1. What are the most important **achievements** arising from WSIS that should be highlighted in the Zero Draft? *

The Elements Paper references youth briefly in Article 5 and Article 8. However understanding the contexts, pathways and challenges of youth participation is essential in designing inclusive, thoughtful and impactful mechanisms for future engagement. By recognising the diversity of youth experiences and environments in which youth operate, decision makers can more effectively structure participation spaces that are meaningful, empowering and responsive to the evolving role of youth in Internet governance.

There are 176 national, regional, and youth IGFs (the NRIs). Within this ecosystem, youth IGFs serve multiple purposes, including capacity building, co-creation, community development, policy dialogue, and feedback mechanisms. These initiatives provide spaces where young participants are not confined to predefined roles or contributions. Instead, they are encouraged to explore ideas, exchange perspectives and push personal boundaries in order to foster intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue.

The Youth IGF structure functions as a component within the cascading NRI framework, contributing input to both global IGF discussions and national governance spaces. For example, youth facilitators actively encourage young participants to engage in interventions and take the microphone during IGF sessions. Another example is the YOUthDIG Messages, which are incorporated into the published EuroDIG messages and circulated among European stakeholders to amplify youth perspectives. Additionally, the Canada Youth IGF purposefully brings elected and appointed public officials in conversation with youth to ensure youth have the ability to advocate for their stakeholder position to those with political power. Inclusive approaches like these help ensure that youth voices are not only heard but also integrated into broader deliberations.

The IGF has evolved into a platform where youth inspire one another by collaborating on projects and developing peer-to-peer spaces. These efforts promote increased youth interaction, support and inclusion. Examples include initiatives such as the Youth Internet governance texts such as the Youth Atlas Project (https://drive.google.com/file/d/19ijZr0YFEwZ5FHxYvzqeVNRnbR4maj_D/view) and academic articles (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308596124000557) which document youth experiences and perspectives in Internet governance. Additionally, the Asia Pacific Policy Observatory demonstrates how young stakeholders are leading in shaping Internet governance debates at both regional and global levels.

Additional schemes have played a pivotal role in mobilising youth participation. Programmes such as the Internet Society (ISOC) Youth Ambassador Program and Digital Grassroots have empowered young individuals to actively engage with governance processes. Furthermore, student-focused programs and fellowship initiatives by various multistakeholder institutions in the Internet ecosystem–such ICANN, IETF, and the Regional Internet Registries–have empowered youth to become better positioned as included stakeholders through these funded initiatives. Some Youth IGFs (e.g., Asia-Pacific Youth IGF, Canada Youth IGF) have also provided funded travel opportunities to allow disadvantaged youth to attend Internet governance conversations, demonstrating how youth take part in both established Internet governance spaces, along with creating their own for greater youth capacity building amongst themselves.

What these demonstrate are the ways in which the WSIS process' capacity to allow bottom-up stakeholder development has brought youth participation in a sustainable and inclusive capacity building. Youth have both advocated for themselves, for future generations, and have become active Internet stakeholders across the broad multistakeholder Internet ecosystem. This success which allows for diversity and creativity in the Information Society has been possible because of the open and inclusive language.

2. What are the most important **challenges** to the achievement of WSIS outcomes to date and in the future that need to be addressed in the Zero Draft? *

It is unclear to youth how they can contribute to WSIS Action Lines when there is not a clear logical path of tracking youth actions towards those WSIS achievements. Most youth that participate in the WSIS Forum do so through the prizes, or by being identified by national governments and international organisations. The WSIS Forum is not equipped for building youth leaders, but instead for highlighting existing ones from areas which have allowed their proliferation. This creates an opportunity gap for young leaders to grow, as well as a gap between youth from prominent spaces who have helped build their digital initiatives, from those without such (usually financial) blessings. To overcome this, we recommend for the WSIS Forum to provide funding, workshops, and learning programmes for young leaders to build themselves up within WSIS as to become a more meaningful stakeholder in this space.

Particular attention must be given to underrepresented populations, such as the African youth, Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, young women, and other equity-deserving communities. We must take into account the digital divide—not only in terms of access but also in the ability to benefit from reliable infrastructure to join events virtually. At the same time, economic inequalities continue to prevent people from developing countries, who often have limited financial means, from attending these events in person. We need to advocate for funding support that enables their participation in key spaces, as well as assistance in obtaining visas, which can be difficult or take a long time. This is essential to ensure their voices are heard and taken into account.

