Africa Tech For Development Initiative

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# Africa4Dev's Contribution to the Hamburg Declaration on Responsible AI for the SDGs

## Introduction

Africa4Dev is highly committed to advancing responsible AI policies that ensure sustainable, inclusive, and ethical AI development across Africa. As the world embraces AI for economic and social transformation, it is crucial that AI aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), addressing global challenges while ensuring equitable participation from all regions, particularly emerging economies.

We advocate for AI systems that promote social good, foster gender equality, and ensure environmental sustainability. Africa4Dev believes that AI should be accessible to all, particularly marginalized communities, and should be developed with ethical frameworks that prevent bias and ensure fairness. We emphasize the need for African representation in AI governance, equitable access to AI-driven opportunities, and stronger policy frameworks that align AI innovation with Africa's socio-economic and environmental priorities. By collaborating with governments, industry leaders, and civil society, Africa4Dev aims to shape AI policies that drive inclusive growth and meaningful technological progress across the continent.

This submission highlights Africa4Dev's recommendations for core commitments under the Hamburg Declaration on Responsible AI for the SDGs and outlines actionable policies across the five "Ps" of the 2030 Agenda: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships.

**People Commitment: Ensuring Inclusive and Ethical AI**

The people commitment necessitate that the Declaration prioritize the development and promotion of AI systems that respect human rights, diversity, and equity, ensuring that all communities especially marginalized and underserved populations benefit from AI advancements. The question of diversity and representation in AI data can be answered through establishment of policies that mandate and require diverse and inclusive datasets, ensuring that underrepresented groups and communities, languages, cultures, and perspectives are adequately represented in AI models. The Hamburg Declaration need to implement guidelines that mandate fairness, transparency, and accountability in AI applications, ensuring no group is unfairly disadvantaged.

The people commitment should also be premised on the ideals of AI for accessibility. How accessible are AI systems. There is a crucial need to advocate for development of AI solutions tailored for people with disabilities and rural communities, improving access to healthcare, education, and financial services. Advancing the Sustainable development goal of gender equality under goal 5 necessitates equitable AI Development. Regulations that eliminate gender bias in AI systems and promote women's participation in AI development, research, and leadership should be introduced and expanded in both the global North and global South.

**2. Planet Commitment: AI for Climate Action and Environmental Protection**

In advancement of the planetary commitment, the Hamburg Declaration would need to amplify the importance of its planetary commitment in the age of AI by advancing AI for sustainable environmental management, fostering a climate-resilient and eco-friendly future in line with goal 7 & 13. This commitment must transcend regional and jurisdictional limitations by supporting the development of AI applications capable of tracking deforestation, desertification, and biodiversity loss thereby enhancing environmental conservation globally.

The Declaration must also and encourage the use of renewable energy in AI infrastructures such as cooling systems for data houses and place less reliance on high consumption of energy models leading to advancement in development of energy-efficient AI models with the capacity to reduce carbon footprints. The need to enhance resilience in response to climate challenges and likelihood of high casualties during humanitarian crisis arising from natural disasters calls for urgent need to deploy advanced AI-driven early warning systems for natural disasters such as floods, droughts.

The global challenges of ozone layer depletion and emission from fossil fuel further necessitates the need for the people commitment to cover establishment of international standards that will drive international cooperation in green powered AI and adoption of green pact on environmental best practices. This will require establishment policy frameworks that mandate environmentally responsible AI development and investment in AI-powered circular economy initiatives.

**3. Prosperity Commitment: AI as a Catalyst for Economic Growth and Innovation**

Multiple crises are placing the global economy under serious threat. Global real GDP per capita growth is forecast to slow down in 2023 and with ever increasing challenging economic conditions, more workers are turning to informal employment[1]. Globally, labour productivity has increased and the unemployment rate has decreased. However, more progress is needed to increase employment opportunities, especially for young people, reduce informal employment and labour market inequality (particularly in terms of the gender pay gap), promote safe and secure working environments, and improve access to financial services to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth.

The global unemployment rate declined significantly in 2022, falling to 5.4 per cent from a peak of 6.6 per cent in 2020 as economies began recovering from the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. This rate was lower than the pre-pandemic level of 5.5 per cent in 2019. The estimated total global unemployment in 2022 was 192 million. Projections indicate that global unemployment is expected to decrease further to 5.3 per cent in 2023, equivalent to 191 million people[2].

Goal 8 under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) advocates for decent work, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and in achieving this objective the Hamburg Declaration need to harness AI to drive economic empowerment, job creation, and digital transformation particularly in the global south (Africa). The question of how AI can solve the economic challenges in underdeveloped economies should be at the front burner. There is hence a crucial need for AI Capacity Building. Investment must be accelerated in AI-focused education and vocational training to equip youth and professionals with the skills needed for the digital economy.

To accelerate global prosperity through AI, the Declaration must identify opportunities in AI for SMEs and Startups Africa for instance has some of the youngest and energetic populations in the world with forecasts for 2020 showing just one non-African country[3]. Tapping into this vast potential of the African youths through economic empowerment will drive economic development. The Declaration should identify the geographical nuances and cultural landscape peculiar to

[1] UN, 'Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all' <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/> accessed 8th March 2025
[2] ibid
[3] World Economic Forum on Africa, '19 of the world's 20 youngest countries are in Africa' (Aug 30, 2019), <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2019/08/youngest-populations-africa/> accessed 11th March 2025

different regions globally and advance best practices on adopting AI to drive SDG 8. This can be achieved through creation of AI innovation hubs, providing funding programs for African AI startups, and incentives for local businesses to integrate AI-driven solutions.

