

Forum: Human Rights Council
Issue: Improving human rights through artificial intelligence
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Introduction

With the rise of artificial intelligence worldwide, our global conversation is now extending into how this tool can be used to benefit all of humanity. Both socially, economically, and politically, artificial intelligence has not only become an inseparable component of our daily lives, but is in fact, a powerful force that is expediting the process of globalization. For more economically developed countries (MEDCs) and less economically developed countries (LEDCs) alike, artificial intelligence is a field where scientists and researchers are constantly exploring for the purpose of extending its application across various sectors.

This is not to say that there is complete consensus with regards to the further research of artificial intelligence. In fact, many are against this technological leap, due to fears such as robots eventually replacing human workers by taking over jobs, which ultimately causes mass unemployment. Furthermore, many believe that despite the well-intentions of programmers, the technology will evolve to the point where robots will become autonomous and result in devastating consequences. Critics have argued that artificial intelligence is, in fact, posing a growing threat to the security of nations, due to the hackable nature of our digitalized world. These are legitimate concerns that should not be overlooked and need to be addressed. There are also many nuances within artificial intelligence that should become an area of discussion. But today, delegates must come together, as a collective, to brainstorm and begin to recognize the benefits that artificial intelligence has yielded and the future benefits that they can bring, especially if researched and applied in a sensible manner.

The proliferation of artificial intelligence into our everyday lives has led to a neglect of its overwhelming impact. From social media to big data, these are all forms of artificial intelligence. As invisible as they may be, artificial intelligence has worked to increase the efficiency of everyday tasks. They have led to the possibility for knowledge to be accessible at the tip of our fingertips. They have helped to analyze simple and complex decisions that are made in homes, governments, corporations, including in the United Nations. Therefore, we must now begin investigating how artificial intelligence, both in the short and long run, is used to improve human rights in a global context.

Definition of Key Terms

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is defined by the European Parliament as “the capability of a computer program to perform tasks or reasoning processes that we usually associate to intelligence in a human being. Often it has to do with the ability to make a good decision even when there is uncertainty or vagueness, or too much information to handle” (“Artificial Intelligence”). Please note that artificial intelligence is very broad term and therefore can be defined differently, such as with the difference between weak artificial intelligence versus strong artificial intelligence.

Human Rights

The official United Nations definition for human rights is as follows: “rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination” (“Human Rights”). Furthermore, human rights should also be universal and unalienable, interdependent and indivisible, equal and non-discriminatory, as well as both rights and obligations.

Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a “universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity,” according to the United Nations. These 17 goals were originally a part of the Millennium Development Goals, but has expanded to include more aspects such as “climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice” (“Sustainable Development Goals”). In this context, sustainable development goals are precisely the areas where artificial intelligence can come into play. Efforts are being taken by the United Nations to use technology as a means to achieve these development goals, which are inherently interconnected, and by successfully tackling one will result in positive repercussions for the other benchmarks.

Background Information

Increasingly, artificial intelligence is seen as the beginning of a new frontier, no longer purely existing in science fiction. At a global scale, it is seen to be a critical aspect of “monitoring, discovering, predicting and interpreting the overwhelming quantities of information essential for harnessing the data revolution,” and by doing so, be able to “analyzing large amounts of data to detect abnormalities and patterns, AI can extract valuable insights from large datasets and discover new solutions through simulations, and can model trend development to make predictions and then produce recommendations and personalized responses” (Malhotra). As a result, their significance cannot continue to be overlooked, but should rather be tailored to yield the maximum number of benefits for achieving these SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals

SDGs can be solved through artificial intelligence, here are a few examples:

SDG#1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

More than 836 million people current live in poverty and approximately 1/5 people in developing regions are living on “less than \$1.25 per day” (“Goal 1”). Through artificial intelligence, measures are currently being taken to “provide real-time resource allocation through satellite mapping and data analysis of poverty” (“Accelerating”). By doing so, nations are able to find out specifically which places are in need of help, thereby targeting those regions and alleviating suffering on a wide scale. Especially for areas of turmoil or more inaccessible places, this step is one towards the right direction.

SDG #2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Food insecurity is becoming an increasingly problematic topic. According to the UN, “a profound change of the global food and agriculture system is needed if we are to nourish today’s 795 million hungry and the additional 2 billion people expected by 2050” (“Goal 2”). Therefore, agricultural productivity can be increased with artificial intelligence. This is currently attempting to be tackled by a “predicative analysis from imaging with automated drones and from satellites,” similar to that of SDG #1 (“Accelerating”).

