

XXIII INFOPOVERTY WORLD CONFERENCE

PRESS RELEASE

STEERING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TOWARDS AN OVERCOMING OF INEQUALITIES, CLIMATE EMERGENCIES AND POVERTY? ICTs OPERATING AS EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES ONLY IF UNDERGOING ETHICAL EXAMINATION AND ARE PRONE TO HUMAN NEEDS?

XXIII Infopoverity World Conference “*AI turmoils digital processes: how to act to ensure human rights and provide e-welfare for all?*”

April 12, 2024

United Nations Headquarters in New York (CR.11)
streamed on UN Webcast

Artificial Intelligence and digital technologies are now pervading international debates and daily lives all across the globe. Combined with a new perception of society emerging amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and the harrowing realities of ongoing wars, such phenomena are fundamentally reshaping our outlook on the imminent future, amplifying concerns and uncertainties but also the many opportunities surrounding a digitally dominated world. A fresh chapter is unfolding, propelled by a cohort of digital natives and the pervasive integration of new technologies determining the very essence of progress. Within this landscape, tackling the diverse array of new and sometimes unethical instances – largely driven by private entities wielding control over infrastructure and operational platforms – has ascended to paramount significance. Delaying the resolution of these issues is no longer tenable.

Operating since the dawn of the digital revolution, OCCAM – Observatory on Digital Communication has become a pilot explorer addressing and presenting the risks and openings of ICTs for social development. In doing so, the Infopoverity World Conference has punctually chronicled the pivotal junctures of the past two decades.

In its 23rd edition, with the title “*AI turmoils digital processes: how to act to ensure human rights and provide e-welfare for all?*”, on **April 12, 2024**, at the **UNHQ in New York**, the Infopoverity World Conference will address how Artificial Intelligence should be oriented to the fight against poverty, ameliorating the challenging living conditions still faced by many in our society. This approach seeks to close the economic, social, and digital divides that pose significant risks to global progress. Without proper guidance, AI runs the risk of triggering economic crises, distorting market competitiveness, curtailing personal liberties, reshaping global power dynamics, and potentially accelerating the threat of war, echoing the turmoil of the 19th century marked by two world wars and severe economic upheaval.

The proclaimed SDGs have paved the way for development as a guiding compass. Now, substantial technical, social, political, and economic endeavours are urgent, especially directed toward marginalized communities, to allocate significant resources to AI-driven e-services to surmount the deficiencies and challenges in telecommunication infrastructure, e-learning, food security, telemedicine, and e-governance. Sharing knowledge and best practices in a holistic and harmonious approach to define a concrete strategy towards SDGs achievement in view of a fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable new digital society is the challenging task we are all called upon.

How should we steer the impetus of AI to orient it towards overcoming of inequalities, climate emergencies, and challenging instances? How to address the paradoxical binomial between digital excellence and its diverted use, it being at the basis of a struggling achievement of the SDGs putting the protection of human rights on the back burner? How to attest that ICTs and AI serve as effective responses to contemporary challenges only if they undergo ethical examination and are prone to human needs?

These are only some of the interrogatives the 23rd Infopoverity World Conference will try to disentangle, responding to the call of the UN General Assembly “to continue to assess and enhance their [specialized agencies, funds, programs, other entities, bodies and offices, and related organizations of the United Nations system] response to leverage the opportunities

and address the challenges posed by artificial intelligence systems in a collaborative, coordinated and inclusive manner” (US-Led Resolution A/78/L.49).

On these premises, we are honored to be gathered here once again to relaunch the very same mission that inspired OCCAM to create the Conference in 2001 with the same core principles.

“E-welfare and the transfer of knowledge & technologies to all in need, we are convinced, could be the main winning option, where AI could be the key factor, if properly oriented.”