Success cases of the WSIS outcomes for youth can be found in a few examples. One notable initiative is the West African Youth Internet Governance Forum (WAYIGF), which recently hosted a policy hackathon under the theme "Shaping a Resilient, Inclusive, and Safe Digital Future for West Africa." This event invited youth from across the region to collaboratively develop innovative policy solutions addressing key challenges such as AI governance, digital rights and inclusion, online safety and cybersecurity, and trustworthy and ethical digital public infrastructure. The hackathon provided mentorship, team-based collaboration, and a platform for youth to present their ideas to regional and global stakeholders Another example is the use of the Team Syntegrity methodology within the YOUthDIG Messages process. This methodology, developed by Stafford Beer (1994), facilitates collective and participatory decision-making on issues related to organisational identity development and policy implementation. It is designed to promote equitable and inclusive dialogue among participants who hold diverse perspectives, enabling structured yet non-hierarchical engagement. These examples illustrate how youth are not only participating in Internet governance but are also shaping its future through creative, inclusive and impactful mechanisms.

The IGF Youth Track brings youth IGF coordinators together to organise sessions collaboratively. However, its purpose extends beyond simply offering a space for youth to express their views. It also functions as a peer-to-peer learning framework where young participants exchange with the IGF Secretariat on conducting multicultural discussions, managing events and fostering community development. Additionally, the Youth Track has sparked new collaborations and opportunities, allowing youth IGF coordinators to connect with one another and enthusiastically develop joint projects.

The WSIS process has progressively emphasized meaningful youth participation, but moving from broad inclusion to specific platforms and initiatives are still insufficient. The transparent ways of recognition and integration of youth voices in shaping global digital policies are still immature. There shall be proactive outreach and acknowledgement on grass-root level youth initiatives.

3. What are the most important **priorities** for action to achieve the WSIS vision of a 'people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society' in the future, taking into account emerging trends? *

We welcome the Elements Paper including youth as a stakeholder group. We welcome the Pact of the Future, which includes the Declaration on Future Generations, which emphasises youth participation, and foster an ecosystem to nurture and include constructive youth engagement. For the WSIS vision to be people-centred, we need to think of young people and future generations. Therefore, mention of youth, children, teens, and future generations is a key priority.

4. What **additional themes/issues**, if any, should be included in the Elements Paper? *

Future generations ought to be mentioned in the Zero Draft. Historically, youth are known as part of 'capacity building.' This is an inappropriate notation of youth who have been actively shaping digital structures around the world as a distinct stakeholder group. Youth and children not only advocate for themselves, but also for future generations. Therefore, mention of commitments to future generations for future WSIS reviews ought to be considered as the Information Society develops in a way which always recognizes that digital ought to serve the people of today and tomorrow, and not all of us to serve these technologies.

5. Do you wish to comment on **particular themes/issues/paragraphs** in the Elements Paper?   *

(section 16) Information and communication technologies for development - Countries need to come together to support youth to become future Internet leaders to allow for current and future digital divides to be solved by these up-and-coming stakeholders. We suggest for the WSIS Review to urge countries to foster partnerships amongst one another for ensuring youth are included within ICT4D initiatives and to collaborate as multiple countries along common goals with similar needs as opposed to singular countries, and for youth to be part of collaborative solution-finding.

(section 17-20) Digital economy - Drawing from broader youth statements and engagements within IGF processes, young people are actively advocating for inclusive, secure and sustainable digital futures. They emphasize the importance of building trust in digital systems, addressing misinformation and promoting cybersecurity as a cornerstone of economic resilience. Youth contributions highlight the need for accessible digital skills development, fostering adaptable ICT career pathways and ensuring that emerging technologies like AI are leveraged for equitable development. Their voices are crucial in shaping policy recommendations for education, access, and empowerment, contributing to a truly inclusive digital transformation.

(section 32/35) Bridging digital divides - To advance the goals outlined in Article 32, which emphasises the importance of local content and services in diverse languages and formats being accessible - we propose the establishment of a grant scheme to support NRIs in covering technical costs. This includes funding for high-quality livestreaming, captioning and reporting, which are essential for fostering inclusive and accessible real-time online participation, but also for facilitating long-term archiving and preserving institutional memory for future reference and evaluation. We also advocate for this funding to be accessible by all Youth IGFs and not restricted, nor favoured, to certain regions over others.

