JOINT STATEMENT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Considering the vital impact that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has on freedom of expression, freedom of the media and the information ecosystem;

acknowledging that the development and use of AI can be beneficial but raise serious human rights-related concerns;

stressing the need to ensure that the design, development and deployment of AI are firmly anchored in international human rights law, principles and commitments;

reaffirming human dignity, equality and human rights as guiding principles for the integrity of the information ecosystem,

the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa ("Mandate Holders"), gathering in Brussels, Belgium to mark World Press Freedom Day 2025, made the following statements:

"The rapid development of artificial intelligence systems often proceeds without sufficient incorporation of human rights considerations. Developers primarily operate within frameworks of technical ethics and market effectiveness, while the human rights community engages too late in the process. We must shift from a risk-mitigation approach to one where freedom of expression and information integrity are foundational principles embedded from the earliest stages of AI development. This requires bridging the gap between technical innovation and human rights protection, and ensuring that AI systems enhance rather than undermine the information ecosystem that sustains our democracies." – Pedro Vaca, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States (OAS).

"There is a complex relationship between journalism and Big Tech, including AI. This is characterized by growing media dependency on platforms, concerns about journalist safety, and a struggle for news visibility, which affects both access to accurate, fact-based news, as well as the economic and financial sustainability of media outlets. In addition, we witness the unauthorized, unattributed, and uncompensated use of journalistic content to train AI systems. We should take advantage of this AI momentum to explore opportunities to create public information spaces where public interest information is prioritized, in support of democracy, peace and security." – Jan Braathu, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media.

"Africa faces further intensification of the global digital divide as AI technology thrives on high powered computer chips, electricity intensive data centres, strong research capacity and finance for the development of AI foundation models. These currently do not exist in Africa. The minority of Africans who have access to digital connectivity will only be using AI applications or AI built-into existing services, such as maps and video streaming. As most of the AI underlying foundation models are developed outside Africa, for reasons covered above, the consequence is that AI applications and AI built into other applications are therefore weak in African languages, African skin tones, African languages and African specificities. All this affects the tools available to African media and African citizens. This will lead to discrimination and the exacerbation of social inequalities, to African detriment."- Geereesha Topsy Sonoo, Special Rapporteur for FOE and ATI with the African Commission of Human and Peoples Rights.

"Like all technologies, AI comes with benefits as well as risks but undoubtedly it has come to stay. Governments, companies and above all civil society must work together to ensure that AI's use is shaped by a people-centred human rights approach. AI's success should be measured not by the speed of news, but by its quality, not by its capacity to increase profits, but its ability to restore public trust in information. With a true commitment to freedom of expression, AI could become the kind of tool the world needs for sustainable development that leaves no one behind." – Irene Khan, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

The Freedom of Expression Mandate Holders reaffirm the importance of international fora and multi-stakeholder collaborations for dialogue on AI-related developments. Overcoming isolated conversations and merging AI discussions with the issues affecting Freedom of Expression and media freedom, the Mandate Holders will aim at providing guidance to a range of stakeholders on safeguards and approaches to leverage technology in ways that strengthen democratic processes and foster information integrity as a vital foundation of democracy, peace and security.