The Co-creation of a draft resolution for the International Telecommunication Union Plenipotentiary Conference 2014

Evaluation of the public consultation method for the resolution on youth empowerment

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Introduction

The International Telecommunications Union’s Working Group comprises of 12 individuals from different countries around the globe. The group has been tasked with the responsibility of shaping a resolution focussed on youth for consideration. Given the need to ensure that the views of the youth are reflected in the policy-making at both domestic and international levels, the formulation of a youth resolution within the ITU is critical.

The Republic of Costa Rica intends to table a resolution of youth at the Plenipotentiary Conference (PP) to be held on October 20 to November 7, 2014 in Korea. The PP is a significant event at which Member States determine the way forward for the organisation.

Against this background, the mandate of the ITU’s Working Group is to shape the proposed wording for an ITU PP-14 Resolution on Youth. The relevant youth issues pertaining to ICTs are to be articulated in the formulation of the resolution for consideration by Member States.

What is a resolution?

A United Nations resolution is a formal text adopted by an organ of the United Nations. It articulates the official intent and opinion of Member countries on a particular area of concern. A resolution is usually a non-binding agreement among states. It usually has a heading, preambular clauses and operative clauses relating to a subject matter of concern to Member States.

Within the context of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), a resolution is being drafted to focus on the youth issues as it pertains to Information Telecommunications and Communications (ICTs). Some of the areas of concerns to be captured in the resolution include digital education for the youth, online entrepreneurship and inclusion of young girls in ICTs. Once agreed upon by Member States of the ITU, these areas will represent the areas of focus for states in the coming years.

How is a resolution developed? Who are the major actors?

A resolution is developed through many processes. Given that the ITU comprises both states and the private sector, there is need for the views of all parties to be reflected in a resolution. The diagram below identifies some of the major processes involved in the development of a resolution.
The diagram below highlights the key actors involved in the development of a resolution.

**Negotiation/Diplomacy:**
Given conflicting views, there is need to negotiate and use diplomacy in the development of a resolution.

**Consensus:**
Given the competing interests of states, there is need to reach consensus before a matter can be captured in a resolution.

**Discussion/Consultation:**
There are many actors involved in the development of a resolution. Therefore, there is need to consult and discuss with states, private sector and NGOs to engage that all views are reflected in the resolution.

**Research:**
It is important that there is evidence-based decision making and so research into a particular area is critical.

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The diagram below highlights the key actors involved in the development of a resolution.

- **Private Sector**
- **Member States**
- **Relevant Civil Societies**
- **Youth**

**Key Actors**
How is a resolution enforced/acted upon?

The 193 Member States of the United Nations are sovereign states. As such, each state is responsible for enforcing a resolution. States would be required to implement the necessary legislative framework, provide the necessary infrastructure, finance and by extension the enabling environment to ensure the effective enforcement of the resolution.

In addition, states may consult and work with local committees, NGOs and other relevant groups as they implement the resolution within their respective jurisdiction.

The value-added of a multi-stakeholder approach to UN resolutions

The participation of multiple stakeholders in the drafting process of UN resolutions, taking into account various different views and interests, leads to a more holistic approach. A multi-stakeholder approach may be defined as “[a]lliances between parties drawn from government, business and civil society that strategically aggregate the resources and competencies of each to resolve the key challenges of ICT as an enabler of sustainable development, and which are founded on principles of shared risk, constant mutual benefit.” (Digital Opportunity Initiative, 2001)

The strategic formulation and approach of multi-stakeholder participation in the UN system is significant for the post-2015 development agenda, for such partnerships can encompass multi-faceted resources, involving financial flows, as well as innovation, technology, research, and human capacity. As, on a global scale, the private sector and civil society have expanded in size, sophistication and global reach, there is also a greater need for coordination and cooperation, such as the pooling of lessons learned and best practices. (General Assembly and ECOSOC Joint Thematic Debate/Forum On Partnerships, 2014)

