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XXIII INFOPOVERTY WORLD CONFERENCE



A.I. turmoils digital processes: how to act to ensure human rights and provide e-welfare for all?

FINAL DECLARATION & PLAN OF ACTION

April 12, 2024

UN Headquarters (CR11), New York – online

Live streamed on UN Webcast



Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale



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The participants to the 23rd Infopoverty World Conference “AI turmoils digital processes: how to act to ensure human rights and provides e-welfare for all?”, held on April 12, 2024, at the UNHQ in New York and online on UN Webcast,

Thanking

The *Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy*, represented by H.E. Sen. Alberto Barachini, Undersecretary of State, Department for Information and Publishing.

The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy*, represented by H.E. Marco Romiti, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations.

The *European Parliament*, represented by Niccolò Rinaldi, Head of Unit Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

The *United Nations Agencies, Offices and Conventions Representatives*:

Navid Hanif, Assistant Secretary-General, UN Economic Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA); Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director-General Culture Sector, UNESCO; Patrizio Civili, Special Advisor to the Director General, IDLO; Former UN Assistant Secretary-General; Remy Sietchiping, Chief, Policy, Legislation and Governance Section, UN-Habitat; Melchiade Bukuru, Former Director, UNCCD Liaison Office in New York; Halka Otto, Senior Officer, FAO Liaison Office in New York; Francesca De Ferrari, Programme Management Officer, UN-HABITAT New York.

The *Conseil International du Cinéma et de la Télévision CICT ICFT* auprès l’UNESCO, represented by Giacomo Mazzone, Secretary-General, EUROVISIONI, Member CICT-ICFT.

The *United Nations Association Film Festivals* and *CICT ICFT* for presenting the Signs of Change Film Festival and 18th UNAFF Traveling Film Festival, moderated by Jasmina Bojic, Founder and Director of UNAFF and UNAFF Traveling Film Festivals, Stanford University.

The *Society and Diplomatic Review*, represented by Dame Gloria Starr Kins, President.

The *sponsors* of the 23rd Infopoverty World Conference:

- The *University of Oklahoma*, represented by Belinda Biscoe, Senior Associate Vice President, The University of Oklahoma; John Steffens, Assistant Vice President Emeritus.
- The *Christopher Smithers Foundation*, represented by Nicole Smithers, President; Brinkley Smithers, Vice-President; Nicholas Smithers, Director; Christopher Smithers, Secretary.
- *Giacomini Spa*, represented by Andrea Alessandro Giacomini, CEO & Head of Public Affairs; Mariama Samake, Communication & Institutional Relations; Guido

Galliani, Technical Development with R&D Giacomini; Andrea Bighinzoli, Marketing Director.

- *Homeost Corporation*, represented by Kiyoshi Nakanishi, CEO; Simon Downes, FDA correspondent; Luis Hernandez, International Attorney, Regulatory Affair Specialist.

Recalling

the important contributions exposed during the previous steps of the conference:

- *VI International Medical Informatics and Telemedicine* meeting, February 28, 2023.
- *UNCTAD 26th Commission on Science and Technology for Development*, March 27/31, 2023, UN Headquarters, Geneva.
- *5th African Union – European Union Agriculture Ministerial Conference*, June 30, 2023, FAO Headquarters, Rome.
- *XXV Euromediterranean Conference on Cinema “Platforms and AI: the rise of global cinema?”*, September 8, 2023, 80. Venice Film Festival, Villa degli Autori Lido di Venezia.
- *UNESCO High-level discussion on AI in the audio-visual industry Film sector on the frontlines*, October 19, 2023, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris.
- *Roundtable “The Hunt for an Aitπ”* on the occasion of International Pi Day, March 14, 2024, OCCAM Headquarters, Milan.

Appreciating

the successful path of the Infopoverty World Conference – organized since 2001 by OCCAM at the UNHQ in New York – whose Final Declarations constitute a thread to recognize and comprehend the occurrences of the Digital Revolution towards the achievement of the SDGs – former MDGs – implementing solutions to fight poverty through e-services4dev in the ICT Villages and disadvantaged communities in the fields of education, telemedicine and food-security, digital infrastructure and e-governance within the Infopoverty Programme and its projects annually drafted by the Conference in view of the UN 2030 Agenda.

