



## United Nations General Assembly 1

Directed By: Monika Gagoshidze

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### TSMUN XXVII BACKGROUND GUIDE 2024

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**Topic I: Discussing international standards and guidelines for the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence**

**Topic II: Exploring the use of AI towards the 2030 Agenda**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Tallahassee Southern Model United Nations. My name is Monika Gagoshidze and I am the Director of the United Nations General Assembly 1 for TSMUN 2024. Your Assistant Director is Josh Daniels. Currently, we are members of the TCC Model United Nations team.

The topics under discussion for this year's United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization are:

- I. Discussing international standards and guidelines for the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence
- II. Exploring the use of AI towards the 2030 Agenda.

The United Nations General Assembly 1 aims to contribute to and foster peace by promoting collaboration between nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which

are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.

I hope you find this background guide useful in your preparation for the conference. This background guide is meant to introduce delegates to the topics that will be discussed in committee and provide guidance as delegates begin their research. Delegates are strongly encouraged to research the positions, views, and opinions of their Member States as well as relevant regional and international frameworks, past resolutions, and organizations initiatives.

Each delegation will submit a position paper for the committee. Delegates must turn in their papers before the start of the first committee session. Papers may be emailed to [positionpapers@tsmun.org](mailto:positionpapers@tsmun.org) and can also be submitted through a USB drive or hard copy. For a position paper guide and an example, please visit <https://www.tsmun.org/position-papers.html>. Papers that are not in the correct format will not be eligible for awards. For conference information, scholarships, and other useful information, visit <https://www.tsmun.org/>. If you have any questions leading up to the conference, feel free to contact [sg@tsmun.org](mailto:sg@tsmun.org). I look forward to seeing you all in committee.

Sincerely,

Monike Gagoshidze, United Nations General Assembly 1 Director

### ***Introduction***

In order to facilitate the work of the United Nations (UN), its founding Charter (1945) established the six main structural organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat.<sup>1</sup> Among these, the General Assembly (GA) serves as the primary forum for

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<sup>1</sup> UN Structure. United Nations.

deliberation and policy formulation. Its membership consists of all 193 Member States of the body, each member having one vote.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Committee Mandate***

The General Assembly mandate is outlined in the Charter of the United Nations (1945). The fundamental part of the body's work consists of making recommendations to the Member States on the international issues within the scope of the United Nations. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions on various international topics ranging from peace and security, economic development, humanitarian assistance, legal frameworks and more.

General Assembly resolutions are non-binding, serving as recommendations. The responsibility for implementing or ratifying the resolutions lies with each Member State.<sup>3</sup> Despite the non-binding character of the General Assembly resolutions, they play an important role in establishing universal standards, guidelines and expected behaviors. Member States can express their position on a specific topic depending on how they decide to participate in deliberations, voting, abstention... It can also serve as a tool to encourage consensus building among Member States with diverse political interests.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the General Assembly also deals with the approval of the UN budget and elects members for its officer positions and for positions of other principal organs.<sup>5</sup>

### ***History***

The first session of the UN General Assembly was convened in 1946, in London. Initially, 51 Member States attended the session. The purpose of the meeting was to define the function of the governing body of the newly established organization of the United Nations.<sup>6</sup> The membership of the organization grew gradually reaching 76 in 1955, 99 in 1960, 179 in 1992 and finally 193 in 2011.<sup>7</sup> The Changes in membership have been reflections of various historic events. As more and more nations achieved independence they also sought membership in the UN.

Throughout the years, the General Assembly has adopted several important resolutions; the first resolution "Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy" was adopted in 1946,<sup>8</sup> and was a reflection of an existing political climate.

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<sup>2</sup> "Functions and powers of the General Assembly" General Assembly of the United Nations.

<sup>3</sup> "The GA Handbook A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly" Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. 2017.

<sup>4</sup> "UN General Assembly First Committee". Reaching Critical Will.

<sup>5</sup> "The GA Handbook A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly" Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. 2017.

<sup>6</sup> "First Session of UN General Assembly - 10 January 1946"

<sup>7</sup> "Growth in United Nations membership". Peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet. United Nations.

<sup>8</sup> "Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)" General Assembly of the United Nations. United Nations.

The Resolution 1378 (XIV)<sup>9</sup> was the first document that was co-sponsored by all member states; it dealt with the question of disarmament through various aspects and mechanisms.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Governance, Structure, and Membership***

The General Assembly convenes in two main types of sessions: “regular annual sessions”, which are considered to be in session for one year starting in every September, and “special sessions”, which are convened either at the request of the Security Council or at the demand of the majority of Member States. The General Assembly is primarily governed by the GA president and twenty-one vice presidents.

