

Generation Connect Global Youth Summit

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(as prepared)

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

Fellow Young People,

It is a pleasure to join you here from Stockholm to take part in commemorating the opening of the first-ever Generation Connect Youth Summit in Kigali! Being able to connect with you from Sweden only further highlight the importance and relevance of meaningful connectivity, and what it enables us to do.

My name is Jayathma Wickramanayake, I am the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, a Generation Connect Visionaries Board member.

I had the privilege to grow up as a digital native and leverage the advancement of digital development. Like many of you, I also leveraged the rise of social media to advocate and demand justice. In many ways, many of the changes that led us today were made possible because young people have been mobilizing as the most connected generation. But despite these advances, we also witness how inequality widens.

When the pandemic hit, we saw how fellow young people lost their access to schools and jobs because they were unable to have access to connectivity. 2.2

Billion children and youth even today don't have access to an internet connection at home.

In the midst of isolation, we saw online harm targeting vulnerable youth and excluding them even further. We saw the concern of our growing digital footprint and its impact to our carbon footprint. These are all concerns that many young people experienced online and their impact trickled down to our lives offline.

I'm here at this international meeting of Stockholm +50 where young people are demanding policymakers to make real commitments for the people and the planet so we can all have a sustainable future. But as young peoples demands are not siloed. As much as we are advocating for a sustainable future, we also want to have a better digital future because we know it is becoming impossible not to separate our digital lives and real lives.

The United Nations acknowledges that young people are connected to each other like never before and young people's crucial role in achieving the 2030 Agenda and building resilience in their communities.

This is why when we launched the UN Youth Strategy, Youth2030, the Strategy aims to guide the UN's work at all levels – across all areas so that it can help the United Nations to be an institution work together with youth and for youth in achieving this ambition of an inclusive, better, and sustainable future at all fronts.

I am proud to see how partners in the UN System, like ITU as well as many other interagency partners, are taking forward the principles of meaningful youth engagement of Youth2030 to their work and now have enabled us to land on this moment – side by side with youth to demand action and commitments for a better future online and offline.

We know that there are more work to be done, but we are confident if the UN System and its partners work with youth together on this, this ambition soon will turn into reality.

With that in mind, please allow me to pass the mic to Xiye Bastida, a youth activist that has been advocating relentlessly for the rights of young people and the rights of our planet. Xiye, the floor is yours.