Acknowledging

the support of the *EWABELT Project* (GA 862848) funded by the European Commission under the Horizon2020 Program.

Taking into consideration the contributions summarized in the Report.

Responding to the call of the UN Secretary-General for an “*AI that bridges divides*”.

The participants convene on the following

FINAL DECLARATION

The advent of Artificial Intelligence has altered and fundamentally reshaped our outlook on the imminent future, amplifying concerns and uncertainties while also expanding the opportunities for inclusive and sustainable development and the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

On a six-year countdown to the UN 2030 Agenda, poverty remains one of the most challenging priorities to be tackled worldwide. Its expansion undermines the stability of our civilization, the ecological balance, and the respect for human rights, and fosters war and social violence. To this end, seizing the opportunities offered by AI and digital innovations to accelerate concrete action necessarily involves plans to orient these technologies towards a human-centric approach and ethical principles to avoid a partisan, speculative, bellicose, and socially controlling use, as often powerful political, social, or economic entities are induced to do, as it has occurred at the peak of the industrial revolution which led to two conflicts. *(H.E. Marco Romiti, H.E. Sen. Alberto Barachini, Hanif Navid)*

In this context, the indispensable value of welfare has favored the construction of solidarity-based societies open to democratic development and the wellness of their population. Such commitment shall be renewed and bestowed upon by the international community to ensure sustainable and inclusive development, which can only be projected if operational socio-economic gaps of haves and have-nots are addressed. To do so, AI-powered technologies should pivot toward socially beneficial applications, especially in and with marginalized communities. The primary application of AI shall therefore consist of digitally enhanced services in the abovementioned fields paired with adequate international dissemination strategies, considering the need to protect digital rights and the lack thereof in many regions of the world as well as the difficulty in their long-term maintenance. *(Pierpaolo Saporito, Liberato Bautista)*

To attain these objectives,

1. renewed progress must be undertaken towards a conducive international environment, rooted in the rule of law and international cooperation, geared to advance peace and development in a mutually reinforcing way, as called for in the 2030 Agenda. As an integral part of this endeavor, governments, decision-makers and the international community at all institutional, public and private levels should make a concerted, sustained effort to develop suitable and effective policy and legal frameworks to guide AI and digital technologies, guaranteeing transparency, equity, accountability, and fairness in the respect of privacy, human rights, and UN principles. *(Patrizio Civili, Niccolò Rinaldi, Hossam Badrawi, Remy Sietchiping)*
2. the food-security solutions showcased represent promising synergies in the fight against hunger and attest to the capability of AI-empowered digital technologies in

accelerating safer, more inclusive and equitable agri-food system transformations without exacerbating malnutrition, inequalities and climate change emergencies but fostering long-term sustainability, especially in the most degraded landscapes, which are home to the poorest and the hungriest communities. The best practices experimented within the EU EWABELT Project – including the plant health telediagnostic digital platform “PlantHead” – represent a successful multi-stakeholder collaboration to be disseminated further through policies and recommendations as exemplary accomplishments backed up by academic and scientific endorsement to advance food-security and promote smart agriculture in underserved regions – especially in sub-Saharan Africa. (*Melchiade Bukuru, Halka Otto, Youssef Brahim, François Tapsoba, Giovanna Seddaiu, Quirico Migheli, EWABELT Consortium*)

3. confirming how digitalization in medicine shall be recognized as a valid alternative capable of alleviating the burden healthcare systems have been experiencing worldwide, the participants commended the telemedicine insights calling for a renovation of the current dynamics through more research, investments, and policy recommendations through collaboration among healthcare administrators and policymakers to cope with existing entry-barriers and encourage regional and international robust standards, protocols, and cost control frameworks to be established and adopted, especially for the benefit of underserved regions. (*Claudio Azzolini, Francesco Oggioni, Simone Donati, Andrea Falco, Antonio Capone Jr, Claude Boscher, Anat Loewenstein, Umberto Paolucci, The Christopher Smithers’ Foundation, Homehost Corporation*)
4. the determined action for socioeconomic and environmental rebalancing between urban and rural areas received unanimous support to abolish the causes behind slums, famines, overwhelming emigration flows, conflicts, and violence, which afflict primarily Africa, by encouraging the integration of people-centered approaches with biodiversity-sensitive ones. Emerging from centuries of stagnation and colonial exploitation and being robbed of its natural resources to fuel the great industrial revolution, Africa now finds its great awakening thanks to the Digital Revolution and innovation, led by a new young generation. The interdependency that promotes sustainable, equitable progress underscores both the current and prospective opportunities where new models of possible participatory welfare and cutting-edge solutions in renewable and clean energy infrastructure, such as solar, hydrogen, and water, and community engagement can be fostered to meet the expectations of the green energy transition. (*Aliye Çelik, Lance Jay Brown, Francesca De Ferrari, Andrea Alessandro Giacomini, Mariama Samake, Guido Galliani, Andrea Bighinzoli*)
5. with an increasing number of people employing digital technologies and AI, the value of education and training at all levels underscores the necessity to socially and economically invest in digital infrastructure, services, and innovative solutions to democratize quality education and digital literacy equipping everyone with adequate skills to reduce the existent gaps in language, accessibility, and affordability of services. The UN Millennium Village of Sambaina in Madagascar constitutes a pilot instance where such services have been activated in the past and

