Global Digital Justice Forum's Submission to UN Survey on the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance

IT for Change

February 2025

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Some members of the Global Digital Justice Forum—IT for Change, APC, Global Partners Digital, Derechos Digitales, and Media Monitoring Africa—collectively prepared a submission in response to a [UN survey](#) to identify the terms of reference and modalities for the establishment and functioning of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, to be established within the United Nations.

Our submission was based on the premise that the development, deployment, and impact of AI are deeply interwoven with existing power structures, economic models, labor dynamics, and geopolitical interests. Our complete submission is below.

Please provide a brief description of your organization/entity

The Global Digital Justice Forum (GDJF) is a dynamic coalition driven by a vision of digital justice achieved through people and planet-centered policies grounded in human rights. Members of the Forum have an impact footprint across South Asia, East Asia, the Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and collaborate with alliances and civil society groups in North America and the European Union.

Please describe the <u>process</u> you followed to collect, consult, and prepare your input.

Participants from around 15 countries compiled the input during a meeting organized by IT for Change and the Association for Progressive Communications held in Johannesburg on 10 and 11 February 2025. The initial draft was shared with other members of the Global

Digital Justice Forum who provided further comment which was then compiled for the final submission.

SEGMENT 1: Please provide your feedback on the following guiding questions concerning the establishment and functioning of the <u>Independent International Scientific Panel on AI</u>

> 1. **What should be the mandate of the multidisciplinary Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, to be established within the United Nations?**

(i) Comprehensive evidence gathering on AI's impact

> The Panel must systematically collect and analyze evidence on AI's broader societal effects. This includes:
>
> a) Human rights – Impacts on privacy, surveillance, algorithmic bias, labor rights, and equitable access to essential services like healthcare, justice, and education.
>
> b) Social impact – Effects on communities, public discourse, information integrity, democratic values, and electoral processes.
>
> c) Economic impact – Influence on labor markets, wealth distribution, and global economic inequalities, between countries and within countries.
>
> d) Political impact – AI's role in conflicts, power imbalances within and between countries, and challenges to international cooperation on digitalization and development, particularly with regard to the global majority.
>
> e) Environmental impact – AI's role in resource consumption, including energy and water use, and its contribution to environmental degradation. This effort must account for regional disparities in resources and technological capabilities, as well as differing impacts on specific groups, such as, for example, indigenous people.

(ii) Risk and opportunity assessment & AI standards

The Panel should contribute to the development of a unified global public interest approach to AI risk assessment, standards, policy and regulation by:

a) Evaluating existing methods for assessing AI risks and opportunities across sectors and regions, with a focus on human rights impact assessments aligned with UN principles.

b) Identifying gaps in current frameworks and recommending equitable, transparent, and accountable governance methodologies.

c) Establishing common public AI standards to ensure AI technologies are safe, secure, transparent, and aligned with fundamental rights, rather than private or political interests.

d) Proposing where needed and harmonizing existing AI technical standards to promote fairness, collaboration, and human-centric development.

2. What should be the size, composition and governance structure of the Panel?

(i) Size and composition

To ensure diversity, expertise, representation, and inclusivity, the Panel should include:

a) Interdisciplinary experts from fields like science, human rights, law, economics, ethics, social sciences, and public policy.

b) Expertise in "small AI" for locally driven applications, avoiding dominance by large-scale AI developers.

c) A maximum of 50 members, with 10 representatives from each of the five UN regions.

d) Representatives from relevant UN bodies, such as OHCHR, ITU, ILO, UNESCO, IOM, WHO, and the Internet Governance Forum's AI Policy Network, aligning with existing global frameworks.

e) Regional representation to reflect diverse interests, backgrounds, and expertise, ensuring AI governance includes a broad range of perspectives.

f) Experts who engage critically with AI, addressing both risks and opportunities.

g) Strong representation from Global Majority countries.

h) Voices of marginalized communities, including women, gender minorities, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and racialized groups affected by AI.

(ii) Engagement with other bodies and processes

The Panel should:

a) Coordinate closely with bodies and processes related to AI, internet governance, and digital transformation strategies.

b) Establish engagement mechanisms (online and offline) to enable members to consult and interact with a wide range of constituencies for meaningful participation in AI governance discussions.

(iii) Governance

The governance framework should:

a) Ensure transparency, accountability, and coordination across UN bodies and stakeholders to avoid duplication.

b) Enforce strict conflict-of-interest rules, excluding industry-backed stakeholders while allowing independent consultation with the private sector.

c) Include a secretariat which could be the UN Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies (ODET)

d) Include an advisory Council: This body should include representatives from relevant UN entities (e.g., CSTD Working Group on Data, OHCHR) and civil society organisations to help define the Panel's agenda.

e) Include co-chairs: Two members should be selected internally, with at least one from the Global South.

f) Include a funding mechanism constituted in such a way that it prevents contributions from influencing the Panel's mandate, agenda, or decisions.

g) Ensure sufficient financial support to enable equal participation of all members of the panel, especially from under-resourced regions and institutions.