The importance of including diverse input

At the same time, it is also important that the UN take into consideration the interests and views of certain population groups, who might not necessarily be represented by the public sector, business and civil society. In this respect, much depends on the understanding of who is a stakeholder in the first place. A stakeholder may be defined as “[a]ny group or individual who can affect or [be] affected by the achievement of an organisation’s objectives.” (Freeman, 1984: 46) Accordingly, young people, who collectively have a vested interest in ensuring a sustainable future, are a crucial stakeholder in the UN’s achievements. The world is currently inhabited by approximately one billion youth. Accordingly, around one in five persons or 18 per cent of the global population is aged between 15 and 24 years. Additionally, children aged between 5 and 14
years comprise 19.8 per cent of the world’s population. (Youth Social and Development Division, 2014)

However, the needs and views of young people are often not sufficiently taken into account in the decision-making processes of the UN. Almost 85 per cent of the world’s youth live in developing countries and by 2020, this proportion is estimated to reach 89.5 per cent. (ibid.) Moreover, in 2013, approximately 74.5 million youth were unemployed. (International Labour Organization, 2014) It is therefore of growing importance to mainstream youth in the UN development agenda and reflect the interests and ideas of young people in the UN’s working methods and documents.

The importance of input from young people

The world is currently inhabited by approximately one billion youth. Accordingly, around one in five persons or 18 per cent of the global population is aged between 15 and 24 years. Additionally, children aged between 5 and 14 years comprise 19.8 per cent of the world’s population. Almost 85 per cent of the world’s youth live in developing countries and by 2020, this proportion is estimated to reach 89.5 per cent. In 74.5 million youth Therefore, it is of growing importance to mainstream youth in the UN development agenda. As the main stakeholders in a sustainable future, the interests and ideas of young people need to be reflected in the UN’s working methods.

Advantages of including the youth in the work of the ITU

The most straightforward argument why it is beneficial to include the youth in the drafting process is their understanding of ICTs and their possible ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking. The staff of the ITU seeks a Pareto optimal outcome for all its members but they lack sufficient knowledge on how the final decisions will affect the population in general and the youth in particular in the long-run. This information asymmetry can be bridged by MSA. Next to this efficiency argument, public consultation of the youth implies that people is given a voice in the drafting process. Through these transparent and open means the ITU increases the legitimacy of their mandate and can exert more pressure on decision-making member states to agree on the best possible solution for all stakeholders. Finally, it can be assumed that giving the youth a voice will lead to a feeling of ownership once a resolution is enacted. This shared commitment will not just raise awareness but might even spill-over to an increased interest and participation in following MSAs.

1 http://undesadspd.org/youth/faqs.aspx
Disadvantages of including the youth in the work of the ITU

Many advantages also come along with considerable challenges. To propose international policy the youth requires a basic understanding of the overall UN working methods and the ITU’s role in the landscape of international organizations. Without this knowledge, the propositions of the youth might be too idealist to be considered as valid points. Thus, MSA can complicate and prolong the decision-making process. Since ITU resolutions are made every four years at the Plenipotentiary Conferences, the drafts have to be tailored to the positions of the member states on the one hand and should represent a continuous effort of the ITU to fulfill their mandate effectively. Secondly, giving youth a voice does not automatically mean that their position is taken account of. If the voice of the youth remains unheard by the member states, MSA can even decrease legitimacy of a resolution. More broadly speaking, we still do not know to what extent member states are willing to include the youth in the drafting process. Thirdly, consulting the youth through the internet does not offset the imbalance of access. There will still be geographical and socio-economic imbalance of participation which lead one back to the ultimate question whether there is ‘one youth’ with ‘one voice’. Finally, MSAs have financial implications which have to be considered. The ITU would require further staff to carry out the MSAs and moderate between the stakeholders. As the ITU is facing budgetary cuts, MSA can be seen as another burden where the fruitfulness remains ambiguous since member states are the final decision-makers.

