Asia Pacific Youth IGF 2024 Youth Policy Statement

The theme of yIGF 2024, "Connecting Generations: Forging a Responsible Digital Future through Collaboration and Policy Innovation," aligns with APrIGF 2024's overarching theme, "Evolving Ecosystems, Enduring Principles: Shaping Responsible Internet Governance." Together, these themes emphasize the importance of cross-generational cooperation and forward-thinking policies in promoting inclusive Internet governance. This youth statement was collaboratively drafted by young leaders from across the Asia-Pacific region during the Asia-Pacific Youth Internet Governance Forum (yIGF) 2024 and the Asia-Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF) 2024, held from August 20 to 23, 2024, in Taipei and online. It addresses the needs, challenges, and opportunities young people face in the region, providing a platform for them to share their unique perspectives on pressing issues.

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Securing Truth in the Age of Information Overload

The growing sophistication of AI-generated synthetic content, such as deepfakes, highlights the urgent need to secure authenticity in the digital age. Misinformation campaigns, particularly during democratic processes like presidential elections, pose serious threats to information integrity. This underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder cooperation to tackle these challenges.

The constantly evolving Internet ecosystem, driven by innovation and emerging technologies, introduces new complexities to security and trust. To address these, enduring principles must be collaboratively developed to mitigate cybersecurity risks, protect data privacy, ensure information integrity, promote online safety, safeguard children, and foster trust in innovation.

As youth advocates, we call on governments, civil society, the technical community, and the private sector to take proactive steps in addressing these pressing issues and shaping responsible Internet governance.

Government

Government must take the lead in ensuring a safe and inclusive digital environment for all. With a focus on gender-inclusive safety measures by providing education and resources, particularly for marginalized communities, governments can empower individuals to navigate the digital world responsibly. Additionally, they have a responsibility to safeguard democratic integrity by regulating AI and promoting voter education to help the public identify and resist misinformation, especially during elections. We recommend governments to:

- **Promote ethical AI development** by establishing robust frameworks that prioritize safety, ethics, and human-centric values, ensuring responsible AI design that aligns with societal needs.
- **Implementing regulations against misinformation** and supporting voter education initiatives to help citizens detect and resist false information, especially during election periods.
- **Support digital literacy campaigns** through public education programs and inclusive initiatives like hackathons, empowering citizens and youth to critically evaluate AI-generated content and emerging technologies.
- **Invest in resilient infrastructure** and collaborate on policies that promote digital inclusion, protect against misinformation, and strengthen cybersecurity, especially in underserved and vulnerable areas.

Private Sector

The private sector plays a crucial role in fostering trust and ensuring the safety of digital platforms. We expect companies to take responsibility not only for preventing the spread of misinformation but also for educating users on how to identify and combat fake news. By collaborating with influencers and AI developers, companies can promote transparency and fairness in the digital economy, empowering the public to critically evaluate the information they consume. We urge the private sector to:

- **Invest in public workshops** that teach critical analysis of information, equipping citizens with skills to discern truth from disinformation, particularly during election cycles.
- **Prioritize human-centric values** to ensure transparency, fairness, and the integration of ethical practices in AI systems, prioritizing human-centric values in digital governance.

- **Support cybersecurity education** and collaboration across sectors to protect critical infrastructure, develop incident response plans, and foster a digitally resilient workforce.

Civil Society

Civil society plays a vital role in empowering communities and raising awareness about critical issues, such as misinformation and online safety. To address the growing threats of misinformation, especially on social media platforms, civil society organizations need to collaborate with other stakeholders. These collaborations can drive fact-checking initiatives and promote digital literacy, protecting vulnerable communities from manipulation, especially during elections. We call on civil society to:

- **Advocate for partnerships between civil society, governments, and tech companies** to promote transparency and accountability in information-sharing, ensuring that fact-checking and verification systems are accessible and widely used.
- **Develop a fact-checking coalition across the Asia-Pacific region** to ensure organizations, governments, and tech companies work together to support grassroots initiatives and educate younger generations to maintain optimism for tackling misinformation.
- **Lead efforts to promote media literacy**, teaching people how to discern credible sources from fake news. Youth can be engaged as ambassadors of these initiatives to spread awareness and skills within their communities.

Technical Community

We, as young people, trust the technical community to create and uphold the highest standards in digital privacy and cybersecurity. In the age of AI, tech developers, engineers, and leaders must work ethically and transparently to protect our data and privacy and implement ethical standards with consideration of fairness and accountability when developing the technology. As the architects of the systems that power our digital world, the technical community has a unique responsibility to ensure the safety and security of those systems. We call on the technical community to:

- **Collaborate with governments, educational institutions, and private organizations** to establish robust cybersecurity standards, including advanced technology, employee training, and transparent data breach policies.
- **Mitigate algorithmic bias** by implementing robust detection techniques, ensuring that AI systems do not perpetuate discrimination and foster trust in technology.
- **Adopt technical standards for information integrity**, such as watermarking AI-generated content and using blockchain for news verification to combat deepfakes and protect digital content credibility.