3. How should the nomination and selection process of the Panel be?

The nomination and selection process for the Panel should ensure diverse, multi-disciplinary representation and be free from undue influence. It should be transparent, publicly documented, and independently overseen to guarantee fairness and credibility. A Nomination Committee, comprising representatives from UN bodies, civil society, academia, and independent experts, should oversee the process. Eligibility criteria and selection procedures must be clear and accessible, ensuring accountability. Selection should consider both formal qualifications and

real-world experience, with a focus on including historically excluded voices, groups, and communities.

4. What types of evidence-based impact, risk and opportunity assessments should the Panel deliver, and with what frequency?

Rigorous, evidence-based assessments to evaluate AI's impact, risks, and opportunities in different contexts. These assessments should be globally relevant, interdisciplinary, and policy-driven, using high-quality data and analysis.

(i) Types of Assessments

The assessments should balance sector-specific and cross-cutting evidence collection to offer a holistic understanding of AI's impact:

a) Vertical (Sector-Specific) Assessments:

- Human Rights & Social Impact: AI's effect on discrimination, privacy, democratic values, mental health, and social interactions, with attention to the disproportionate impact on certain groups.
- Economic impact and consequences for workers: AI-driven job displacement, automation, and economic inequality
- Environmental consequences: AI's role in climate change, resource consumption, and energy use, as well as the impact of resource extraction on Global Majority countries.
- Public services & governance: AI's integration into healthcare, education, law enforcement, and policymaking.
- Security & geopolitics: AI's risks in warfare, cybersecurity, surveillance, misinformation, and global stability.

b) Cross-cutting assessments:

- Power asymmetries: AI's impact on global inequalities and its influence on regions.
- Ethical & legal considerations: Aligning AI developments with international human rights law.
- Consisting with regional and national economic development strategies and priorities: Assessing the impact of AI on the strategies and priorities of developing regions of the world.

- Standardization & good practice in policy and regulation: Harmonising AI governance models to ensure accountability and accessibility taking into account the different levels of capacity and access to resources in different parts of the world

- AI and the public good: Leveraging AI for sustainable development, accessibility, and social progress.

- Digital inequality: Evaluating the unequal distribution of AI's benefits and harms, particularly on disadvantaged communities.

- Digital transformation of the state: Assessing the impact of AI in state information systems on social benefits, rights, and transparency.

- Preconditions for AI deployment: Analysing technical, regulatory, and public policy conditions for responsible AI adoption, by both the public and private sectors.

(ii) Frequency and type of reports:

a) Annual reports: On the performance of the Panel itself. These can serve as transparency reports.

b) Thematic reports: Focused on critical issues that enable a multi-regional and comparative assessment of the global status of certain standards, frameworks, or the impact of AI on specific rights. Also on developing or updating guidelines and methodologies for human rights and environmental impact assessments.

c) Regional Reports: Specifically addressing the challenges faced by different regions.

d) Succinct briefs on relevant developments to be produced on a rolling basis.

All reports should be made available to the general public.

SEGMENT 2: Please provide your feedback on the following guiding questions concerning the establishment and functioning of the <u>Global Dialogue on AI Governance</u>

1. **What should be the mandate of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, to be established within the United Nations?**

The Global Dialogue on AI should take place as part of or alongside existing dialogues such as those convened as part of the WSIS process or other international agreements and processes. It

should serve as a platform to inform normative coordination and common public standards across existing frameworks at the international, regional and national levels, identify regulatory gaps, and recommend measures to strengthen global AI governance in a way that prioritizes human rights, social justice, and ecological sustainability.

The Global Dialogue on AI should anchor its work in existing international human rights law (including UN OHCHR and Special Procedures reports), applying and upholding existing treaties, General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions, and global commitments, including CEDAW, ICERD, Convention on Rights of Child, among others. It should also interface with UN agreements on sustainable development. The Dialogue should also be anchored in the principles of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Global Digital Compact (GDC), ensuring that AI is developed and deployed for the benefit of people and in a way that redress existing digital inequalities between countries; enable achievement of SDGs, and address ecological implications of AI.

2.   What types of outcomes should the Dialogue achieve?

i) Collect, identify, and highlight critical challenges for AI development and regulation and presenting options for normative frameworks for AI governance

ii) Serve as a repository for policy innovations, providing an accessible knowledge base for policymakers worldwide. It could highlight commonalities and trends in AI governance approaches and support opportunities to foster coordination and cooperation around existing frameworks.

iii)Promote informed, critical discussions on AI's societal, economic, and environmental implications.

iv) Facilitate knowledge building and capacity development and foster cross-regional knowledge sharing.

Through these outcomes, the Global Dialogue on AI Governance can bring coherence to AI governance discussions, promote regulatory clarity, and build global capacity to ensure AI is developed and deployed equitably and responsibly.