The presidency rotates among five regional groups of the United Nations. The regional groups were established in order to guarantee equal representation within the body, they include: the Group of Asia-Pacific States, the Group of Eastern European States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Group of African States, the Group of Western European and other States.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, the work of the General Assembly is divided among six main committees each addressing a wide range of international topics. The First Committee deals with the issues of disarmament and International Security. It aims to promote cooperation and strengthen global stability through multinational agreements and regulations.<sup>12</sup> The Second Committee of the General Assembly is Economic & Financial; the third is Social, Humanitarian & Cultural; the fourth is Special Political & Decolonization; the fifth is Administrative & Budgetary, and the sixth is legal. Different committees work together to demonstrate collaborative decision-making.

<sup>13</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The General Assembly is one of the principal organs of the United Nations. Its work deals with a wide variety of international topics and its membership is made up of every UN Member State, each having an equal vote. The General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, but they can serve as a guideline for future national, regional, and international policymaking. They also illustrate the desirable policy stance for the international community.

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<sup>9</sup> General Assembly-Fourteenth Session. United Nations.

<sup>10</sup> “Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)” General Assembly of the United Nations. United Nations.

<sup>11</sup> “The GA Handbook A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly” Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. 2017.

<sup>12</sup> “Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)” General Assembly of the United Nations. United Nations.

<sup>13</sup> “The GA Handbook A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly” Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. 2017.

## **Topic I: Discussing international standards and guidelines for the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence**

### ***Introduction***

Artificial intelligence (AI) has a potential to significantly facilitate the work of various industries and provide machines that can think and act similarly to human intelligence. However, it's imperative for AI to be regulated through international standards to ensure its ethical applications across various fields.

The term 'artificial intelligence' was first coined in 1956 at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence (DSRPAI). At that time, the biggest issue for the development of AI systems was the lack of ability for computers to store sufficient amounts of data to not only execute commands but also to remember them.<sup>14</sup> This issue remained central for AI development for years, but as the memory and speed of computers increased, it became possible to replicate human intelligence artificially to a degree that was not possible prior.<sup>15</sup> In order for AI systems to function sufficiently, it needs to have access to large amounts of data, process it promptly and adapt to changes in a diversifying environment.<sup>16</sup>

In regards to the ethical concerns of the misapplication of AI, multiple aspects should be considered. AI raises concerns about data collection, privacy, surveillance, bias, discrimination, misinformation, environmental impact and more. Therefore, there is a growing need for ethical AI designs in the future.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Current Situation***

Variety of current challenges and desirable goals related to artificial intelligence are highlighted in an interim report launched by the UN Secretary-General's AI Advisory Body. The report highlights the importance of collaborative effort in AI development and application, and lays out five major guiding principles that should serve as a starting point for fair design of AI systems for various jurisdictions.<sup>18</sup> The principles uphold the significance of AI legislation that is designed to benefit all and is governed in public interest in accordance with such international frameworks as the Charter of the United Nations, along with Human Rights Law and the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, various jurisdictions across the world have their own standard of AI regulations, but despite the widespread consensus regarding the desire to implement safe and ethical AI

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<sup>14</sup> Anyoha, Rockwell. Can Machines Think? Harvard University.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> "PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE ETHICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE" 26 February, 2019 UNESCO. United Nations.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Interim Report: Governing AI for Humanity. December 2023. AI Advisory Body. United Nations.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

systems, many Member States lack comprehensive regulatory systems implemented in accordance with international and regional guidelines and recommendations.<sup>20</sup> The research conducted by the International Association of Privacy Professionals across fifteen different jurisdictions confirms this claim; over half of the studied jurisdictions lack concrete legal frameworks regulating fair applications of the AI systems.<sup>21</sup>

Several jurisdictions with some AI regulations include Canada, where AI and Data ACT is expected to uphold human rights in the field of AI with focus on avoiding its reckless applications and responsibility in terms of enforcement;<sup>22</sup> China, where various important AI legislation is already in effect like: Algorithmic Recommendation Management Provisions,<sup>23</sup> and the Interim Measures for the Management of Generative AI services<sup>24</sup>; the United States, where despite the lack of comprehensive AI regulations the country has enacted some new and updated legislation like the National AI research and Development Strategic Plan,<sup>25</sup> along with AI Training Act,<sup>26</sup> National AI Initiative Act,<sup>27</sup> and such executive orders as Maintaining American Leadership in AI,<sup>28</sup> and Promoting the Use of Trustworthy AI in the Federal Government.<sup>29</sup>