Championing Youth: Rights, Safety, and Well-being

As youth advocates, we stress the need for inclusive strategies that ensure equitable access to digital resources, protections, and opportunities while fostering a safe and trustworthy online environment. This effort must address specific issues such as Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and gender-based violence online, ensuring that the rights, safety, and well-being of young people are protected. Moreover, a resilient Internet is key to youth safety and well-being, as it can provide them with safe, reliable access to information, education, and mental health resources. We call on all stakeholders—governments, civil society, the technical community, and the private sector—to take the following proactive steps to make this vision a reality:

Government

Governments hold a pivotal role in creating inclusive digital infrastructures that empower youth. We urge governments to prioritize providing equitable digital access, fostering collaboration with educational institutions, and promoting policies that protect young people online. We call on governments to:

- **Provide subsidized high-speed Internet in underserved areas**, ensuring all youth—especially in rural regions—have equitable access to the digital world.
- **Implement cybersecurity training** that ranges from basic digital literacy to advanced skills, building a digitally competent workforce capable of addressing cyber threats.
- **Work across borders to establish international standards and collective efforts** to combat cybercrime, protecting digital infrastructures on a global scale.

Private Sector

The private sector has a unique responsibility to balance innovation with user safety. We call on tech companies to collaborate with governments, academia, and civil society to create robust digital protections, foster trust, and address inequities in digital access. We call on the private sector to:

- **Improve content reporting mechanisms** by considering diverse cultural contexts and local nuances. While users should still be able to report potentially false content, policies must be more inclusive and adaptable to prevent misuse. This should be paired with robust, context-sensitive fact-checking processes to avoid the perception of censorship, particularly in regions with varying cultural and societal norms.
- **Improve cybersecurity through shared expertise** from academia and the technical community to develop and implement safety measures, ensuring that digital platforms are secure, especially for young people.
- **Support initiatives that provide access to education and technology** for underserved communities, ensuring that underprivileged students and older generations are included in the digital economy.

Civil Society

Civil society organizations must advocate for a safe and inclusive digital space for youth, ensuring that marginalized groups are not left behind. We call for greater support of role models, awareness campaigns, and concrete action against online harassment and gender-based violence.

- **Promote positive role models:** Civil society must elevate role models who demonstrate ethical Internet use, inspiring youth to engage in positive online behavior.
- **Combat gender-based violence online** by implementing stronger deterrents on social media platforms to protect female journalists and others from online harassment while promoting gender equity in the digital space.
- **Become actively involved in community-based resilience programs** to strengthen youth's rights and ensure equitable access to a secure Internet that protects their well-being.

Technical Community

The technical community must focus on building AI and digital systems that prioritize safety, reliability, and accountability. We urge developers to enhance AI accuracy, transparency, and ethical governance to protect youth and marginalized communities from harm. We call on the technical community to:

- **Enhance AI accountability** by ensuring the transparency and reliability of an AI system, especially in fields like medicine, where accuracy can have life-changing impacts.
- **Protect users from harmful material** by designing algorithms that effectively filter harmful content while balancing user safety with the freedom to create and share content online.
- **Embrace decentralized governance** to increase transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes while addressing security challenges that may arise.

Empowering Access: Democratizing the Internet for All

The younger generation believes that decentralized technologies, such as Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs), can democratize Internet governance, making decision-making more inclusive and accessible. It addresses both the opportunities and challenges of integrating these technologies while ensuring current Internet governance frameworks serve the diverse needs of all stakeholders, particularly underrepresented and marginalized communities. To build a more equitable digital future, we call upon governments, civil society, the technical community, and the private sector to take the following actions:

Government

Governments must play a proactive role in closing the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to the Internet, particularly in underserved areas. We urge governments to prioritize digital inclusion for all, including marginalized and disabled communities, and to encourage digital literacy programs that support these groups, including older generations. Additionally, efforts should ensure that Internet access is equitable, open, and aligned with net neutrality principles while fostering collaboration across borders. We urge governments to:

- **Make broadband affordable and accessible to underserved areas**. Governments should collaborate internationally to secure funding and implement innovative projects that drive meaningful connectivity.
- **Prioritize the adoption of assistive technologies** that empower people with disabilities to participate fully in Internet governance and digital decision-making processes.
- **Foster public-private partnerships to strengthen youth-led digital innovation** and sustainable development in the digital economy.

Private Sector

The private sector must lead in creating an accountable digital economy by fostering innovation while ensuring transparency, data protection, and equitable access. By leveraging global partnerships and setting high ethical standards, companies can drive meaningful change in the digital ecosystem.