- Pierpaolo Saporito, President of OCCAM and Infopoverty Program

OCCAM will welcome eminent speakers, representatives of international organizations, scientists, academia, private and public businesses, and Civil Society Representatives to showcase the most innovative projects and solutions applying and regulating Artificial Intelligence and representing efforts of international cooperation to address the complicated asynchronisms in the various development fields. Contributions from the highest ranks – among others, **Navid Hanif**, *Assistant Secretary-General*, UN Economic Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA); **Alberto Barachini**, *Undersecretary of State*, Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy; **Ernesto Ottone R.**, *Assistant Director-General Culture Sector*, UNESCO; **Patrizio Civili**, *Special Advisor to the Director General*, IDLO, *Former UN Assistant Secretary General*; **Belinda Biscoe**, *Senior Associate Vice President*, The University of Oklahoma; **Niccolò Rinaldi**, *Head of Unit Asia, Australia and New Zealand*, European Parliament; **Hossam Badrawi**, *Chairman*, Nile Badrawi Foundation for Education & Development; **Remy Sietchiping**, *Chief, Policy, Legislation and Governance Section*, UN-Habitat; **Liberato Bautista**, *President*, CoNGO, the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations – will delve into the relevance of a holistic approach based on AI, to be adopted by the international community for a functional SDGs achievement, emphasizing the commitment of policymakers, international organizations and Civil Society to an ethical social and economic development in the respect of human rights for all. Acknowledging how eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, the Conference will present an example of international research and innovation cooperation, namely the EU-funded H2020 **EWABELT Project** (GA 862848), operating in sub-Saharan Africa to face the issues of food-security. The latter being one of the challenging priorities for AI, the Consortium will highlight the successful implications of research activities in Africa, with a particular focus on ICTs, biopesticides, and Neglected Underutilized crop Species (NUS). Contributions by **Guangzhou Qu**, *Director*, FAO Liaison Office in New York; **Melchiade Bukuru**, *Former Director*, UNCCD Liaison Office in New York; **Youssef Brahimi**, *founding member*, Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), *Member* of EWABELT Scientific Advisory Board; and **François Tapsoba**, *Professor*, Université Joseph KI-ZERBO, *Member* of EWABELT Scientific Advisory Board, will enrich the debate stressing the importance of sustainable, healthy and accessible agri-food systems. Of equal significance is the accessibility of fundamental healthcare services and infrastructure, which could be hastened through the adoption of digital technologies. This is the central theme of the third session of the Conference, featuring an international panel focusing on the digitization of medicine. Esteemed experts – including **Claudio Azzolini MD**, *Founder*, Eumeda Telemedicine Platform, AS, Insubria University; **Francesco Oggionni**, *Advisory Board Member*, CDAOS.cat non-profit Data & Digital Health Innovation; **Antony Capone Jr MD FACS**, *Associated Retinal Consultants*, Royal Oak, Michigan; **Claude Boscher**, *Former Surgeon*, the Pôle Tête et Cou, Hôpital Américain de Paris; **Anat Loewenstein MD, MHA**, *Professor and Director*, Division of Ophthalmology, Tel Aviv University; **Umberto Paolucci Meng**, Up Invest Srl, *Former President*, Microsoft Europe, Middle East and Africa – will highlight how strong new practices and enhanced digital healthcare platforms can be of assistance to many, especially in underserved regions, if combined with global governmental efforts to build efficient e-health systems for all, integrating existing hospitals with territorial points of care. In this context, recognizing the urgency to cope with mental health issues, the **Christopher D. Smithers Foundation, Inc.** will showcase two inaugural projects dealing with addiction and how a human-centric AI could be of help in aiding individuals, thereby contributing to community well-being and upholding basic human rights. In the same way, moving towards urban-rural linkages, **Aliye P. Celik** and **Lance Jay Brown** from Sustainable Urbanization (CSU); **Francesca De Ferrari**, *Programme Management Officer*, UN-HABITAT New York, representatives from **Giacomini Spa**; **Emmanuel Amos**, *Founder*, Programos Foundation, and others, will underscore both current and prospective opportunities within infrastructure, clean energy – specifically focusing on hydrogen – and community development. Their aim is to address the disparities and imbalances resulting from urban-rural

interdependencies and to promote sustainable, equitable progress on a global scale. As an illustrative historical case, the UN Millennium Village of Sambaina in Madagascar will be showcased for its provision of e-services to marginalized communities. Drawing from past experiences and the expertise of the panelists – **Peter A. Psaras**, *Founder Chios Capital, Chief Strategy Officer & Managing Director Global Futures Group LLC, Advisory Council International Science Reserve ISR, New York Academy of Sciences NYAS*; **Hon. Jerry M. Hultin**, *Former Under Secretary of Navy, President Emeritus New York University Tandon School of Engineering*; **Jeffrey Williams**, *Founder & CEO, Worldwide Tech Connections*; **Esther Wojcicki**, *Founder Global Moonshots in Education, Founder Palo Alto High Media Arts Program, CEO Woj.Education*; **Nadait Gebremedhen MD**, *Founder & Executive Director, Hagush*; **Kiyoshi Nakanishi**, *CEO, HOMEOST; PIA Co., Ltd* – the fifth session of the Conference will combine strategic balanced Human and Artificial Intelligence plans and policies in education and business operations to promote gender equality and the respect of human rights, them serving as catalysts for progress in all spheres. A special event promoted by **CICT ICFT** at UNESCO and **UNAFF** Travelling Film Festival with its Founder and Executive Director, **Jasmina Bojic**, will stress the relevance of the cultural-social binomial in endorsing and coping with challenging contexts, in this case in Northern Kenya. The concluding session with remarks from **Pierpaolo Saporito**, *President, OCCAM and Infopoverty Programme*; **John Steffens**, *Assistant Vice President Emeritus, University of Oklahoma*; **David Neely**, *President and CEO, Affecting Change International (ACI)*; and **Giacomo Mazzone**, *Secretary-General, EUROVISIONI and Member, CICT-ICFT*, will put the basis for a **Plan of Action 2024-2027** converging in a holistic system capable of overcoming the sectorization of all these instances through an epistemological approach, allowing for a harmonious connubium of creativities, traditional knowledge and cutting-edge technologies to face current challenges and eradicate poverty, emphasizing the responsibility of every single person involved.

On these premises, the 23rd Infopoverty World Conference will act as an international thinktank gathering the most prominent insights to draft a **Final Declaration** endorsed by the UN system addressing the urgency of ethical AI and digital technologies to cope with current challenges and provide adequate solutions towards a global, sustainable and inclusive social development in the respect of human rights and e-welfare for all, in line with the UN core principles and the UN 2030 Agenda.

Be part of the change!

Join the discussion on **April 12, 2024** at the **UNHQ in New York**, streamed on [UN Webcast](#). Or reach out to us at occam@occam.org for more information.

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