### *Actions Taken by the UN*

The United Nations passed its first global guidelines and standards for ethical use of Artificial Intelligence on November 23, 2021. Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence was adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).<sup>30</sup> The framework was designed to address the policy concerns highlighted by the Preliminary study on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, conducted two years prior.<sup>31</sup> The UNESCO recommendation designated eleven areas of policy action for Member States to consider including: ethical impact assessment, data policy, development and international cooperation and more. The framework builds upon the existing guidelines to further

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<sup>20</sup> “Global AI Legislation Tracker”.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Internet Information Service Algorithmic Recommendation Management Provisions – Effective March 1, 2022. Digichina.

<sup>24</sup> Interim Measures for the Management of Generative Artificial Intelligence Services BY CHINA LAW TRANSLATE ON 2023/07/13.

<sup>25</sup> “NATIONAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN 2023UPDATE”. SELECT COMMITTEE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE of the NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL May 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Summary: S.2551 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) Public Law No: 117-207 (10/17/2022)

<sup>27</sup> WILLIAM M. (MAC) THORNBERRY NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Maintaining American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence. Executive Order 13859 of February 11, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government. Executive Order 13960 of December 3, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. Adopted on 23 November 2021.

<sup>31</sup> PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE ETHICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. 6 February 2019. SHS/COMEST/EXTWG-ETHICS-AI/2019/1

suggest specific policy recommendations for various international actors on public and private levels.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Regional and International Framework***

Various Member States, regional organizations, and international groups approach the emerging threat of unethical applications of artificial intelligence differently. In 2019, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has adopted AI principles that have been upheld by various other regional and international organizations such as the European Commission, the International Organization for Standardization, the African Union and more.<sup>33</sup> Despite its non legally binding character, adopted principles serve as a tool to communicate internationally agreed standards and regulations that can be applied for national policy formulation for various actors.<sup>34</sup> In summary the principles reaffirm the importance of securing personal data, along with upholding the rule of law, human rights, transparency, risk assessment, accountability, and more.<sup>35</sup> The OECD recommends its Member States and other signatories to design their national legal frameworks in a way that encourages investment in development of trustworthy AI systems, data sharing among various international and national stakeholders, training for AI workers, capacity building, focus on human-centered values and fairness, and more.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, in terms of the regional frameworks across the world, the European Union is currently working on the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act; the act is expected to become a law once the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament agree on a final version.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Artificial intelligence can be utilized as a tool to facilitate application of digital systems to varying operational tasks; notably it can reduce human error, bring innovation, speed up information processing, and more. On the other hand, its misapplication can bring ethical concerns due to its potential to cause harm without accountability. One of the central issues regarding AI is the lack of national and regional applications of international standards, guidelines, and regulations but as the technology develops, many Member States are prioritizing investments in a safe AI future.

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<sup>32</sup> Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. Adopted on 23 November 2021.

<sup>33</sup> "Global AI Legislation Tracker".

<sup>34</sup> "Forty-two countries adopt new OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence". OECD.

<sup>35</sup> Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence. OECD Legal Instruments. OECD/LEGAL/0449.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> EU Artificial Intelligence Act.

## Topic II: Exploring the use of AI towards the 2030 Agenda

### *Introduction*

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a combination of 17 goals agreed upon by all members of the UN General Assembly in 2015 in order to demonstrate collaborative desire towards sustainable growth.<sup>38</sup> 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the main focal point for all Member States as they move towards the future of development; it's a reminder of important aspects that should not be neglected towards this move. The 17 SDGs are as follows: Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms, Goal 2: Zero Hunger, Goal 3: Health, Goal 4: Quality Education, Goal 5: Gender equality and women's empowerment, Goal 6: Water and Sanitation, Goal 7: Energy, Goal 8: Economic Growth, Goal 9: Infrastructure, industrialization, Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities, Goal 11: Safe cities, Goal 12: Sustainable consumption and production, Goal 13: Climate Action, Goal 14: Oceans, Goal 15: Biodiversity, forests, desertification, Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions, Goal 17: Partnerships.<sup>39</sup> Sustainable development goals are interconnected, each supporting others for a common goal.

### *Current Situation*

Due to the vast contextual nature of the 2030 Agenda it's critical to consider various aspects of its implications separately. To begin with, Artificial intelligence can be used as a tool to fight with improved efficiency towards the goals that concern various specific goals highlighted by the 2030 Agenda.