Methodology: consulting on a resolution on youth for ITU’s PP-14 conference

The Republic of Costa Rica is trying for the first time to have the general public involved in the decision making process. In that sense, it invited the ITU to pilot a public consultation process with the participants of the 52nd Graduate Study Programme.

The ITU working group consists of 13 participants - 6 female and 7 male representatives.

The aforecited working group had 5 workshops with different agendas:

- In the first workshop the 13 participants were splitted into 3 sub-groups with an ITU Moderator each.
- The sub-groups were asked to brainstorm and contribute with five different ideas regarding the topic of empowering youth in the ICT sector.
- Each sub-group participant came up his or her own ideas and had an opportunity of presenting them before the sub-group members.
- As a result of further discussion the 5 best ideas per sub-group were chosen.

Following that 3 small presentations were made by representatives of each subgroup and in the end the main points emerged and a draft proposition was put in place.
Furthermore, to foster the discussion process and allow for the co-creation, an online platform – Madison - was used. This is a government policy co-creation interactive platform which allows the general public to have access to the decision making process by commenting and editing draft proposals.

The ITU working group found this process very useful in terms of public access and recommends the aforementioned platform as a tool of public consultation for policy-making decisions.

In order to help engage members of the public, the ITU working group has several recommendations to help ITU inform and generate awareness to its activities.

The ITU working group suggests as a strategy the following communication-mix:

Online activities:

- Use of corporate website and blogs
- More visible use of social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr
- Inclusion of diverse visual content such as video and infographics

Offline activities:

- Organization of roadshows in the target regions to create awareness about the public consultation
- Use the local media to involve the general public in the decision making process
- Use of outdoor advertising such as billboards to reach the general public

**Challenges and Compromises**

Within the ITU group we faced several challenges. These challenges were as follows:

- **Difficulties of coordination**
  The lack of coordination during the team forming and unstructured collaboration among team members made the teamwork difficult. The sheer number of the team members, which is 15, already exerts a problem. It has proved challenging to set meeting time and place.

  Moreover, the composition of the team has brought about more serious challenges.

- **Language**

  People in the group either take English or French as the working language they are comfortable with. The language created a cleavage in the group and impeded the communication greatly. Fortunately, in the end we found the solution that allows communication and exchange of ideas
among francophone and Anglophone participants instead of brutally dividing the group into two according to the language spoken.

**Different cultures & values**

In addition, people come with different cultural backgrounds in terms of different educational and professional experience. Consequently, they tend to have different and even conflicting perspectives and self-perceptions. In the same vein, people have different values and put different degree of importance to issues.

For instance, we went through a long and heated discussion on whether and how we could incorporate a clause that specifically address to the disproportionality between young men and young women in pursuing advanced studies in ICT. The group was split along both lines of gender and cultural background, and progress was largely stalled. In the end, I sought the middle ground by incorporating the issue as a subcomponent of the clause on engaging the academic community, instead of putting it as an independent clause, in order to be less provocative.

**Organizational framework**

The next challenge we faced was the objective circumscription. Unfortunately, we noted that most of the ideas produced during the brainstorming are not eligible to be incorporated in the resolution. It has been a hard process to reconcile our vision with reality, i.e. ultimately the success of the resolution depends on the will of the member states.

On this point, considerable compromises were made. In particular, the initial idea of calling for a major institutional reform to create decision-making seat at the assembly was basically abandoned, taking into consideration that it could only happen with the consent and spontaneity of the member states. Certain degree of creativity and innovation also has to give way to the formality of the document.

**Time and expertise limitations**

In the end, the limitedness of time and expertise made the work more challenging. We were forced to be less ambitious to cut the necessary workload to adapt the objective restriction.

**Final outcome**

The following presents the compromised text based on a first version provided by ITU and building on suggested comments and edits made by attendees of the Graduate Study Programme.

