The 10th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda
Implementation of the mandate and program of work –
Focused thematic discussion and interactive dialogue
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Artificial Intelligence, Cultural Rights and Regulation

Tuesday 29 October 2024, 15h to 16h30

Transcript of the statement by H.E. Mr. Tareq Md. Ariful Islam,
Permanent Representative of Bangladesh

Chair of the Expert Mechanism,
Distinguished delegates,
Good afternoon to you all.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development for inviting me to this session on artificial intelligence, cultural rights and the right to development. I thank Ms. Klentiana Mahmutaj for her insightful presentation.

As we stand at the watershed moment of technological revolutions driven by artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, we recognize their unprecedented potential to shape a sustainable future. It has the potential to assist in the equitable distribution of wealth by promoting financial inclusion.

While AI holds immense promises, it also presents profound risks to society and humanity. As for Bangladesh, a least developed country, you would be happy to know that we have already crafted a draft national artificial intelligence policy aimed at strategically integrating AI into various critical sectors, notably smart public services, governance and judiciary, environment and climate change, education, healthcare and well-being. But we need technical assistance and capacity building for its implementation.

Distinguished audience, AI offers significant opportunities as well as challenges for creative ecosystems. On benefit point of view, AI can transform creative tools, enabling more individuals to engage in creative expression. For example, individuals without advanced skills in design, music or writing can still use AI tools to produce high quality work, thus fostering inclusive cultural participation. AI can reach cultural gaps by translating and adapting art forms across languages and styles, enabling diverse voices to reach global audiences and promoting cultural exchange. AI can assist in restoring, archiving and reinterpreting cultural artifacts, preserving them for future generations. For industries like film, music and design, generative AI can streamline processes, reduce production costs and foster innovation, contributing to the growth of local and global creative industries.

On the other hand, AI can pose challenges to the creative ecosystem too. AI generated creative tools may lack the nuance needed to accurately represent specific cultural practices, leading to misappropriation or stereotyping. AI systems might overly represent certain cultures that result in a homogenization of culture and thoughts, and thus undermine cultural rights. The automation of creative tasks might lead to job loss, especially for roles traditionally held by artists, designers and musicians, disproportionately affecting regions or groups where creative

work is a primary livelihood. It might de-incentivize growth of human creativity, compromise intellectual property regime. Larger companies or entities with access to advanced AI resources may dominate the industries, making it harder for independent or local creators to compete, thus limiting diversity and opportunities for smaller creators to develop economically.

As AI continues to influence cultural expression, concerns grow over how cultural rights, that is the right to protect promote and develop one's cultural identity, are balanced with technological advancements.

Distinguished delegates, indeed, we must acknowledge the transformative capabilities that AI holds and embraces the opportunities it presents to tackle current and future global challenges. However, we must navigate this transformative journey with extreme caution and efficiency. We believe comprehensive frameworks are needed for responsible and effective use of AI and emerging technologies, involving governments, industry, regulatory bodies, academia, civil society and other stakeholders. Frameworks that would monitor AI's societal impacts to prevent harm such as cultural erosion, discrimination or economic exclusion, ensuring that AI contributes positively to human development.

AI systems should operate transparently and be held accountable to standards that uphold human rights ethical principles and cultural integrity. We also need to recognize the critical role of collaboration between regulators, innovators and relevant stakeholders of potential big markets to promote the development and deployment of AI technologies, while safeguarding human and planetary safety. By striking a delicate balance between technology to progress and protection, such collaboration can shape a future where AI and emerging technologies will interact for our benefits.

Distinguished delegates, we view that though the bulk of AI development and utilization is presently concentrated in developed nations. It holds immense promise to profoundly transform their socioeconomic landscape of developing regions as well. Despite AI's potential to address intricate development issues, it also carries inherent risks. If not properly addressed, these risks have the potential to exacerbate an already expanding AI gap among and within developing nations amplifying social disparities and marginalizing millions, if not billions of individuals.

We underscore that LDCs, developing countries and their development partners and other stakeholders should work together through international cooperation, global solidarity and share responsibility based on the principles of the 2030 agenda and the human rights treaties including the right to development to reap the benefits of the AI and to close the digital divide. The Expert Mechanism can play a pivotal role in facilitating these cooperations.

Dear audience, any innovation and development at the expense of human rights is counterproductive. To fully harness the promise of AI while mitigating its risks, we must uphold interconnected rights as fundamental. In this regard we underscored the following:

- First, AI systems must be designed and deployed with respect for cultural identities, languages and traditions, ensuring that communities are not marginalized by these technologies. Preservation of culture and diversity requires that AI tools remain adaptable to local context and values, preventing biases that would erode or misrepresent cultural heritage.

- Second, everyone has the right to enjoy the benefits of AI and its applications. We need to ensure this right. Bridging the digital divide and providing equal access to AI

resources are essential to avoiding socioeconomic disparities, which AI can exacerbate if concentrated in only a few regions. Policymakers, developers and stakeholders must work together to make a force for sustainable development that empowers people living in LDCs and developing countries.

- Third, for AI to align with cultural rights and development goals, affected communities must be active participants in AI policy and development processes. Empowering diverse voices to shape AI technologies fosters better alignment with local needs, values and aspirations, safeguarding consumer rights and equitable development. AI as a tool does not inherently possess value, rather it's our conscious decisions and actions in its use that will shape its ultimate impact and significance.

With these words, I would like to conclude.

Thank you so much.