For instance, Goal 4 deals with education; the UN estimates that without needed intervention 84 million children are expected to stay out of school by 2030. The fourth goal aims to provide free schooling for children across the world and ensure universal access to it.<sup>40</sup> Providing quality education plays a significant role in achieving other Sustainable Development Goals as well; it plays a significant role in eradicating poverty (GDG 1) as it creates improved employment opportunities for workers to contribute to economic development (SDG 8) and plays a crucial role in reducing inequalities (SDG 10, SDG 5) when provided equitably to various groups. Among many ways to ensure quality education, Goal 4 highlights the importance of technological integration in educational processes.<sup>41</sup> This is where artificial intelligence comes to play. UNESCO has stressed the importance of AI integration in education done in a way that avoids widening the technological gap that can exist within and between Member States.<sup>42</sup>

AI can also help with a combination of various SDGs regarding climate action (SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15). The UN has stressed the devastating consequences climate change can bring upon

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<sup>38</sup> The Sustainable Development Agenda. United Nations.

<sup>39</sup> The 17 Goals. United Nations.

<sup>40</sup> The 17 Goals. 4 Quality Education. United Nations.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Artificial intelligence in education. UNESCO. United Nations.



every Member State. In order to contain global warming levels not over 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, global emissions need to be cut in half by 2030.<sup>43</sup> Last decade was the warmest ever recorded in history with increased wildfires, droughts, floods and hurricanes. If no global action is taken, world temperature is expected to increase beyond 3°C, which in turn can endanger human lives (SDG 3) due to its various disastrous consequences.<sup>44</sup> For instance it can create food (SDG 2) and water (SDG 6) scarcity due to its ability to exacerbate droughts and render the land less suitable for agricultural purposes; it can contribute to loss of biodiversity and deforestation (SDG 15)<sup>45</sup> further contributing to the loss of human lives and displacements.<sup>46</sup>

Artificial intelligence can help combat climate change. Its primary application can be its ability to analyze large swaths of data with improved accuracy and predicting capabilities. This can play a crucial role in designating mitigation strategies. AI can also be used as a communication tool to report various weather patterns and climate disasters in a timely manner. AI can also help collect and analyze information regarding air pollution patterns; it can additionally play a role in achieving carbon neutrality by increasing efficiency of renewable energy sources.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Actions Taken by the UN***

As AI technologies develop, the United Nations keeps providing multiple reports on AI applications that deal with various sustainable development goals. For instance Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education (2019) deals primarily with SDG 4. It was adopted by UNESCO in 2019. The agreement highlights the importance of efficiently integrating AI technologies in education; it provides sets of recommendations to Member States to implement on a voluntary basis; these recommendations include keeping in mind financial aspects of AI integration in education along with its multidisciplinary nature, importance in training, data analysis, learning assistance and assessment and more .<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, there are also several UN actions that deal with climate action and AI. For instance, under the Initiative on Artificial Intelligence for Climate Action, the United Nations addresses the importance of AI technologies in providing warnings about numerous disasters, along with the capacity of AI to predict suitable planting times, assessing the soil condition and fighting against the diseases; AI algorithms can also be utilized to predict energy demands and they can be further applied accordingly to foster renewable energy.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Regional and International framework***

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<sup>43</sup> Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. United Nations.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> The 17 Goals. 15 Life on Land. United Nations.

<sup>47</sup> How AI helps combat climate change. UN News.

<sup>48</sup> Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education. UNESCO. United Nations.

<sup>49</sup> AI for Climate Action: Technology Mechanism supports transformational climate solutions. United Nations.

Sustainable development goals also deal with international cooperation (SDG 17) and strong institutions that guarantee peace and security for all (SDG 16). For the past couple of years, the conflict-related civilian death has significantly increased. Ongoing armed conflicts have a significant influence on instability nationally, regionally, and sometimes even internationally.<sup>50</sup> There can be several ways AI capabilities can both exacerbate and help mitigate challenges regarding international security. 2023 research prepared by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), separates two large groups of risks related to AI and security; the first group includes concerns regarding safety of AI technologies and the second group considers the risks of miscalculation, escalation, and proliferation.<sup>51</sup> It's important for the international community to work multilaterally to mitigate challenges created by AI technologies.

### ***Conclusion***

The scope of the topic of artificial intelligence towards the 2030 Agenda is vast. As a result the issue can be approached through various ways. 17 Sustainable development goals deal with a variety of topics among which education, climate action, and international security play an important role integrating important aspects of other goals within their scope. Moreover, artificial intelligence can be applied to ensure universal access to quality education; it can be used to fight climate change by collecting and analyzing large amounts of data; it can act as a tool to ensure cooperation and guarantee peace and security across the planet.

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