**Resolves:**

1) that ITU continue to engage with young audiences in outreach, through communications, capacity building and research; through the lenses of digital inclusion (connecting the unconnected), innovation, entrepreneurship and skills development, to provide tools for self-empowerment and their satisfactory participation in the digital economy and all aspects of society. {FOCUS AREAS}
2) that ITU should mainstream youth across the Union, including the 3 Sectors and ITU Telecom World, to improve internal coordination and create a strong and comprehensive value proposition for future partners in this area. {ITU INTERNAL COORDINATION}

3) that ITU activities with youth be used to strengthen the value proposition to Academic Members especially for young scholars, to increase the attractiveness of engaging with and being a member of the Union. {STRENGTHEN ACADEMIC MEMBERSHIP}

4) that future engagement with young people happen through recognized national or grassroots structures, such as official delegations or ITU Academic Members, and ITU projects such as ‘Connect a School, Connect a Community’, ‘Girls and ICTs’, ‘Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship’, and competitive processes such as the ‘Young Innovators Competition’, to provide legitimacy for their participation in ITU activities. {EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN ITU PROCESSES}

5) that ITU commits to regular monitoring, reporting and research on youth’s use and uptake of ICT, including disaggregated data by gender and information on behavioural aspects which may be harmful and dangerous. {STATISTICAL MONITORING AND REPORTING ON KEY INDICATORS}

Requests the Council:

1) to establish a regular reporting mechanism on ITU youth activities with regard to ICTs (excluding Child Online Protection);

Instructs the Secretary-General:
1) to deploy sufficient staff and financial resources to develop and maintain effective youth programmes across the Union, within budgetary constraints;

2) to ensure coordination of ITU activities to avoid duplication and overlap;

3) to explore ways of strengthening the role of Academia within the structures of the Union, through increasing the value proposition for academic institutions, and increasing the visibility and prestige for especially young contributing scholars;

4) To maintain the ITU Telecom World Young Innovators Competition on a yearly basis, and ensure that sufficient expertise and resources are allocated to working with winning ICT innovations in order to provide mentorship, capacity building and sufficient exposure at national and international levels.

Instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau:

1) to continue activities to advance the objectives of WTDC resolution COM3/1 (Dubai, 2014) to promote information and communication technologies among young women and men for social and economic empowerment;

2) to continue activities related to research, monitoring and reporting on statistics and indicators related young people’s uptake and use of ICT, including disaggregated data by gender and information on behavioural aspects which may be harmful and dangerous;

Instructs the Director of the Telecommunication Standards Bureau:

1) to continue to explore ways and means of involving young engineers / ICT researchers in the specialist work of the Bureau, such as through the ITU Kaleidoscope event;
**Instructs the Director of the Radio communication Bureau:**

1) to continue to explore ways and means of involving young engineers / ICT researchers in the specialist work of the Bureau;

**Invites Member States:**

1) to actively seek means of including young people in ITU events and national delegations through, for example, more active engagement with national academic institutions and youth organizations;

2) to explore policies and mechanisms to more easily allow young people to engage with and influence the process of national and international ICT policy-making;

3) to explore ways of strengthening the role of Academia and especially young scholars within the structures of the Union, through increasing the value proposition to academic institutions, and providing visibility for contributing scholars;

4) To actively promote the Young Innovators Competition and ensure youth from national constituencies are empowered to participate in and promote to the event;

**Invites Sector Members:**

1) to support, where possible, the necessary structures for effective engagement with young people, through for example, access to information and fellowships for participation in ITU activities if the participation is beneficial to the overarching goals of the ITU;

2) to help shape future Challenges of the Young Innovators Competition and engage in a co-creation process on designing a best possible solution. Also, to commit to incubating the winning solution.

3) to continue to explore new innovative business models to connect the unconnected and thereby contribute to the digital inclusion especially among young people.

4) to invest in the research and development of technologies that facilitate the use of ICTs for physically disabled young people.

**Invites academia:**

1) to continue providing the necessary structures for effective engagement with young people, through access to information, fellowships and academic credits for participation in ITU activities.

2) to support networks of young people to act as community based hubs and innovation centres to provide input to ITU’s intellectual processes.

3) to promote education in the field of ICT for young people and especially for young women.

**Conclusion**
References