3.   How should Governments and all relevant stakeholders be involved? (Maximum 3,000 characters)

In this regard, it is worth considering the UN's experience in integrating various governmental, non-governmental, and private sector actors, as well as other stakeholders such as academia and civil society, and the lessons learned from these interactions in multi-stakeholder forums.

Use can be made of existing regional fora for UN member states, such as regional economic commissions of the UN.

Regardless of the mechanism adopted, it should be aimed at:

 (i) Ensuring, enhancing, and promoting meaningful participation, especially from underrepresented regions, voices, and experiences in discussions about the future of new and emerging technologies.

 (ii) Integrating into discussions on AI regulation, governance, and impacts the centrality of human protection, well-being, and the preservation, guarantee, and respect for human rights.

Multi-stakeholder engagement mechanisms should strive for fair, balanced, and diverse representation. They should also be mindful of the challenges certain actors—such as civil society—face in ensuring effective and meaningful participation, including financial constraints, visa restrictions, and other barriers.

4.   What should be the format of the Dialogue?

The Dialogue should support and align with the Global Digital Compact (GDC) recommendation that the Dialogue should take place within existing UN processes, summits, and platforms, rather than creating parallel structures. By embedding discussions within established forums, the Dialogue can ensure coherence with broader digital governance efforts, reduce duplication, and maximize engagement from diverse stakeholders.

The Dialogue should be structured at two levels:

> i) Overarching, transversal discussions that address cross-cutting AI governance issues, including normative frameworks, ethical principles, and global regulatory coherence.

> ii) Sector-specific dialogues that examine AI's impact, risks, and opportunities in key areas such as healthcare, education, labor, finance, climate action, and security.

The Dialogue should utilize and build upon existing UN platforms that already work on AI-related issues across various domains, such as UNESCO, ILO, ITU, OHCHR etc. By convening discussions within these specialized forums, the Dialogue can foster targeted, evidence-based AI policy recommendations.

SEGMENT 3: Please provide your feedback on the following guiding questions concerning the establishment and functioning of the <u>Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance</u>

1. **What should be the relationship between the Panel and the Dialogue?**

The Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance should maintain a mutually reinforcing relationship, ensuring that AI governance discussions are informed by scientific expertise, interdisciplinary knowledge, and the lived experience of those most affected. However, the two entities should remain institutionally independent, with distinct mandates and roles.

While the Panel and the Dialogue should be separate entities, they must maintain structured communication channels to ensure their work is complementary.

The Panel should use the Dialogue as a platform to communicate and share findings, ensuring that AI governance discussions are evidence-based. The Panel's work—such as impact assessments, risk evaluations, and policy recommendations—should inform the Dialogue's deliberations, ensuring that discussions are grounded in rigorous research and analysis. By engaging with diverse perspectives and real-world experiences, the Dialogue can help the Panel identify knowledge gaps, emerging challenges, and areas requiring further research.

This reciprocal exchange ensures that both entities remain dynamic, responsive, and relevant to evolving AI governance needs.

2. **How can the Panel and Dialogue effectively draw on and leverage existing initiatives within the United Nations? How can the UN system best support the Panel and Dialogue in a coordinated manner?**

> i) To ensure the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance are effectively integrated within the United Nations system, it is essential to elevate, enhance, and coordinate existing UN mechanisms. The UN should support both entities by leveraging existing expertise, fostering cross-agency collaboration, and ensuring inclusive and dynamic participation.

> ii) The UN should ensure the elevation of OHCHR's role in AI governance, integrating human rights principles across all AI-related discussions, risk assessments, and policy recommendations.

> iii) The Panel and the Dialogue should also engage with other key UN agencies already working on AI governance, such as FAO, ITU, UNCTAD, ILO, WHO, UNICEF etc. AI governance discussions should be distributed across different UN bodies, rotating responsibilities among agencies based on thematic focus.

3. **Please use this space for any additional comments**

AI is not simply a neutral tool; its development, deployment, and impact are deeply interwoven with existing power structures, economic models, labor dynamics, and geopolitical interests.

The Panel and Dialogue must not be used as superficial advisory bodies that provide the illusion of inclusion, consultation and concern with the public interest. Governments, corporations, and international organizations must not use these mechanisms as a way to delay, dilute, or sideline necessary legal and regulatory measures for AI. Strong compliance mechanisms must be built into AI governance frameworks to ensure that guidelines and recommendations translate into enforceable regulations, transparency obligations, and accountability measures.

It is crucial that the work of the Panel and the Dialogue be enriched by diverse social perspectives to ensure the greatest possible diversity and social representation in their composition and analyses. It is urgent not to overlook the importance of adopting affirmative measures to integrate the views and opinions of gender-diverse communities, women, ethnic and racial groups, and people with disabilities, among others. Additionally, it is essential to incorporate, at the highest

levels of scientific discussion, analytical perspectives on how AI may deepen existing social inequalities and digital divides—such as the digital divide itself.