



UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

CEB

**Chief Executives Board
for Coordination**

HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES (HLCP)

Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence:

TERMS OF REFERENCE (DRAFT)

(prepared by the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence (IAWG))

I. Background and Mission of the IAWG-AI

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformative power to serve as a force for good and to advance sustainable development, while at the same time it holds profound implications for the world, including substantial risks and challenges in need of mitigation, such as those related to biases and privacy. CEB and its HLCP recognize the vital role of the United Nations (UN) system in addressing the opportunities and challenges of AI and have repeatedly engaged on various aspects of the issue since 2017.
2. Following the CEB's endorsement of the *UN system-wide strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development on AI*¹ and HLCP's work on UN system actions on the ethics of AI, and taking into consideration the Secretary-General's *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation*, it was decided during the 40th HLCP session to establish an interagency working group on AI (IAWG-AI), co-led by UNESCO and ITU.²
3. Under the auspices of HLCP, and in line with its nature and scope, the mission of the IAWG-AI will focus on delivering concrete outcomes on AI aimed at enhancing UN system-wide policy coherence and programmatic coordination. The group shall aim to promote the development and use of AI that is underpinned by ethical principles ensuring it is human-rights based, trustworthy, safe and sustainable, promotes peace and contributes to achieving the SDGs ("Core Principles").

II. Objectives and Tasks of the IAWG-AI

4. Based on the Core Principles, and with the main goal of delivering concrete and relevant outcomes for the UN system, the IAWG-AI will aim to combine the ethical and technological parts of the UN to provide a solid foundation for current and future system-wide efforts on AI with a view to ensuring respect for human rights and accelerating progress on the SDGs. The IAWG-AI will do so by bringing together the UN system expertise on AI, particularly in support of the CEB and HLCP workstreams on the ethics of AI and the strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development, while ensuring collaboration, coordination and contribution to various AI-related emerging technologies, data initiatives and mandated processes, as appropriate and within the scope of the Group, to avoid duplication and ensure synergies, cooperation and alignment. The Group will also seek the advice and engagement of different stakeholder groups in its activities, as needed, in order to benefit from their expertise.
5. The IAWG-AI will work to:

i. Facilitate exchange of information internally within the UN system

The IAWG-AI will facilitate increased knowledge-sharing and awareness-raising among UN agencies on AI related issues, and bring together all the relevant UN expertise on the subject, to help develop coherent approaches, especially as they relate to the ongoing CEB/HLCP workstreams of AI ethics and capacity development on AI. This could include leveraging online platforms to enhance interagency accessibility to AI-related knowledge, including through the sharing of AI test/training data and successful use cases and best practices. The Group may also contribute to research on AI development, implementation, technologies, ethics and governance, especially approaches that focuses on ensuring AI benefits all of humanity.

¹ For more background information, please see [CEB/2019/1/Add.3](#)

² For more background information, please see [CEB/2020/6](#), para 18

ii. Strengthen internal system-wide capacity

The IAWG-AI will strengthen internal UN system-wide capacity on AI in line with ethical principles in order to enable agencies to adopt robust, human-rights based, trustworthy, privacy-friendly, sustainable, transparent and inclusive data-driven approaches, towards the use and/or deployment of AI systems within the UN. This will be carried out through the development of relevant guidance and programmes, including training and skills development/learning initiatives, support for resource-sharing as well as collaborative practical and field-based projects of mutual interest, pilot projects on how and whether to use AI to achieve the SDGs, resources on incorporating AI technologies within existing initiatives, guidance on conducting risk, accountability, ethical and human rights impact assessments and monitoring mechanism, etc.

iii. Complement and contribute to existing efforts

The IAWG-AI will closely engage with existing UN processes, mechanisms, groups and initiatives to ensure synergies, collaboration, and alignment in order to reduce fragmentation and avoid duplication of efforts on AI. The implementation of its work will be carried forward by the collaborative efforts of relevant United Nations entities, together with relevant inter-agency mechanisms, including those that are operationally oriented or mandated, also linking with the Resident Coordinator system at the country-level through the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG). It would also contribute to all relevant AI interagency mechanisms, processes and strategies, as well as on other AI-related emerging technologies.

iv. Facilitating interagency cooperation in capacity building activities to support Members States

The IAWG-AI will enhance interagency cooperation on policy and programmatic efforts, especially on AI ethics, AI Governance, AI technological developments, and capacity building assistance to Member States, by helping to identify priority areas of action on AI aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This includes providing guidance on how to ensure that ethics and human rights inform all stages of the AI life cycle, including research, design, development, investment, deployment, dissemination, processes surrounding it and the teams involved to promote good governance. It also includes analysing policy and regulatory trends and emerging issues related to AI (such as algorithmic transparency). This effort will be based on a data-driven assessment of gaps and opportunities in the field³ and facilitating cooperation among complementary interagency expertise, efforts and initiatives towards all aspects of the AI lifecycle, as may be needed. Among other things, it could include development of policy analysis, guidelines, tools, technical sandboxes, and online knowledge platforms, as well as an assessment of Member States' needs and existing tools (upon their request and subject to availability of necessary resources). It could also include elaboration of system-wide common positions and related strategic communication on AI related global developments.

III. Membership, Structure and Functioning of the IAWG-AI

6. The IAWG-AI is open to all interested HLCP members and observers that are working to address AI related issues. Interested entities should designate a senior-level focal point within their organization who is

³ For more background information, please see [CEB/2020/6](#), para 20

committed to contributing to the work of the Group and who will draw on expertise within their organization across all levels as relevant, including younger expert staff. In addition to senior-level focal points, the IAWG-AI will also facilitate a broader community of practice consisting of working level staff leveraging digital platforms.

7. The IAWG-AI will be co-led by UNESCO and ITU. Following the nomination of member focal points, the IAG-AI may adopt working modalities most appropriate to specific objectives and tasks.
8. The IAWG-AI will carry out its duties and functions using electronic means, and it will convene virtually at such regular intervals as decided by the Group. When deemed necessary and appropriate by the members of the IAWG-AI, physical sessions of the Group may also be held on the side-lines of other relevant UN or HLCP meetings.
9. To meet the stated objectives and tasks of the Group, the timebound IAWG-AI will develop a workplan which will set out, *inter alia*, concrete deliverables, timelines, roles and responsibilities, key performance metrics etc. for the Group. The IAWG-AI will report on its work to HLCP as needed and/or requested.
10. In its activities, the Group will identify opportunities to actively engage with all relevant stakeholders on AI, including experts from Member States, civil society, academia, youth and the private sector as needed, as well as traditionally marginalized and vulnerable groups.