Agriculture offers another outlet to enhance global prosperity and particularly in Africa. While Scaling up AI applications in farming, climate-smart agriculture, and supply chain enhancement to improve food production is laudable, the Declaration must highlight how end users and AI can consumers in different countries easily access agricultural produce for export and import purposes thereby creating work opportunities through inter and intra trade. How can AI ensure food produce are not destroyed and are stored without using artificial preservatives? AI can be deployed for to monitor and store farm yields particularly in Africa where farmers can be connected with retailers to reduce food waste.

Agriculture has long been the heartbeat of Africa, employing over 60% of the continent's labour force and contributing approximately 23% to its GDP[4]. Yet, the sector is beleaguered by challenges such as erratic climate conditions, low productivity, post-harvest losses, and inadequate access to markets. As the demand for innovative agricultural solutions grows, artificial intelligence (AI) offers a transformative opportunity to enhance productivity and sustainability in African agriculture.

**4. Peace Commitment: Ethical AI Governance and Protection against Misuse**

In an era driven by high tech innovations, it has become integral to advance global guidelines that will foster global peace and unity. AI is like a two-edged sword and if not properly guard railed can lead to disruption of global peace and security. Under the commitment for peace more specifically under Goal 16 of the SDGs, the Declaration should ensure that no country should design, develop, deploy or use military applications of AI in armed conflict that violate international humanitarian and human rights laws. This should include relying on AI to select or engage targets autonomously and thus would ultimately guarantee that geopolitical competition over emerging technologies will not destabilize international peace and security.

Recent conflicts have become testing grounds for AI military applications and autonomous surveillance. The potential integration of AI with nuclear weapons and the advent of quantum-AI systems would undoubtedly destabilize global security. Hence the Declaration must ensure the need to develop and enforce strong AI governance frameworks to prevent misuse of AI, protect human rights, and uphold ethical standards in AI applications. AI-driven proactive warning systems to detect and mitigate potential conflicts need to be adopted as AI should be used to advance global peace and prosperity and not be used as a tool to cause chaos and crisis.

[4] Joshua Muhammed, 'AI for Agriculture: The African Perspective' (African Leadership Magazine, January 3, 2025), https://www.africanleadershipmagazine.co.uk/ai-for-agriculture-the-african-perspectives/#respond accessed 11th March 2025

Misinformation easily spreads like wild fire in the era of AI particularly through deep fakes and this if unchecked can hugely and negatively impact on the public, democracy and political stability. It has then become extremely necessary to adopt policy measures that can help in use of AI in content moderation to combat fake news, hate speech, and political disinformation.

**5. Partnerships Commitment: Multistakeholder AI Collaboration for Sustainable Development**

Aligning with the partnership commitment, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 17 is about revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda is universal and calls for action by all countries developed and developing to ensure no one is left behind. It requires partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society[5].

Shaping a responsible AI for The Sustainable Development Goals can only be realized with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation to ensure no one is left behind in the journey of AI development. To ensure this, and advance the core mandate of the Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC), the Declaration must include commitments to strengthening global, regional, and cross-sector collaborations to ensure responsible AI adoption globally.

Also, public and private AI collaborations should be upheld to build partnerships between governments, tech companies, and research institutions in accelerating ethical AI development. This is more so as collaboration is important in driving research and innovation for a better universe. Government must be at the center of this collaboration by providing funding and research grants while at same time mapping out AI working groups that will facilitate knowledge exchange between stakeholders both at the local, regional and international levels.

There should be a global AI data inclusion policy and data sharing agreement that advances seamless equitable AI data-sharing with a view to promoting equal global opportunities for all countries to advance responsible AI for the SDGs in their respective states. Such cross-sharing of data will enable under resourced countries grow their AI. Finally harmonization of AI policies should be a priority for international organizations to help align AI regulations and ethical standards across countries, ensuring AI policies are locally inclusive and globally relevant. Although different countries have diverse AI policies however, a unified and structured international AI policy capable of advancing the global mandate of the SDGs is more ideal.



[5] UN, 'Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development' https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/ accessed 15th March 2025

**Conclusion**

Bridging the inclusion gap is all the more important given AI's potential for sustainable development. With many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets off track, artificial intelligence can help rescue the development agenda. To truly harness AI's potential, we need international cooperation[6].

Africa4Dev firmly believes that AI must serve all humanity, with a focus on sustainable, ethical, and equitable development. The Hamburg Declaration represents a critical step toward ensuring AI is used responsibly and inclusively, particularly for emerging economies like Africa.

To achieve this vision, Africa4Dev urges all stakeholders to:

1. Commit to inclusive AI policies that promote diversity, fairness, and equity.
2. Leverage AI for climate action, economic growth, and human rights protection.
3. Establish strong AI governance frameworks that prevent misuse and uphold ethical standards.
4. Strengthen multilateral partnerships that foster AI collaboration between countries and the global AI community.

Through these commitments, we can ensure that AI becomes a force for good, driving sustainable progress while respecting the cultural and economic realities of diverse societies. Africa4Dev looks forward to further engagement in shaping AI policy and governance for a just, inclusive, and responsible AI future.



[6] Vibhu Mishra, 'Make AI work for everyone, UN chief says' (UN 3 September 2024), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/09/1153881> accessed 15th March 2025

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