(section 34) Bridging digital divides - Various youth IGFs (https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2025-youth-track and https://eurodigwiki.org/wiki/YOUthDIG_2025) have focused on the issue of media literacy for combating misinformation and disinformation. We advocate for verbiage pertaining to educational programs for young people to include how these same young people might co-create and co-lead such initiatives.

(section 84) Monitoring and Measurement - We believe that a unit of measurement for the WSIS Action Lines ought to be engagement with young people. With recognition of the importance of future generations, we would like to see specific measurement categories in the Zero Draft which include how multiple stakeholders, in their respective roles and in performing their specific functions, engage with young people as part of achieving the WSIS Action Lines. Such a measurement category is similar to the European Commission in their Internet governance and multistakeholder relations where engagement with young people is measured as mentioned during the WSIS+20 High-Level Event, 'Digital Cooperation and Empowerment: Insights and Best Practices for Strengthening Multistakeholder and Inclusive Participation' session (https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2025/Agenda/Session/425).

6. What suggestions do you have to support the development of the **WSIS framework** (WSIS Action Lines, IGF, WSIS Forum, UNGIS etc.)? *

We endorse the indefinite extension of the IGF Mandate and reaffirm our commitment to support the current IGF Secretariat. We ask the UN to allocate a budget to financially support the IGF Secretariat, to set up a grant scheme to support NRIs with technical (equipment) costs such as high quality (equipment for) livestreaming, captioning, and reporting. And lastly, to strengthen the travel grant programme to ensure greater participation from the Global South, as well as speakers from the Global North representing equity-deserving groups such as indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, women, and other equity-deserving communities.

We welcome UNGIS' continued engagement to foster collaboration among UN institutions and agencies in support of the WSIS objectives. By aligning ICT, science, and technology with the broader UN agenda, UNGIS plays a vital role in mainstreaming ICT for Development and enhancing coordination across existing initiatives. We commend UNGIS for its swift response to the Global Digital Compact through the publication of the WSIS Process and 2030 Agenda - GDC Matrix (https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/ungis/Content/upload/gdc/UNGIS-CompiledMatrixOfLinkages-WSIS-GDC.pdf), which clearly outlines its contributions and acknowledges shared efforts across the UN system. We encourage continued collaboration and outreach to relevant stakeholders to advance these goals.

Finally, we call for the UNGIS high-level meeting to be made publicly, offering transparency into each organisation's digital contributions and how other stakeholders can contribute to their processes.

7. Do you have any **other** comments? *

Youth is a broad term and various agencies, groups, and countries define what makes someone a youth differently. In many spaces, youth are at least 18 years old as this allows for funding opportunities to bring young people to global or regional events without liability issues for organizers, since 18 is the recognized age of adulthood amongst most countries. Similarly, using the 18 years old starting age for defining 'youth' allows greater freedom for taking photos, including young people as speakers or moderators (with their published names), and attending social events for professional networking (e.g., social events where alcohol might be served). We believe that youth ought to be inclusive of those 18-35. By including youth up to 35 years old, this allows for global recognition of how various regions define youth. We would encourage the mention of young people within the Zero Draft and broader WSIS Review to separate 'Youth' from 'Children.' To this, children are defined as those under the age of 18 (i.e., 0-17 years old). There are also groups of young people who advocate for teenagers to become a recognized group of young people. We believe that young people should be encouraged and recognized in digital development and Internet governance, but that intricacies between youth and children ought to be separated to ensure Internet governance spaces, such as the IGF, do not experience issues in capacity building efforts which might cause liability issues for the IGF, its annual host country, sponsors, or participants. However, we hope to ensure that children are not missed within the diverse and pluralistic conversations which happen in varied Internet governance spaces, hence including the terminology of children included within 'youth and children' as opposed to 'young people.' This would parallel the agreed language in UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/155. We would also advocate for youth to be recognized as 18-35 which parallels the African Youth Charter; and for children to be recognized as those under the age of 18.

8. Who is **submitting** this input? *

Kindly provide the name of the person submitting this input, as well as the associated country, organization, stakeholder type, and relevant contact information

Dana Cramer, Canada, WSIS Youth Caucus, youth stakeholder (on behalf of WSIS Youth Caucus which can be found at wsisyouthcaucus.org and includes youth from all regions of the world)

9. Please provide your **e-mail** address: *

Please enter an email