SDG #3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

- For children, “more than six million children still die before their fifth birthday each year” and those born into poverty are “twice as likely to die” (“Goal 3”). For mothers, maternal mortality is also a prevalent issue in LEDCs. In fact, “only half of women in developing regions receive the recommended amount of health care they need” (“Goal 3”). Seeing these issues, artificial intelligence is able to be of use. It can analyze a vast amount of healthcare data, therefore leading to scientific breakthroughs. Currently, there are “8 billion mobile devices with smartphone cameras being used to diagnose heart, eye and blood disorders” (“Accelerating”).

SDG #4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning

Although primary school education has reached 91 percent in LEDCs, but 57 million continue to be out of school (“Goal 4”). In fact, approximately 50% of these students are living in conflict-ridden areas, therefore the sustainability of their education is constantly at risk. Many choose to prioritize safety over knowledge, which has led to 103 million youth lacking basic literacy skills with an overwhelming 60% who are women (“Goal 4”). Currently, education in many aspects is undergoing a revolution, where more material is becoming “virtualized” and there are “intelligent mentors with responsive personalized learning” all online (“Accelerating”). For instance, Coursera is a platform that uses “AI-produced granular information” and “big data analysis is improving graduation rates of low-income and first generation college students” (“Accelerating”). This way, even students in the poorest areas, as well as those in conflict-affected areas, will be given a chance to an equal education and a chance at improving their lives.

SDG #5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

For developing regions, only approximately 2/3 have achieved gender parity in primary education (“Goal 5”). Even today, sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, and Western Asia, still prevent girls from receiving an adequate education, thereby barring them from becoming socially mobile (“Goal 5”). Today, artificial intelligence can accurately identify and correct the existing gender bias, therefore this recognition will be important in “empowering women for growth and new opportunities” (“Accelerating”).



Figure 1: The Connection between Artificial Intelligence and Sustainable Development Goals

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Microsoft

Recently, Microsoft has taken steps towards embracing the rise of artificial intelligence. They have developed a “machine-learning model that can analyze demographics, academic performance and

historical data to predict which students were at risk of dropping out and prompting early intervention” (Malhotra).

Partnership on AI

This is an organization that was first established to “study and formulate best practices on AI technologies, to advance the public’s understanding of AI, and to serve as an open platform for discussion and engagement about AI and its influences on people and society” (“Partnership”).

Google

Currently, Google has implemented artificial intelligence software – DeepMind – which is a data hub that responds immediately to increased usage or changing weather that helps to optimize energy efficiency. By doing so, artificial intelligence is able to reduce the energy consumption of the data center by 15 percent (Malholtra). As a result, they can help be massively implemented for more sustainable energy.

Descartes Labs

Descartes Labs is unique in the fact that they have developed an image-analysis software, which is a type of artificial intelligence. As a result, they are able to “analyze satellite photos of farmland to forecast accurate estimates of crop yields, allowing farmers, insurers, commodities traders and governments to make more informed decisions” (Malholtra). This data refinery for satellite imaging will bring tangible benefits in the years to come.

Motorleaf

This is an innovative company that has been able to create an autonomous indoor farming system. This way, food insecurity can be addressed. As a result, this system is monitoring “indoor farming environments and plant growth and adjusts lighting, temperature, humidity, water and soil nutrients to maximize a farm’s productivity” (Malholtra). This is one step closer towards improving nutrition and improving the basic food needs for those who currently are suffering from poverty and a lack of access.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
2004	Space rovers Spirit and Opportunity by NASA autonomously navigated Mars’ surface
June 7 th -9 th , 2017	AI For Good Summit (Hosted at ITU in Geneva)

2015 Hawking, Musk, Wozniak + 3000 researchers in the artificial intelligence and robotics field wrote an open letter to ban the development and use of autonomous weapons

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December, 1948 (**A/RES/217(III)**)

Possible Solutions

With all this said, it is clear that artificial intelligence can be extremely beneficial for the advancement of human rights in both LEDCs and MEDCs. Regarding this, there is still much more to be done. To begin, education is a primary concern that is currently leading to the many inequities in modern day society. Simply by revolutionizing classrooms through individualized learning pathways or virtual tutors will not be sufficient. Therefore, delegates should come up with ways to allocate resources for these programs to sprout, which can be achieved through various measures, such as foreign aid or having more developed nations help with the birth of the technology sector for these less developed governments. Through jumpstarting these programs, it can lead LEDCs to become more advanced and become capable of moving with the trend or even become a leader in the field in the upcoming years. Furthermore, in the context of justice systems, artificial intelligence is also seen as a way to eliminate the current forms of discrimination and human biases. Through a heavier reliance on algorithms and potentially robot judges, the criminal justice system in many nations, including more developed nations, can be improved. These are simply a few ideas that can be further developed in more meaningful ways. Keep in mind that when you are crafting these solutions, you can be creative and be open-minded.

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