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The impact of AI on creative industries, cultural rights, and the right to development

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Transcript of statement by Mr. Giorgos Samouel,
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Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon. Let me begin by thanking the Chair and the Secretariat for the invitation to take part in this panel and for the opportunity to share Cyprus's views and experiences.

My remarks are divided into two parts. First, the intersection between AI and cultural rights, and second, some reflections on the future of cultural rights and cultural heritage within the work of the Human Rights Council.

For Cyprus, a small state with a rich cultural heritage and a dynamic, growing digital sector, AI is not only a technological advancement, it is also a profound cultural development, one that challenges us to reflect how innovation can respect, protect and promote our shared humanity.

At home, Cyprus is beginning to explore how AI can support creative protection, cultural preservation, and education, from digital restoration projects in museums to new forms of artistic collaboration using AI tools. Through the Deputy Ministry of Culture, we are promoting the use of new technologies in heritage digitization programs. While AI applications are not yet fully operational, Cyprus has supported research projects aimed at developing AI tools for the protection of cultural heritage, particularly in combating the illicit trafficking of antiquities.

In parallel, we are developing a national action plan to support the cultural sector in harnessing the potential of AI through close collaboration among the competent ministries. This plan focuses on mapping the needs of the cultural sector, enhancing the skills of cultural professionals, fostering cross regional partnerships, and funding innovative initiatives.

At the same time, we are advancing national frameworks on AI governance that integrate ethical standards, data protection, and cultural considerations fully in line with the European Union's broader efforts, including the recently communicated apply-AI strategy.

However, our experience also reminds us that technological progress must not come at the expense of cultural diversity, human dignity, or the rights of creators. If deployed without care, AI can unintentionally overshadow human creativity and erode the recognition of individual and collective cultural knowledge. Respect for cultural rights must therefore guide how AI is designed, trained, and applied, ensuring that it complements rather than replaces human creativity. Those who develop and

manage AI systems should do so responsibly with transparency, ethical awareness, and firm commitment to supporting human expression.

Cyprus considers that three key areas are essential to achieving this balance between technological innovation and the protection of cultural rights.

First, data governance for cultural materials. We need clear principles of provenance, consent, community curation, and attribution whenever cultural content is used to train AI systems. Communities must not lose their voice over how their heritage is represented and shared. They should remain active partners in shaping how their culture is reflected in the digital sphere. Without such safeguards, AI systems risk reproducing bias and enabling new forms of cultural appropriation, ultimately undermining the very diversity they aim to preserve.

Second, effective safeguards for creators, moral and economic rights. Legal and contractual instruments must ensure that artists and cultural professionals are duly recognized and fairly compensated when their works contribute to AI systems or inspire AI generated content. Creativity must continue to be valued, visible, and rewarded even in the age of algorithms.

Third, enhanced capacity, inclusion, and cooperation. We must provide targeted support for creators and cultural institutions, particularly in smaller states across the Global South, to build technical expertise, negotiate fair terms, and access public funding for human rights based cultural AI initiatives. In this regard, the Expert Mechanisms work could play a pivotal role in developing practical toolkits and model policies that promote equitable participation and genuine cultural diversity.

Ultimately AI should serve as a means of human development, not a substitute for it. By impeding cultural rights at the heart of AI governance, we can ensure that technology amplifies creativity, strengthens identities, and fosters dialogue among people.

Building on these reflections, allow me now to turn to the second part of my intervention, a few thoughts on the evolving role of cultural rights and cultural heritage within the work of the Human Rights Council in the key trends shaping their future.

Looking ahead, the Council has an increasingly important role in addressing how technological changes affects cultural rights and heritage. Recent resolutions, including the one adopted at the 58th Session on cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage, recognize that artificial intelligence and digitalization are reshaping how culture is created, preserved, and accessed. The human rights ecosystem, including the work done by the Expert Mechanism and the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights Alexandra Xanthaki particularly through her two most recent reports, has demonstrated that it is well equipped to meet this challenge. The task is to ensure that this transformation remains human cantered and rights based. Greater recognition among UN bodies, enhanced cooperation with UNESCO and WIPO, and stronger engagement with civil society and local communities will be essential. Cyprus will advocate in favour of such efforts. Ultimately, the Council's work must safeguard cultural diversity and the right of every person to participate freely in cultural life, both offline and online.

I thank you.

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