shall be renewed for community development. (*Peter Psaras, Jerry Hultin, Jeffry Williams, Esther Wojcicki, Nadait Gebremedhen, Emmanuel Amos, Rakotonirina Tahiry Thierry*)

6. accepting how culture plays a fundamental role in shaping perspectives of society as a vehiculating means of acceptable norms and breakthrough innovations, the protection and promotion of the diversity of heritage, cultural expressions and local traditions and languages shall adopt region-specific approaches tailored to local conditions, encompassing varying technological landscapes, infrastructural capacities, and levels of connectivity across the globe, to encourage an ethical and fair deployment of digital technologies and AI into the social fabric. (*Ernesto Ottone R., Giacomo Mazzone, Jasmina Bojic, David Neely*)
7. substantial technical, social, political, and economic endeavors are needed to allocate significant resources into AI-driven e-services to surmount the mentioned deficiencies and challenges. The insights emerged underscore the willingness and the need to draft clear ethical standards and inclusive policies and guidelines for the application of AI as a catalyst for widespread and inclusive development, stressing the importance of social and environmental justice and the need for a holistic approach capable of driving ICTs towards beneficial socio-economic applications encouraging job opportunities and participation of marginalized communities and of the youth at all levels of civic engagement and governance. (*Belinda Biscoe, John Steffens, Aldo Torreggiani*).

The synergetic cooperation among the United Nations system, sub-national and national governments, supranational entities, international organizations, public and private companies, academia and research centers, NGOs and Civil Society altogether – well represented at the Conference – will allow for a participatory, holistic and interoperable win-win process to concretely provide services towards e-welfare through the transfer of skills and knowledge, them being a prerequisite for progressive, universal, targeted sustainable progress, and responding to the struggle for peacebuilding, human rights, and social and environmental justice. (*Imtiaz Dharker*)

ANNEX I

PLAN OF ACTION

Considering the relevant results expressed by the Conference, the following Plan of Action aims to encourage and support the realization process of selected proposals oriented to empower the fight against poverty in line with the Conference's core mission.

*In this regard, the following Plan of Action previews a commitment by all the participants to future strategies, emphasizing the **coherence and effectiveness** of the proposals in order to create an **operational synthesis** where AI solutions could be implemented on the ground.*

Projects and proposals

1. HOLISTIC APPROACH

1.1 Implementation of the Infopoverty Global Platform for E-Services

Historical tool of the Infopoverty Programme since 2001, validated at the UN ECOSOC/UNCTAD CSTD High-Level Meeting at the United Nations HQ in Geneva in 2013 and endorsed at the EXPO Milano 2015, the Platform represents a basic operative reference able to interconnect and enrich different projects of the Plan of Action, looking for new opportunities.

