action to amplify the voices of young leaders in the digital development dialogue at the global and regional levels. From 120 different countries, 180 **Generation Connect Youth Envoys** were competitively selected as exceptional young leaders in digital development. Generation Connect Youth Envoys work closely with ITU Regional Offices to create global and regional impact on youth-related matters. ITU members have also been involved and they have supported Regional Offices on matters related to Generation Connect Youth Envoys.

The **Generation Connect Visionaries Board** was assembled to further champion the voices of youth to advance digital development at the global level. It is comprised today of 14 global leaders in digital development. Through the creation of this intergenerational Board, the Generation Connect initiative has gained access to diverse networks of young people and more opportunities for meaningful youth engagement around the world.

Additionally, Generation Connect maintains and updates its **virtual communities** on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) frequently with the goal of reaching as many young people as possible.

#### **Generation Connect as an Initiative of the ITU Youth Strategy**

The ITU Youth Strategy, which is aligned with Youth 2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth, was adopted by ITU members during the 25th meeting of the Telecommunication Advisory Group (June 2020).

The three pillars of the ITU Youth Strategy are: Empower, Engage, and Participate. These pillars help encourage ITU to support youth *empowerment* by creating and maintaining a community of young leaders; *engage* young people in its activities and with its members; and facilitate youth *participation* and dialogue in ITU decision-making processes. As an initiative of the ITU Youth Strategy, Generation Connect aims to organize and facilitate activities and events that implement the three pillars of the ITU Youth Strategy.

### Empower

The Empower Pillar of the ITU Youth Strategy calls for supporting youth empowerment by creating a community of young leaders. Aligned with this pillar, Generation Connect events and activities equipping young people with key competencies and skills to be used for their own personal career development include:

- The ITU Generation Connect Young Leadership Programme in Partnership with Huawei
  - Through this programme, young leaders will have the unique opportunity to make new community-driven digital inclusion projects a reality and expand the impact of their existing projects. To support the selected young leaders' efforts during this journey, ITU and Huawei will help young leaders receive guidance, training, and funding to enable them to develop and successfully implement their own digital development initiatives.
- Capacity-building activities
  - Generation Connect capacity-building activities include the Generation Connect Digital Learning Certificate on ITU Academy, workshops on cybersecurity and innovation for Generation Connect Youth Envoys, and mentoring/networking sessions for young prospective digital development leaders.
- Youth Innovation Challenges
  - Since its establishment, Generation Connect has ran several challenges to unleash youth innovation, including the E-Waste Iconathon Challenge, wherein youth submitted their designs to be used around the world to symbolize the take-back and collection of e-waste.

### Engage

Generation Connect invites young people to engage in mutual exchanges with the ITU and its members. Activities and initiatives in the Engage Pillar include:

- Appointing Regional Youth Focal Points
  - The Generation Connect global team continuously coordinates with the Regional Youth Focal Points for each of the six ITU regions, ensuring youth engagement on regional levels as well.
- Generation Connect Podcast
  - The Generation Connect podcast is designed by youth and for youth and offers young people the opportunity to engage in digital development discourse with diverse experts.
- Collaborations with other UN initiatives
  - Generation Connect collaborates across the UN System towards meaningfully engaging young people in more intersectional initiatives related to digital development. Generation Connect has engaged in activities with the ECOSOC Youth Forum, the UN Youth Envoy's Office, the FAO, UNESCO and other UN agencies.

## Participate

Aligned with the ITU Youth Strategy, Generation Connect aims to offer opportunities for young people to participate in ITU meetings, make their voices heard, and contribute to ITU work. Generation Connect continues to work on creating avenues for youth participation in the ITU, including activities such as:

- Participation in ITU and BDT Events
  - Generation Connect youth have been involved in a wide range of ITU activities and events, particularly those within the BDT including Regional Development Forums (RDFs), ITU-D Study Groups, and the EQUALS in Tech Awards. They have also engaged in wider ITU events and activities such as PP-22.
- Consultations
  - Through roundtable discussions led by youth, for youth, Generation Connect consults diverse youth to provide iterative feedback on the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy. Generation Connect Youth Envoys also have the opportunity to participate in a wider range of consultations, including consultations with the AI for Good initiative to design a youth track for issues pertaining to youth and Artificial Intelligence.
- Global Youth Summits
  - Generation Connect hosted the 2022 Generation Connect Global Youth Summit in Kigali, Rwanda, directly preceding the commencement of WTDC-22. With over 5,000 youth delegates from over 115 countries participating, the 2022 Generation Connect Youth Summit highlighted the importance of inclusive youth participation in ITU events and beyond. Planning for another Global Youth Summit is underway to grow youth participation in the digital development dialogue around the world.

## Our Future is Just a Click Away

Generation Connect remains committed to amplifying the voices of young leaders in the digital development dialogue through the implementation of the ITU Youth Strategy. As an initiative that seeks to consistently seek feedback from youth around the world, Generation Connect is constantly growing and improving. Together, Generation Connect believes we can build our collective, inclusive digital future through a strong intergenerational and collaborative lens.

For more information, please visit the Generation Connect [website](#) or email us at [generationconnect@itu.int](mailto:generationconnect@itu.int).