Remarks by Ambassador Sun Lei at the Discussion on "Artificial intelligence, cultural rights, and the right to development" of the 13th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to join you for discussions on Artificial Intelligence, Cultural Rights and the Right to Development.

The theme of this session could not be more timely and relevant. Artificial intelligence is redefining how development should be pursued, how cultures should be preserved, and how governance should be promoted.

With regard to this, allow me to offer three observations.

First, AI should be a driver of inclusive development that delivers for all.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, we are reminded that development is not a privilege, but an "inalienable human right"—one that entitles all peoples to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy development.

AI holds the promise to accelerate this vision in unprecedented ways. It could create new pathways for economic participation, lower barriers to quality education, and expand access to medical services for under-served regions. The list goes on.

Last week, I talked to a Chinese entrepreneur who was here for the ECOSOC Youth Forum. His AI start-up focuses on delivering personalized, adaptable learning devices, especially for students from less-developed regions in China and other developing countries. The services it provides have reached hundreds of thousands of students in a short span of two years, making knowledge more readily accessible and equitably dispersed.

His company, and many others like it, exemplify China's broader approach to the development of AI. It is our firm conviction that AI must not be a "game of the few or of the rich". Rather, it should be people-centered, inclusive, equitable, and beneficial to all.

This approach is grounded in China's Global Development Initiative that calls for special attention to the needs of developing countries and efforts to address development imbalances both within and among countries. The development of AI must leave no one behind.

On our part, China stands ready to share its experience and technologies, help other countries in the Global South strengthen capacity building, and let the benefits of AI be shared across all countries and communities.

Second, AI should be a catalyst for cultural dialogue and strengthen diversity of civilizations.

The study presented just now draws our attention to the implications of AI for cultural diversity. Indeed, without careful stewardship, AI may result in cultural uniformity rather than diversity. This is a risk that we must avert.

As laid out in China's Global Civilization Initiative, it is essential to respect cultural diversity, view all cultures as equals, and promote dialogue among civilizations.

AI should be harnessed to create new spaces for cultural exchange, enabling ideas and knowledge from different civilizations to be shared more widely to facilitate progress of human civilizations.

Two years ago, right here at the UN, China proposed the AI Capacity-Building Action Plan for Good and for All. We committed ourselves to working with all countries, especially fellow developing countries, to develop AI language or data resources, take proactive steps to eliminate racial, algorithmic and cultural discrimination, and protect and promote cultural diversity.

Third, AI's development should be anchored in robust global governance.

In his co-authored book Genesis, the late Dr. Henry Kissinger cautioned that the advent of artificial intelligence is a question of human survival.

Given what is at stake, fragmented approaches will only deepen divides, undermine trust, and allow AI to run amok. A collective approach is sorely needed to make sure AI develops along the right course. The question is: What does this approach look like?

One keyword is equality. When China proposed the Global AI Governance Initiative in 2023, it stressed the need to ensure equal rights, equal opportunities and equal rules for all countries.

Another keyword is multilateralism. Last year, President Xi Jinping put forth the Global Governance Initiative and called for further commitment to multilateralism. This is applicable to AI's development. We support the central role of the UN in developing an AI governance framework and a set of standards that enjoy broad consensus.

We look forward to working with all stakeholders to make such a governance system fair and equitable.

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Be it during the industrial or digital revolutions, humanity has managed to navigate uncharted waters together and emerged stronger. Looking ahead, artificial intelligence will draw us closer into a community with a shared future. On this journey, solidarity is more essential than ever.

Let us all work together to amplify AI's positive potential, rein in its risks, and ensure it reflects the common values of humanity.

Let us join hands to make sure that AI does not become a "Pandora's Box" of unintended consequences, but a modern "Ali Baba's Cave" that unlocks opportunities and delivers shared prosperity.

I thank you.