DTC Statement to the UN Informal Interactive WSIS stakeholder consultation on the review of implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+ 20)
Monday, 9 June 2025 8pm EST

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Dynamic Teen Coalition (DTC), the first and only teen-led board at the United Nations.

Over the past 20 years since WSIS, we've seen tremendous growth in digital participation. But that growth has outpaced the frameworks that govern it. The original vision of a "people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented Information Society" cannot be realized if entire age groups are still structurally excluded.

At the UN, "youth" is still often defined as 18 to 35. This excludes teens aged 13 to 19, despite the fact that they are legally and actively participating in global digital life, on social platforms, in coding communities, in open science, and in international discourse.

To respond to this gap, DTC Co-Chairs Pyrate Ruby Passell and Stacy Gildenston developed a realistic inclusive, lifelong multistakeholder model that reflects how people actually participate across their lifespan, especially online. **We propose:**

0–12: Child – a stage focused on protection and safety;
13–19: Teen – focused on human rights, identity development, and digital citizenship;
18–Early Career – a self-selected stage that bridges experience and maturity;
Mid Career – where networks, impact, and leadership take shape;
Senior Career – a time for mentorship, legacy, and structural guidance.

This structure is grounded in real practice. DTC teens lead consultations at the IGF, contribute to ITU's Virtual Worlds initiatives, and are recognized by the UN Foundation. We don't need permission to participate, we're already doing the work. What we need is a system that reflects that reality.

The current challenge to implementing WSIS outcomes is not just technical, it's structural. Exclusion by age is a policy failure that can and must be addressed.

Our ask is simple:

1. Update UN and WSIS-related age categories to reflect real digital participation
2. Eliminate unnecessary age caps that prevent teens from registering or contributing
3. Institutionalize teen-led participation through funded pathways, not just token invitations

We believe inclusive, lifelong multistakeholder cooperation, especially through WSIS+20 and the Global Digital Compact, can only be meaningful when all stakeholders are actually included. That means building *with*, not just *for*, teens.

Thank you.

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