- **Collaborate globally to develop and fund initiatives** that ensure equitable access to education, digital resources, and the Internet for underserved communities.
- **Establish clear and transparent frameworks** to protect users' data and privacy, ensuring algorithms are explainable and are regularly audited.
- **Support youth participation** in digital governance to ensure decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of the broader community.
- **Innovate responsibly by implementing ethical standards** in AI-driven decision-making, data collection, and platform governance to maintain accountability.

Civil Society

Civil society organizations have a unique responsibility to advocate for diverse voices in Internet governance. By promoting digital literacy, cultural relevance, and resilience, they ensure that marginalized communities are not left behind in the digital age.

- **Encourage the creation of meaningful content in local languages** to increase accessibility and cultural relevance for diverse communities, empowering youth to engage more deeply with digital resources.
- **Address the link between climate change and digital infrastructure**, especially how climate disruptions affect Internet access in vulnerable areas.
- **Support inclusive governance by ensuring that diverse voices**, including underprivileged students, older generations, and marginalized communities, are actively engaged in policy-making processes.
- **Grassroots resilience programs** should be built focusing on digital literacy and disaster preparedness, ensuring communities are equipped to maintain Internet access even in challenging circumstances.

Technical Community

The technical community should embrace decentralized, multilateral collaborations that prioritize inclusivity and transparency. Moving away from top-down governance models is essential to creating a more resilient and democratic digital ecosystem.

- **Adopt collaborative and inclusive approaches** to Internet governance that facilitate **problem-solving across borders**. These models should ensure that **youth and marginalized voices** are actively involved and heard in the **decision-making process**.
- Use **decentralized technologies** like **DAOs** to improve **decision-making transparency** and **accountability** in digital governance processes, ensuring decisions reflect a broader range of perspectives.

Ethical Governance of Emerging Technologies

Emerging technologies like AI offer transformative potential, but they also present significant ethical challenges. As youth, we believe that the responsible governance of these technologies requires a careful balance between innovation and regulation. This balance is crucial to ensure AI enhances our societies while addressing critical issues like transparency, bias, data protection, and human rights. Youth should also be involved in governance discussions, bringing innovative solutions to the ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies and helping to build resilient systems for the future. We advocate for different stakeholders to take the following action proactively:

Government

Governments are central to shaping the future of AI by creating legal and regulatory frameworks that promote responsible innovation while protecting fundamental rights. We urge governments to prioritize ethical concerns such as transparency, fairness, and privacy while ensuring human rights remain at the core of technological development. We call on governments to:

- **Foster multi-stakeholder dialogues**, incorporating youth perspectives into AI policy decisions. This ensures that AI innovation benefits society while safeguarding individual privacy and human rights.
- **Create robust legal frameworks that protect digital rights**, ensuring individuals can choose their participation in the digital world and are protected from exploitation by AI-driven systems.

Private Sector

The private sector holds significant power in shaping the ethical development of AI. We, as youth, call on companies to invest in responsible AI development that considers social and ethical impacts, particularly in collaboration with civil society and marginalized communities. The private sector must lead by example, ensuring that AI innovations promote digital trust, safety, and inclusivity. We call on the private sector to:

- **Invest in responsible AI infrastructure that integrates ethical standards from the start**. This includes respecting Indigenous knowledge and employing ethical data collection practices that protect vulnerable communities.
- **Collaborate with civil society and governments** to address online fraud, scams, and cyber threats. Youth should be included in these partnerships, helping to create solutions that promote digital trust and safety for all.

Civil Society

Civil society has a crucial role in advocating for ethical AI governance and ensuring that discussions about emerging technologies include marginalized groups. We, as youth, believe that women, rural populations, and indigenous communities should be at the forefront of these conversations to ensure that AI's benefits reach all corners of society. Preventing digital fragmentation requires inclusive, community-driven dialogue. We call on civil society to:

- **Collaborate with youth to deliver AI literacy programs**, particularly targeting marginalized groups. These programs will equip communities with knowledge about ethical AI practices and how to protect their rights in the digital space.
- **Advocate for broader participation in AI governance**. Inclusive engagement ensures that AI development reflects the values of all communities, not just those with more technological access.

Technical Community

The technical community has the responsibility to build AI technologies that prioritize ethics as much as efficiency. As youth, we believe that the technical community must address issues like the environmental impact of AI, transparency in AI systems, and the development of tools that detect and prevent digital threats. We seek to work closely with developers to ensure these innovations are responsible and accessible to all. We call on the technical community to:

- **Work to reduce AI's carbon footprint**, particularly in energy-intensive areas like Generative AI. Youth should be involved in projects aimed at monitoring and mitigating these environmental impacts.
- **Continue enhancing AI tools that prevent fraud, scams, and misinformation** while improving transparency in content recommendations. Youth can actively contribute to testing and refining these tools to better serve diverse users.
- **Must ensure the development of** ethical, scalable solutions that can adapt to new challenges, ensuring that emerging technologies contribute to a resilient, inclusive Internet.