National statement delivered by Mr. Muneeb Ahmed, First Secretary, on AI, Cultural Rights and Regulation during the 10th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

(Geneva, 29 October 2024)

Excellency,

Distinguished panellists and members of the Expert Mechanism,

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

At this forum two sessions ago, my delegation highlighted the tremendous potential benefits of AI and, also, the risks of its misuse. In the years since, the risks have only grown and the misuse has become increasingly real.

Pakistan therefore commends the Expert Mechanism for convening this discussion on AI, cultural rights and regulation. We welcome the panellists' and experts' insights on the thoughtful questions framing today's conversation.

In a world of interlinked crises and crushing resource scarcity, AI's potential to augment human capabilities has the power to be a force multiplier for government efforts to protect human rights.

Pakistan, like many other developing nations, prioritizes equitable access to the fundamental AI resources: computational power, data, and talent. Achieving this requires the development of both flexible guidance and binding norms to safeguard fair access, avoid monopolization, and encourage capacity-building initiatives globally.

From our perspective, both binding regulations and non-binding guidance on AI are essential tools that can complement one another.

Binding norms provide a framework that not only facilitates AI-driven Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also establishes "guardrails" to ensure that AI serves societal goals without exacerbating inequalities or creating new divides. Such norms would enable developing nations to actively participate in the design and use of AI systems, helping bridge the existing digital divide while mitigating the emerging AI divide.

These regulations, alongside adaptable guidelines, create a balanced pathway to leverage AI responsibly for operationalising the right to development, while protecting those in vulnerable situations from potential risks.

Relying on enterprises for self-regulation may be helpful but not necessarily sufficient.

Developing countries have unique developmental needs, and self-regulation by corporations risks prioritizing profit over equitable access to AI's core resources and opportunities.

An inclusive, UN-led governance approach to AI is therefore crucial.

Such a framework should ensure the participation of all countries in designing, deploying and regulating AI; ensuring that the benefits of AI are accessible to all.

Given that regulation is difficult and the burden of responsibility cannot be left entirely to the enterprises, robust international collaboration is the obvious answer. Engaging businesses, lawmakers, technologists, and civil society from across the globe in a continued conversation remains essential

AI development in coming decades will hinge on access to computational power and data. Both are unevenly distributed.

In terms of real-world data – based on overall population size and growth potential – developing countries have considerable advantages.

Rather than reinforcing extractive models that have entrenched inequalities and fostered division and mistrust, it is important to expand access to technologies and know-how for AI.

Human rights including the right to development must lie at the heart of efforts to leverage AI's potential. A right to development perspective would also be vital for realizing AI's potential to contribute to human development – of both individuals and societies.

Algorithmic bias in AI systems is one very real and grave concern that can compound structural drivers of discrimination.

It is imperative that we confront and address these biases, ensuring that AI systems are designed from the ground up with equity and inclusion in mind. This also has an important bearing on AI's potential adverse impact on cultural diversity and the emergence of monocultures.

Thank you.