The 13th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda
Implementation of the mandate and programme of work –
Focused thematic discussions
Conference Room 6, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Artificial intelligence, cultural rights, and the right to development

Wednesday 22 April 2026, 10:00 to 11:30

Talking points by Prof. Serges Djoyou Kamga, University of the Free State, S.A.

Given the expansion of AI, the thematic study on AI, cultural and the right to development (RTD) is timely. I commend the authors of the study for setting out the scene, to capture the risks associated with the deployment of AI, that is likely to leave many behind. If unaddressed, the risks of AI will disenfranchise indigenous people, women, persons with disabilities and other minorities. Hence, it is important to move towards a human rights-based approach to AI, and ensure that cultural right and the RTD framework is applied to deal with the potential dangers of AI.

To this end, I stated that there is a need to ensure that AI Foster Human Dignity for all through multilateralism and international cooperation at the global level. The UN charter in its articles 55 and 56 clearly call on the international community to cooperate to improve the standards of living everywhere in the world. This echo by the UN Declaration on the right to development, which also underlines the role of the international community as a duty bearer of the RTD, besides the state at the national level.

In the African regional, we should build on the solid jurisprudence of the continent on the RTD. The African Commission through its promotional mandate should clearly explain the need to have a people centred AI ; there is a need to revise the guidelines of states reporting under article 22 of the African Charter on the RTD to include AI and the RTD .The continent should implement the African Continental Free Trade Agreement(Digital Trade Protocol and AI).

At the national level, integrating AI, Cultural Rights & the RTD into national Development Plans with algorithmic impact assessment into national AI strategy is critical; it is essential to have budgetary allocations to integrate AI strategies into national policies, to monitor and evaluate their implementation. Importantly, also ensure the meaningful participation of indigenous peoples and other minorities in the process and equally make sure that their benefit from the proceeds of AI.

It is important to get AI and human dignity into the business arena, by making a business case to business, that the business of business is no longer business but include human dignity, cultural rights and the RTD.

In the Accademia, it is important to mainstream AI, Cultural & the RTD into academic discourse and research, by among others having Masters and PhD studies with focus on AI, cultural Rights and the RTD. We need to have cross university and faculty collaborations, to work from a transdisciplinary perspective to advance scholarship on AI, human dignity, cultural rights and the RTD.

The role civil society and activism is equally critical. We also need intensive public interest litigation led by civil society, which makes a difference in advancing the jurisprudence of the RTD in Africa.

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