



National statement delivered by Mr. Muneeb Ahmed, Counsellor, during thematic discussion on the impact of AI on creative industries, cultural rights, and the right to development

12th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

(Geneva, 28 October 2025)

Chair,

My delegation thanks the distinguished experts for their presentations and welcomes Ms. Mahmutaj's focus on this important topic.

Artificial intelligence presents profound opportunities and advantages for creativity and cultural expression, but only if its benefits are shared equitably.

For developing countries, AI holds promise in preserving languages, oral traditions, and cultural heritage. It can help digitize archives, enable translation of indigenous knowledge, and open new avenues for creative expression. Yet these opportunities remain largely out of reach for many in the Global South.

Limited digitalization, poor connectivity, and inadequate resources mean that large parts of the world risk being excluded from this new wave of digital creativity. Unaddressed, such digital divides would not only deepen inequalities but could also endanger cultural diversity itself — as countless voices, traditions, and artistic expressions may slip through and be lost in the data gap.

Equitable access to AI technologies, data, and digital infrastructure must therefore be a central component of efforts to realise the right to development for all. Global frameworks for data governance are essential to ensure that data from developing countries and their creators is not merely extracted, but used responsibly, transparently, and for shared benefit.

AI must be a tool for cultural empowerment, not assimilation or cultural erasure. We must ensure that everyone, regardless of their level of digital advancement, can participate in, contribute to and benefit from this new creative frontier.

In Pakistan, the national AI policy adopted earlier this year seeks to leverage AI in context-sensitive ways to empower communities, promote local narratives and preserve cultural heritage. To ensure ethical and responsible use of AI, the policy incorporates several international tools including UNESCO's Recommendations (on the Ethics of AI).

Chair,

Conversations tend to focus on the impact of AI in terms of procedural generation, as Prof. Westenberger also noted, but it also has an outsized impact on the enjoyment of culture as a fundamental part of the exercise of cultural rights.

Algorithms and data already play a large and not entirely transparent role in what content is promoted. In the future, AI agents and companions may become an ubiquitous yet opaquely administered filter through which individuals process or interact with cultural goods or exercise their cultural rights.

Moreover, individuals' data may be one of the most meaningful contributions to the development of AI models, but there are only limited avenues for these contributions to be matched by equally significant benefits. Instead, individuals' data becomes the property of those who collect, sift and process it.

In developing AI systems and deploying them to the cultural domain or creative industries, therefore, integrating a right to development perspective at the design stage could serve as an important safeguard for all human rights, and could be a valuable contribution of the thematic study.

Finally, we would highlight the implications of blockchain deployments to intellectual property protection systems. Here too, lack of access to compute, energy and capacity would hinder adoption in developing countries, giving rise to potential risks where the cultural expression of individuals or a people is misappropriated as the intellectual property of others.

Thank you.

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