Senior Committee: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Addressing the Ethical and Societal Implications of AI

Background information

The Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres stated that "*Both military and non-military applications of AI could have very serious consequences for global peace and security"* on July 18th 2023 in the UN Security Council meeting on Artificial Intelligence. [1]

The progression of AI has become more of a concern rather than the reason of excitement around the world with very controversial opinions among various member states. Although AI doesn't have a universal definition according to OECD and UNCTAD AI is defined as the "*ability of machines and systems to acquire and apply knowledge, and to carry out intelligent behaviour*".[2]

Even though AI can bring many benefits, there are drawbacks, for instance the threat to multiple jobs, which alone, already raises economic, ethical and societal issues. It is also important to note that pursuing a rapid technological progress like is happening right now, not only accelerates economic evolution but also may leave room for concerns related to fairness, privacy, safety and reliability.

[1] Michelle Nichols. 2023. "UN Security Council meets for first time on AI risks", accessed January 2, 2024. https://www.reuters.com/technology/un-security-council-meets-first-time-ai-risks-2023-07-18/#:~:text=UNITED%20NATIONS%2C%20July%2018%20(Reuters,to%20censor%20or%20repress%20people.

[2] ESCAP. 2017. "Artificial Intelligence in Asia and the Pacific", assessed January 2, 2024, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP_Artificial_Intelligence.pdf

The incorporation of AI gives rise to various conflicts and contradictions of value. Some examples include:

- Privacy may need to be sacrificed. To provide a better service to the consumer it may be required to reveal very personal information for the system to offer its best results,
- Explanations are more complicated. More accurate algorithms may be complex therefore users may find hard to understand, which can lead to mistrust and threaten human dignity,
- Fairness may be sacrificed. In order to provide the most accurate result on average, the algorithm might systematically discriminate specific minorities which leads to algorithmic bias.[3]

The objective is for AI to generally help society, rather than damage. However, ethical and societal issues have arisen which challenge human values. As stated in a UN chronicle: "*The guiding principle of AI is not to become autonomous or replace human intelligence*".[4]

Current Situation

The issue about the implications of Artificial Intelligence has been of upmost importance, especially due to an exponential growth since the end of the 20th century, the period of the "AI- Boom" (tableau s.d.). According to Statista there was a significant increase on the amount invested in AI globally. From 2016 to 2017 with USD 17.7 billion to USD 44.08billion and another great increase from 2020 with USD 67.85 billion to 2021 with USD 93.5 billion.[5]

[3] Jess Whittlestone. 2019. Rune Nyrup, Anna Alexandrova, Kanta Dihal, Stephen Cave, "Ethical and societal implications of algorithms, data, and artificial intelligence: a roadmap for research", accessed January 2024, https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Ethical-and-Societal-Implications-of-Data-and-AI-report-Nuffield-Foundat.pdf

[4] Audrey Azoulay. 2018. "Towards an Ethics of Artificial Intelligence", UN, accessed January 2, 2024, https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/towards-ethics-artificial-intelligence

[5] Bergur Thormundsson. "Global total corporate artificial intelligence (AI) investment from 2015 to 2022(in billion U.S. dollars)", Statista, July 7, 2023 https://www.statista.com/statistics/941137/ai-investment-and-funding-worldwide/

Although AI has the potential to improve the global economy and bring many benefits to society ethical concerns are being raised about privacy, fairness, equality and ethics. For these reasons delegates should focus on tackling such issues ensuring ethical usage of AI.

Concerns include, but are not limited to the fact that:

- The job market is already being impacted by the advance of AI including in medical fields as adoptions of robotics are being introduced to perform surgeries[6]
- According to the Department of Health and Social Care AI technologies are ready to receive nearly USD 20.4 million in government funding precisely to accelerate research areas in medicine. This raises the issue of what private information might be requested by AI[7].
- A significant increase is predicted with the introduction of autonomous cars, solving congestion problems but raising concerns about how to ensure total safety.[8]
- Criminal activity will also be more detectable with the upgrade of various features such as facial recognition technology, fingerprints, and security cameras. However, concerns are being raised about the high probability for algorithmic bias to occur.

[6] Jim McCartney. 2023. "AI Is Poised to "Revolutionize" Surgery", accessed January 2, 2024, https://www.facs.org/for-medical-professionals/news-publications/news-and-articles/bulletin/2023/june-2023-volume-108-issue-6/ai-is-poised-to-revolutionize-surgery/#:~:text=AI%20is%20particularly%20effective%20in,Tignanelli%20said.

[7] Andrea Chipman. 2023. "DHSC awards £16 million for pioneering AI research", accessed January 2, 2024 https://www.digitalhealth.net/2023/03/dhsc-awards-16-million-for-pioneering-ai-research/

[8] William Mattar, "Potential Problems with Self-Driving Cars", accessed January 2, 2024, https://williammattar.com/practice-areas/self-driving-car-accident-attorney/potential-problems-with-self-driving-cars/?utm_content=organic_direct

Frameworks

Principles are already being established by a range of member states and UN advisory bodies have already built numerous reports and declarations. For example, the UN *Report of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology on Robotics Ethics* in 2017 adopted on 14 September 2017. UNESCO had previously published a declaration in 2005, the *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Right* which addresses the issue of technologies applied to human beings[9]

The Asilomar AI principles were developed in 2027 from the work of a non-profit coalition "The Partnership on AI" which was founded by a conjunction of big corporations namely Meta and The IEEE Standards Association principles.[10]

