

Outcome Statement of the Forum on Artificial Intelligence in Africa

Benguéir (Kingdom of Morocco), December 13, 2018

Considering the rapid evolution of AI science and technology, and African's slow progress in that regard;

Considering the expeditious growth of Africa's population, as well as the opportunities and challenges this poses in terms of education, training and the employability of African youth;

Considering the scope of the environmental challenges and threats to peace that affect some regions on the African Continent, leading among others things, to massive population displacement and youth migration;

Considering the potential of AI and the opportunities it offers for a sustainable and inclusive development on the continent;

Considering the goals contained in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and those in the African Union's 2063 Agenda, entitled "The Africa We Want";

Considering UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (2013-2021), and UNESCO's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2014 – 2021);

Stressing the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General, in July 2018, to establish a high-level group on digital cooperation to address sustainable development issues;

Further stressing the importance of close coordination between the various United Nations bodies engaged in AI (WIPO, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the World Bank, the ITU, etc.), with a view to avoiding duplication;

Taking note of Resolution A/RES/73/17, adopted by the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly on 26 November 2018, which refers to the main and rapid developments in technology, including artificial intelligence, as well as their potential impact on the achievement of the sustainable development goals;

Recognizing that an inappropriate use of artificial intelligence may limit the fulfilment of human rights, and may perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination to the detriment of the most disadvantaged groups in societies;

Expressing our concern regarding enduring inequalities and significant disparities in the availability of the resources, capacities and infrastructures required to give access to, and fully benefit from, the results of scientific innovation;

Noting that the use of AI technologies raises concerns of equity and ethics in respect of access to the resources and opportunities it generates;

Noting the comparative advantage of UNESCO in promoting both sustainable development and AI through its programmes in education, the natural, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information;

We, the participants of the Forum on Artificial Intelligence in Africa, gathered in Benguéir (Kingdom of Morocco) on 12 and 13 December 2018, to reflect and debate on the different dimensions of AI within the African context, would like to thank:

- the Kingdom of Morocco, the Office Chérefien des Phosphates Foundation (OCP) and the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), for their valuable support in the organization of this Forum and for the hospitality offered to all participants;
- UNESCO, for having taken the initiative to organize this first reflection around the issues and opportunities of AI in Africa;
- the partners who have joined UNESCO (the International Cultural Communication Center of China, Microsoft, the Moroccan National Tourism Office, Royal Air Maroc, and R2 Social Ltd.), providing their support to ensure the success of this Forum.

Noting the above, We, the participants of the Forum on Artificial Intelligence in Africa agree on the need to promote artificial intelligence in Africa as a lever for development, centered on the human dimension and anchored in universal ethical principles, as well as in the standards of human rights;

We encourage the African Union, regional economic communities, governments, academic institutions and professional associations, the private sector, civil society and international organizations, especially UNESCO, to promote a rights-based, open, accessible AI through a multi-stakeholders approach as an instrument for the empowerment of African people and the positive transformation of African societies.

In particular, *we urge* African governments to engage in a constructive dialogue with all national, regional and international partners to implement the following actions:

- Integrate AI into national development policies and strategies, as a vector for the emergence of African economies based on African cultures, values and knowledge;

- Leverage AI to promote quality education with a special focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), scientific research and innovation, as well as to continue to strengthen education for citizenship based on values, rights and duties;
- Use AI technology to prevent the rise of terrorism, violent extremism and all other forms of violence;
- Promote the disciplines of sciences, as well as media and AI literacy, which contribute to the development of critical thinking and the acquisition of the skills required to understand and use AI responsibly;
- Promote the use of AI for knowledge generation, modeling and the effective management of World Heritage sites and Biosphere Reserves, in particular through coupling connected objects and Artificial Intelligence to collect data, improve monitoring and sustainable management of natural and cultural resources.
- Through AI, foster the development of a creative economy, embracing the dynamism of youth, and ensuring it is equipped with the necessary skills to contribute to the development of the cultural and creative industries;
- Ensure that AI promotes gender equality and recognizes the role of African women in development, adopting specific strategies that strengthen the active participation of women as creators, producers and users of AI;
- Develop AI strategies that respond to the needs of all social groups, including people with disabilities and in vulnerable situations;
- Encourage the use of AI as a means for the sustainable management of Africa's natural resources and the reduction of risks related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation;
- Promote the use of AI to influence policies related to social and cultural transformations that strengthen solidarity, inclusion and intercultural dialogue;
- Promote AI in the bid to build inclusive knowledge societies, guaranteeing access to information for all, freedom of expression and the protection of personal data;

- Promote an appropriate dialogue with different social actors, scientific communities and the private sector to develop an ethical framework that ensures an adequate protection of autonomy, privacy, non-stigmatization, non-discrimination and human dignity. UNESCO, through COMEST, must play a key role in this regard.

We urge international partners to support all actions that are undertaken at the national level to promote reflection around AI and its use, as an instrument for the endogenous development and transformation of African societies.

We urge the African Union and the regional economic communities, to develop in collaboration with UNESCO and other international partners, a pan-African strategy for the implementation of the following actions:

- Organize sub-regional forums to facilitate the exchange of ideas, the development of strategic frameworks and action plans, and encourage an increased use of AI at the national and regional levels;
- Support the establishment of an African forum of associations and institutions on AI, bringing together the main public and private actors in this field to enrich the reflection, facilitate the sharing of experiences and best-practices, foster regional cooperation through education, science, culture and communication, and promote research and knowledge generation;
- Call on the African Union, in partnership with the RECs, to develop a continental strategy for AI, which includes digital data management, and that is based on a multi-stakeholders approach and underpinned by Agenda 2063;

Finally, *invite* UNESCO to pursue, within the framework of its mandate, further reflections on the challenges and opportunities of AI in Africa, and to follow up the recommendations of this Forum with African Member States and in partnership with other actors (African Union, academic institutions, private sector, civil society ...).

Benguérir, December 13th, 2018