2. FOOD SECURITY

2.1 Upscaling of the results achieved within the Horizon2020 EWABELT Project (GA 862848) (By the EWABELT Consortium and Scientific Advisory Board)

The goal set for the continuum of the Project is the exploitation of all the results achieved so far in order to maximize on a larger scale the ongoing research and tools like the Planthead Diagnostic Platform or the qPCR portable devices, to create a real revolution in the countries of the African BELT and beyond. To this end,

- a. “consider how the FAO and IFAD, as well as the other institutions implementing the Farmer Field Schools' concept (FFS), could systematically integrate the digitalization of sustainable natural resource management into the content of FFS training, in line with the methodology developed by EWA-BELT”.
- b. “establish partnerships with the relevant initiatives and scientific institutions of the African Union Commission, including, but not exclusively, the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI), the AU Digital Agriculture Strategy and AU-SAFGRAD”.
- c. on the premises put forward by the UNCCD's CRIC 21 (Samarkand, November 2023) during the preliminary analysis of the results of the UNCCD's 2018-2030

Strategy, “support the UNCCD with the innovation in methods based on artificial intelligence proposed by the EWABELT Project to address the data and methodological gaps that lead to erroneous estimates of the extent of degraded land in hyper arid zones”.

- d. participate in the forthcoming UNCCD COP 16 in Saudi Arabia December 2024 as “best place to address the issue of AI in the fight against poverty and desertification, including ethical issues”.

3. DIGITAL HEALTH

3.1 EUMEDA Digital Platform

The project intends to improve the EUMEDA Platform, active since 2001, by developing new features on the Web-accessible personalized electronic health record databases – in coordination with various levels of access – for storage and follow-up, sharing data and images between health facilities to give better and timely care. The expected results are the simplification of healthcare thanks to digital medicine and AI, by promoting remote care to alleviate the admission burden to healthcare facilities even in developing countries, to improve “patient engagement” and adherence to therapy, as well as scientific research. *(By Claudio Azzolini)*

3.2 Mediterranean Network of Telemedicine

Redesign with AI of the eMedMed network, endorsed by the Union for Mediterranean in October 2013, with updated points of care to sustain and assist the most vulnerable communities empowering systems in underserved regions of the world with skills, technological innovations, and m-devices. *(By Euromediterranean Program)*

3.3 Project “Be Vulnerable: Wellness through AI”

An advanced AI approach to mental health and substance abuse through personalized assistance. The project previews an AI-based chatbot designed to guide recovering addicts toward the rehabilitation, therapy, and wellness programs most suited to their unique circumstances and needs. Stimulated by auto-feedback through conversations with patients, the therapeutic chatbots can access CBT motivational interviewing tasks and provide educational information for databases, medical scales, and research toward long-term recovery. *(By The Christopher Smithers’ Foundation).*

4 SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

4.1 Hydrogen Box for Clean Energy

Fighting the lack of access to energy sources in underserved communities and fostering a sustainable future by deploying innovative green energy solutions developed by the Giacomini's Research and Development Centre over the past

two decades, in order to establish systems able to store and manage hydrogen produced from renewable sources, ensuring access in rural areas to essential energy for domestic hot water, heating, and electricity. *(By Giacomimi Spa)*

4.2 E-Welfare for Rural Communities

Concrete solutions in the form of basic e-services of telemedicine, e-learning, and governance toward a generalized welfare 4all. *(By OCCAM and UN-HABITAT)*

4.3 Innovationbed AI-Labs Ecosystems for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Innovationbed AI-labs births a multi-disciplinary career transformation platform, nurturing an ecosystem of young innovators to fast-track, inclusive, and ethical AI4Dev, bridging rural-urban Nigeria. *(By the Programos Foundation)*

4.4 Research of new models to empower Small Islands Communities' sustainable development to provide basic e-welfare and clean energy

(By Infopoverty Programme)

5 E-LEARNING FOR JOB CREATION

5.1 Best practices at Sambaina, UN Millenium Village in Madagascar

Promotion of Informatics for All in the Commune of Sambaina *(By OCCAM and the School District (CISCO) of Manjankadrina)*

5.2 Proposal from OU College of Continuing Education

(By the University of Oklahoma)

6 CULTURE

6.1 Contribution to UNESCO policies on the protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, on Digital Technologies and Artificial Intelligence, as well as on Mondiacult 2025

(By the Conseil Internation du Cinéma et de la Télévision, CICT-ICFT – Italian Committee)

6.2 M-Cinema: a new tool for a Koinè of young expressions

(By the Conseil Internation du Cinéma et de la Télévision, CICT-ICFT – Italian Committee)

*In order to activate these multifaceted projects and initiatives delineated within this Plan of Action, a **Special Advisory Committee** composed of the chairs of the IWC23 sessions and high-level experts will lead the process to achieve the results and prepare the path to be presented at the next 24th Infopoverty World Conference, scheduled for April 11, 2025, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.*

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