Furthermore, UNESCO also organized many debates in 2018, including the first in Marrakech, Morocco on 12 December 2018. More recently on July 18th 2023 the UN Security Council had a meeting on Artificial Intelligence.[11] It produced in November 2021 the first ever global standard on AI ethics "*Recommendation on the ethics of Artificial intelligence*" which was adopted by 193 Member States.[12]

Focus of debate

AI, indeed, has the potential to enhance society and its purpose is well-intentioned. However, it raises challenges and concerns about individuality, ethics, and human dignity. Questions such as "How do we maintain accountability and responsibility as more and more decisions become automated?", "How can we ensure safety and trust an artificial body with our day-to-day tasks?", "Can personal data be shared to better

[9] Azoulay, "Towards an Ethics of Artificial Intelligence"
[10] Whittlestone, Nyrup, Alexandrova, Dihal, Cave, "Ethical and societal implications of algorithms, data, and artificial intelligence: a roadmap for research"
[11] Nichols, "UN Security Council meets for first time on AI risks"
[12] UNESCO, "Ethics of Artificial Intelligence"

the quality and efficiency of services without compromising informational autonomy?", "How can we prevent algorithmic bias" and so forth, are questions delegates should keep in mind in order to achieve a productive debate.

An international viewpoint is shared regarding the concerns of AI developments, but very few frameworks portray concise resolutions when it comes to ethical values and how they can clash with each other when put into practice. Global society needs discussions, laws and detailed mechanisms that address ethical and societal impacts on both modern days and upcoming days.

More rigorous understanding of the ways that technology might undermine autonomy and in what ways the public is willing to sacrifice independence for algorithmic intelligence should be discussed. Delegates are encouraged to be very specific when writing clauses and to discuss both positive and negative implications. Member states should also consider the frameworks provided in this background report as well as further proposals for the successful and accountable implementation of improvements and solutions to overcome ethical challenges.

Bibliography

ESCAP. 2017. "Artificial Intelligence in Asia and the Pacific." Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP_Artificial_Intelligence.pdf.

Marr, Bernard. 2021. "What Is The Impact Of Artificial Intelligence (AI) On Society?" Accessed january 2, 2024. https://bernardmarr.com/what-is-the-impact-of-artificial-intelligence-ai-on-society/.

Jess Whittlestone, Rune Nyrup, Anna Alexandrova, Kanta Dihal, Stephen Cave. 2019. "Ethical and societal implications of algorithms, data, and artificial intelligence: a roadmap for research." Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Ethical-and-Societal-Implications-of-Data-and-AI-report-Nuffield-Foundat.pdf.

Azoulay, Audrey. 2018. "Towards an Ethics of Artificial Intelligence." december. Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/towards-ethics-artificial-intelligence.

n.d. "What is the history of artificial intelligence (AI)?" Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.tableau.com/data-

insights/ai/history#:~:text=AI%20boom%3A%201980%2D1987,funding%20to%20support%20the%20researchers.
tableau. n.d. "What is the history of artificial intelligence (AI)?" Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.tableau.com/data-insights/ai/history#:~:text=AI%20boom%3A%201980%2D1987,funding%20to%20support%20the%20researchers.
Thormundsson, Bergur. 2023. "Global total corporate artificial intelligence (AI) investment from 2015 to 2022(in billion U.S. dollars)." july 7. Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.statista.com/statistics/941137/ai-investment-and-funding-worldwide/.
McCartney, Jim. 2023. "AI Is Poised to “Revolutionize” Surgery." june 7. Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.facs.org/for-medical-professionals/news-publications/news-and-articles/bulletin/2023/june-2023-volume-108-issue-6/ai-is-poised-to-revolutionize-surgery/#:~:text=AI%20is%20particularly%20effective%20in,Tignanelli%20said.
Chipman, Andrea. 2023. "DHSC awards £16 million for pioneering AI research." march 3. Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.digitalhealth.net/2023/03/dhsc-awards-16-million-for-pioneering-ai-research/.
Mattar, william. n.d. "Potential Problems with Self-Driving Cars." Accessed january 2, 2024. https://williammattar.com/practice-areas/self-driving-car-accident-attorney/potential-problems-with-self-driving-cars/?utm_content=organic_direct.
Azoulay, Audrey. 2018. "Towards an Ethics of Artificial Intelligence." December. Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/towards-ethics-artificial-intelligence.
Jess Whittlestone, Rune Nyrup, Anna Alexandrova, Kanta Dihal, Stephen Cave. 2019. "Ethical and societal implications of algorithms, data, and artificial intelligence: a roadmap for research." Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Ethical-and-Societal-Implications-of-Data-and-AI-report-Nuffield-Foundat.pdf.
Nichols, Michelle. 2023. "UN Security Council meets for first time on AI risks." July 18. Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.reuters.com/technology/un-security-council-meets-first-time-ai-risks-2023-07-18/#:~:text=UNITED%20NATIONS%2C%20July%2018%20(Reuters,to%20censor%20or%20repress%20people.
—. 2023. "UN Security Council meets for first time on AI risks." july 18. Accessed january 2, 2024. https://www.reuters.com/technology/un-security-council-meets-first-time-ai-risks-2023-07-18/#:~:text=UNITED%20NATIONS%2C%20July%2018%20(Reuters,to%20censor%20or%20repress%20people.
UNESCO. n.d. "Ethics of Artificial Intelligence." Accessed January 2, 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics.