

A Youth Perspective on the WSIS+20 Zero Draft

Prepared by the WSIS Youth Caucus

We, the WSIS Youth Caucus, are thankful for the opportunity to express our views of the released WSIS+20 Zero Draft. We are very encouraged by the **recognition of youth as a stakeholder group** in the Zero Draft's preamble. However, there are various areas of the Zero Draft which we, youth around the world, would like to see changed to ensure our stakeholder group's unique perspective within ongoing global digital development. Youth recognition in documents, such as the WSIS+20 Review, is key. Without such recognition, youth participation in programmes, activities, and structures, will be limited. This expands broadly to resources available for youth—who are the next generation of digital development leaders—will have less available resources without such recognition. Therefore, our thesis in our feedback on the Zero Draft is to recognize youth as a listed stakeholder group consistently throughout the text.

Youth as a Distinct Stakeholder Group

We are thankful for the Co-Facilitators' recognition regarding separating 'youth' from children in the Zero Draft. As a key point of advocacy in our previous feedback on the Elements Paper, we discussed this tonal shift which recognizes the unique—and separate—roles youth have from children in global digital development. However, we are discouraged by the verbiage shifts from the preamble, which specifically recognizes 'youth' as a stakeholder group, which later translates into the body of the document as 'young people.'

We would like to see mention of 'youth' as opposed to 'young people' to allow greater bottom-up definition of who a 'youth' might be.

Young people can refer broadly to both those who are aged 35 years old or younger, along with children. For example, the Zero Draft makes mention of children, "people aged ten or over," girls, and 'future generations,' all of which can be captured by the young people verbiage. The paragraph numbers where this is apparent include; (13), (14), (21), (24), (44), and (93). Youth, however, have more distinct recognition in various statistical outputs across Member States and intergovernmental organizations, as well as initiatives provided by other stakeholder groups in their own capacities, who offer opportunities to youth of varied age ranges. ***We therefore request adjustments in verbiage from 'young people' to youth to ensure this distinctive stakeholder group is recognized.***

Development of Digital Goods and Digital Public Infrastructure

We are encouraged by the explicit mention of digital goods and digital public infrastructure in the text of the Zero Draft. Within this section (20), ***we encourage the explicit mention of 'interoperable' or 'interoperability' which would strengthen the goals of open digital goods and digital public infrastructure.***

Interoperability allows youth to have greater access to, and innovate with, technologies to shape their digital futures. Where 'open' might be conflated with interoperability, it can also be limiting if openness requires certain licencing, and usage of a specific system. Interoperability, on the other hand,

allows various technology systems—which youth are at the forefront of developing—to make for more equitable digital goods and digital public infrastructure.

ICT Gender Gap

We appreciate the explicit mention and care taken in the Zero Draft for the recognition of the gender digital divide experienced by girls and women. However, in (24) we believe a tone adjustment is needed to include girls in mention of women in the gender gap statistics cited.

Secondly, women are more likely to volunteer in community-building and administrative labour, both of which are key to digital development goals. Youth also tend to volunteer substantively, making young women a clearly represented group in ICT goals. Ensuring a space for these young women to coordinate their actions, such as Youth Councils across digital development goals, would allow these young women volunteers to establish their leadership skills for achieving digital development goals.

We recommend the addition of the establishment of Youth Councils across digital development goals as a mechanism for supporting young women who volunteer to hold leadership positions early in their careers as part of closing ICT gender gaps.

Job Displacements from Evolving Technologies

The mention of potential job displacements, which are likely to happen from advancements in emerging technologies in (40), will impact youth greatly. We encourage expansion of this section to make mention of the ways in which the job functions mentioned, “some professional, clerical and manual types of work” which oftentimes those jobs occupied by early career professions, who are largely youth, will become the most impacted stakeholder group.

We would like the explicit mention of youth as impacted stakeholders with regards to those likely to face negative externalities in job displacement from advancements in evolving technologies.

Youth Involvement in Capacity Building

In various areas of the Zero Draft, the explicit mention, or alluding towards capacity building would be strengthened by explicitly mentioning youth. For example, in (105) the listed stakeholder groups do not include youth when alluding to capacity building efforts. Youth have demonstrated themselves as a key stakeholder group in capacity building efforts, equipping the next generation of digital leaders to achieve global digital development goals.

We would like to see explicit mention of youth as a stakeholder group specifically within capacity building efforts mentioned throughout the Zero Draft.

We are encouraged to see the means by which the Zero Draft lists capacity building in Artificial Intelligence. However, we are not in agreement regarding the mentioned AI capacity building fellowship in (101). Unless similar fellowships are provided across the various sections of the Zero Draft, we do not believe scarce financial resources which could otherwise be used in supporting existing fellowship programs should be mentioned for only AI capacity building, which would likely see significant youth applicants to such a fellowship program.

Youth Internet Governance Forums

We are incredibly disheartened by the lack of recognition of Youth Internet Governance Forum (IGF) initiatives in the mention of the over 170 national and regional IGF initiatives in (113) and (118).

We request an immediate adjustment in the text of the Zero Draft to include Youth IGF initiatives as part of national, sub-regional, and regional IGF initiatives.

Youth IGFs have allowed for a globally networked space to ensure a next generation of Internet leaders emerge who are well-suited and ready to advance global digital development goals. In the definition of local IGF initiatives, the Global IGF defines ‘NRIs’ as “National, Sub-Regional, Regional, and Youth initiatives.” We recommend for this same wording to be used in the text of the WSIS+20 Review.

The lack of recognition of these bottom-up leadership initiatives is disheartening, and insulting to the youth coordinators who volunteer hundreds of hours each year to organize their national sub-regional, and regional youth IGFs and participate in intersessional youth Internet governance work to ensure a fertile space for ongoing next generation leadership in global digital development and Internet governance.

We do, however, support the continuity of the Internet Governance Forum as expressed in (112), (113), (114), and (115). We also support the continued name of ‘Internet Governance Forum,’ as opposed to changes in this verbiage which might lose name recognition for both the Global IGF and national, sub-regional, regional, and Youth IGF initiatives around the world.

Youth Participation in Future WSIS Reviews and Annual Reviews of the Global Digital Compact

We recognize the need for cost savings and reducing redundancy in annual reviews of the WSIS Action Items and the implementation of the Global Digital Compact. However, we are concerned by (140)’s alluding to finding overlap between reviewing the implementation of WSIS and the Global Digital Compact, specifically as it pertains to multistakeholder engagement at the annual WSIS Forum. Given the annual WSIS Forum does not travel to different regions of the world, and has limited youth participation programs, we are concerned about youth stakeholder representation in the ongoing work of achieving global digital development goals listed in WSIS and Global Digital Compact.

We request an explicit mention of a mechanism of intersessional review to occur at the annual Global Internet Governance Forum, which have existing youth participation programs and streams, to ensure youth representation in achieving global digital development goals.

Given the IGF oftentimes is held at the end of the year, with the WSIS Forum occurring in July, the timelines of these two events to work in tandem with one another would allow greater multistakeholder collaboration and participation in achieving ongoing global digital development.

We thank the Co-Facilitators, various staff, and other stakeholders who have been part of the development of the Zero Draft. We hope our comments and feedback are utilized to ensure youth stakeholder representation in achieving global digital development.