



General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 February 2022

English and Spanish only

Human Rights Council

Forty-ninth session

28 February–1 April 2022

Agenda item 5

Human rights bodies and mechanisms

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The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Do we learn from past mistakes?

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recently adopted the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence at its 41st General Assembly session. This set of recommendations is meant to deal responsibly with both the known and unknown effects caused by the use of Artificial intelligence (AI) systems on human beings, societies, the environment and ecosystems. It is, therefore, the first world normative framework on the use of AI.

In itself, this is a breakthrough. AI is a valuable tool for improving human existence. Nevertheless, it is also capable of perpetuating and increasing certain discriminations, as well as impeding the full enjoyment of human rights. However, today, the different societies that make up the international community are highly dependent on this set of technologies, and this dependence will increase over time.

That is why this set of recommendations is what it is. A set of recommendations. In other words, a set of policies whose implementation depends on the will of the very actors whose conduct harms the full enjoyment of various human rights and perpetuates and increases discrimination.

Trying to fix problems with non-binding measures has already been used to fight against climate change or the harmful effects of business on human rights. The results of such an approach are negligible. So, why not use more effective tools?

Moreover, other international institutions are making greater progress on this topic. For example, the Council of Europe (the leading European human rights organisation that promotes human rights, democracy and the rule of law at the pan-European level), through its Ad Hoc Committee on AI (CAHAI), is already analysing the feasibility and potential components of a binding legal framework for the development, design and application of artificial intelligence systems. If Sustainable Development Goals are to be delivered by 2030, The United Nations might need to inspire its action program from good practices that most experts and stakeholders are aware of. Progress is achieved by the global community not by competing between different organisations but by honest and constructive cooperation between its members. The UN cannot be understood without its Member states' brave and visionary actions. Thus, we remind them of the shared responsibility they have to prop up the SDG agenda's realisation and create the synergies between regional and international organisations to deliver a binding legal instrument on Artificial Intelligence.
