15th Annual Internet Governance Forum
Outputs from the IGF 2020 Global Youth Summit

The world is going digital!
Equipping next generation of Internet governance experts and leaders

We are living in a time when each and every aspect of our lives is going through digital transformation, from education and work to communication and entertainment. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the power and importance of digital technologies. While the physical distancing measures associated with the pandemic has closed schools across the world, disrupted people's ability to work and forced families and friends to stay apart, the Internet has enabled many to continue their education and jobs and maintain social interaction.

However, the increase in the use of online technologies prompted by COVID-19 has exacerbated many digital policy-related issues and has starkly illustrated the widening gap between the connected and unconnected. For example, it has highlighted the importance of issues related to online security and safety, data protection and utilisation, as well as freedoms and rights on the Internet. Even before the pandemic, there was broad recognition of the need to conquer the digital divide, particularly the gender digital divide, as well as online segregation and discrimination of various marginalised groups. These problems have been around ever since the Internet entered our lives, just over 50 years ago, and the complexity and global nature of the issues clearly require the involvement of multiple generations. The youth of today will be tomorrow's Internet leaders and experts. The sooner we start with developing the capacity of today's youth, the sooner we can start to make progress, across the generations, and create an Internet that benefits all.

Over 300 young participants and those supporting youth took active participating at the IGF 2020 Global Youth Summit[1]. Participants sent a strong message for a multistakeholder action necessary to bridge the digital divides, transform and improve traditional education systems and advance capacity in Internet governance for future leaders and experts.

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[1] 5 November 2020 https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2020-youth-summit

IGF 2020 YOUTH SUMMIT MESSAGES

NEXT GENERATIONS BUILDING BRIDGES TO DIGITALLY CONNECT PEOPLE

Meaningful access to the Internet has become the Sine Qua Non of human development. The COVID-19 pandemic was a life lesson to all: without the Internet, young people won't be able to adequately work, educate themselves, communicate, access information and engage in society. In times of confinement and forced physical distance, the Internet was the main tool to help us to stay connected and carry on with our lives. Inequalities in access, affordability and digital literacy became more apparent in this global crisis.

The digital divide is the side effect of digital transformation of our everyday life during the pandemic. Mobile data is the quickest way to enable most people in the world to access the Internet, but a good quality broadband Internet connection and reliable devices are essential to effectively bridge the digital divide and foster digital inclusion. It is important that markets are sensitised to ensure affordable Internet packages for all and encourage Internet Service Providers to reach underserved communities, as well as governments to set favourable/advantageous public policy frameworks to encourage community networks and alternative ways of connectivity.

People do not need to wait to be directed, but they can **direct and shape digitization**. For example, community networks have proved to be a sustainable way of connecting the unconnected through decentralised, locally owned and managed infrastructure. The national, regional and youth IGF (NRIs) could bring to the attention of decision-makers the good practices existing across the NRIs ecosystem.

In some parts of the world, women, girls, gender-diverse people, people with disabilities, elderly population, youth, people in rural and remote areas, indigenous people, refugees and migrants, are on the margins of the connected world and digital policy-related processes. It is of utmost importance that a multistakeholder effort is directed toward meaningful digital inclusion of these **vulnerable groups**.

It is essential to have **collaboration among non-government and government sectors** to set policy and legal frameworks to guarantee respect for rights online and offline in order to improve our societies.

RETHINKING FORMAL EDUCATION: 4.0 VISION FOR NEXT DIGITAL GENERATIONS

Traditional **education systems** are outdated! Effective digital education entails more than a mere basic use of computer devices and applications. Our educational systems should include courses on digital literacy, cybersafety, digital innovation and coding. Teachers should be part of these continuous educational updates. Schools and academic institutions could cooperate with experts across disciplines for massive modernisation of school curricula, capacity development and for upskilling of teachers and students.

The **education systems** are poorly using the advantages of digital tools to deliver education to students, both in terms of platforms and methodologies. Online education can support the traditional onsite teaching and learning methods, to ensure students at all stages of their education have equal quality of access to education, well-balanced with healthy lifestyles, such as physical activity, good eating routine, social activities and gaining knowledge on traditional subjects.
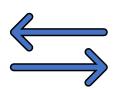
DEVELOPING CAPACITY IN INTERNET GOVERNANCE FOR NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS AND EXPERTS

Governments, private tech companies, start-ups, think-tanks, academic and research institutions and all other stakeholders are encouraged to invest in providing **educational training and capacity building opportunities** for youths by making available and accessible open educational resources (OER) and massive online open courses (MOOCs).

National, regional and global Internet governance-related discussions and decision-making processes need to create **channels for youth participation**. Youth should not be speaking among themselves only, but also with those who can implement policies. The mechanism should be a fair and open platform that brings different stakeholders together to work for a better Internet for all people. What's more important is to embrace youth's creativity and energy with the experiences and power of all people to make positive changes in our communities collectively.

Youth need to have **representation** in the policy-making processes. We call upon the United Nations Internet Governance Forum to establish a regular communication channel between young and senior stakeholders in its deliberations.

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All stakeholders are asked to consider these messages and support IGF 2021 efforts for meaningful inclusion of young people in Internet governance.

These messages will set a foundation for the continuation of strategic efforts to engage with youth through the IGF 2021.

Connect to hundreds of young people through a dedicated mailing list: igfyouth@intgovforum.org

Contact the IGF Secretariat should you have any questions or suggestions: igf@un.org