IGF 2022 GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMIT
Digital transformation and the role of youth

Messages from the IGF 2022 Global Youth Summit

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Opportunities for social prosperity digital transformation provides

- Youth has always been an important driver of digitization, not only as technical innovators, but also through digital cooperation and policy development. In a multi-stakeholder environment of shared responsibilities, institutionalization is key to develop and maintain good practices, networks, and frameworks.

- Creative ways to problem-solving regarding the digital transformation is a responsibility that youth should embrace as their own, as current discussions have an impact on rules, policies and frameworks but also on opportunities for society at large.

- Youth has the opportunity to build on former developments, but also critically check if the frameworks and structures still apply in ever-changing digital environments. Youth therefore has to be recognised as a serious stakeholder in policy and regulatory development.

- Sustainable digital transformation requires a focus on the Internet as a public space that does not exclude marginalized communities (such as gender-diverse people, ethnic and race minorities, women), users in remote areas, and other underserved and underrepresented communities. Investments in meaningful access and accessibility shall benefit all users and communities, going beyond a focus on mere economic growth.

- Tools and processes for education and participation have to be accessible in order for youth to be a positive force in a sustainable digital transformation.

Challenges preventing from fully benefiting from digital transformation opportunities

- Modern technology is already present in our lives, but policy frameworks need to be adjusted to current risks. Higher levels of technical connectivity lead to increased vulnerability of digital infrastructures, data and services.

- Calculation of risk in cybersecurity looks at assets, vulnerabilities and threats. A stable governance structure to mitigate risks is holistic and requires the involvement of governments and regulators, the private sector, and the end-users themselves.

- Socio-economic obstacles to participation in digital transformation have to be recognised and addressed locally and regionally. High levels of youth unemployment, lack of Internet access, and inaccessible digital education hamper opportunities and especially exclude marginalized communities.

Toward a better digital future!

- Key points in the context of digital sustainability include social inclusivity of digital solutions, greener tech to reduce negative impacts on the environment, and open policy processes.

- Rebound effects, in which technology is made more sustainable, but resource use increases due to increased use of green tools, need to be avoided.

- Part of being digital natives means youth understand the impact of digital tech, and the inequalities present in digital connectivity and access. Thus, youth can act as both a driving force and a warning sign in tackling issues from green tech to privacy and human rights.

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