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Governance of artificial intelligence within the framework of the United Nations

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ABSTRACT:

The world currently faces ongoing technological and automation challenges, particularly in the wake of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which has brought about fundamental changes in various fields. One of the key products of this revolution is artificial intelligence. It has become an important indicator of countries' progress and development in various areas, prompting many to adopt it to varying degrees.

However, this almost total reliance on artificial intelligence systems has raised numerous legal issues, prompting the international community to establish governance frameworks for artificial intelligence at the international, regional and national levels through the United Nations and its specialised agencies, such as UNESCO.

Accordingly, we pose the following question:

What is the United Nations' strategy for governing artificial intelligence?

To answer this question, the research is divided into two parts:

1. The concept of artificial intelligence governance.
2. The stages and principles of AI governance.

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Introduction:

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science that aims to create systems capable of performing tasks that usually require human intelligence. Such tasks include developing various rights and positively impacting sectors such as health, development, education, energy, personal data protection, peace establishment and avoiding international crises. Without a legal framework to govern this field, there is a risk that artificial intelligence could become the preserve of certain countries and companies only.

In response, the United Nations convened a summit in 2024 through its High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, emphasising the necessity of governing artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity.

Objective of the study:

The aim of this study is to:

Address the various measures adopted by the United Nations to govern artificial intelligence.

- Examine the mechanisms adopted by the United Nations for this purpose.

Significance of the study:

The importance of this study is highlighted by the following factors:

The extensive use of artificial intelligence in today's world has become a cause for concern and a threat to the international community, raising fears about this significant development. It is therefore essential to shed light on the key principles and standards that the United Nations should adopt for the governance of artificial intelligence and its ethical considerations.

Methodology of the study:

This research paper employs content analysis by reviewing documents related to the governance of artificial intelligence, as well as a comparative method to analyse recommendations issued by various bodies emphasising the necessity of artificial intelligence governance.

Accordingly, we pose the following question:

What is the United Nations' strategy for governing artificial intelligence?

1. The concept of artificial intelligence governance.
2. The stages and principles of artificial intelligence governance.

First:The concept of artificial intelligence governance:

1. Definition of artificial intelligence governance:

AI governance refers to a set of policies, procedures and standards that ensure the responsible and ethical development and use of AI systems. The objectives of this governance include promoting transparency, fairness and accountability in AI applications, while also safeguarding privacy and fostering trust in these technologies[1].

In order to address the numerous challenges faced[2] by the international community, member states have agreed to establish a number of mechanisms, including:

High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence:

This multidisciplinary body was proposed in 2020 as part of the United Nations Secretary-General's roadmap for digital cooperation (A/74/821). In October 2023, the body conducted analyses and provided recommendations for the international governance of artificial intelligence that would benefit humanity across various fields, including health, education, and the economy. These recommendations are intended to support the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Among the body's members are 39 Arab countries.

The establishment of this advisory body is a significant step in the United Nations' efforts to address governance issues related to artificial intelligence at an international level. This new initiative will reinforce a comprehensive global approach by leveraging the United Nations' unique ability to

convene stakeholders as a global forum for addressing critical challenges. Assembling experts from governments, the private sector, the research community, civil society and academia will give the body global and balanced representation across gender and multidisciplinary fields, enabling it to play a unique role in harnessing artificial intelligence for humanity. Its direct tasks include building a scientific consensus on related global risks and challenges, assisting in the use of artificial intelligence to achieve sustainable development goals, and enhancing international cooperation in AI management. It will also help to bridge the gaps between various existing and emerging initiatives[3].

The Artificial Intelligence Governance Committee of the World Economic Forum:

An initiative launched by the World Economic Forum's Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution to promote the transparent and ethical development and deployment of artificial intelligence systems. The initiative aims to establish global AI governance standards and ensure positive technological advancement through collaboration with cybersecurity centres, financial and monetary systems, and health and healthcare organisations. The committee comprises over 250 members from more than 200 organisations[4].

2. Objectives of Artificial Intelligence Governance:

As artificial intelligence technologies rapidly expand across various sectors, the need for effective governance increases to ensure the achievement of several vital objectives, including:

Balancing innovation and protection: supporting technical development while establishing clear controls to reduce potential risks.

- Transparency: providing detailed clarification of how AI systems operate and their decision-making mechanisms.
- Fairness: ensuring that the systems' outputs are free from any bias or discrimination that could affect the results.
- Accountability: Clearly defining responsibilities to ensure that developers and users of AI systems can be held accountable when necessary.
- Privacy protection: ensuring that data, especially personal data, is handled in accordance with laws and ethical standards[5].

Second: Stages and Principles of Artificial Intelligence Governance:

1. Stages of Artificial Intelligence Governance:

Artificial intelligence governance comprises several essential stages:

Formulating strategies and policies: identifying objectives and general directions for adopting artificial intelligence.

Developing infrastructure: creating technological platforms and data centres to support AI applications.

- Building human capacity: Training national personnel in AI techniques.

Implementing standards and regulatory frameworks: establishing standards and controls for the use and development of AI systems.

- Continuous monitoring and evaluation: Overseeing the implementation of policies and updating them according to technological developments[6].

2. Principles of International Governance for Artificial Intelligence:

According to a 2021 UNESCO report, the key principles of international AI governance are as follows:

- Proportionality and non-harm:

The rationale for using AI systems and selecting the specific AI method should be justified according to the following:

The chosen AI method should be suitable for achieving the intended legitimate purpose or objective and align with the requirements for achieving it.

- The chosen AI method must not violate the core values outlined in this recommendation; in particular, its use must not infringe upon or exploit human rights.

- The selected AI method should be contextually appropriate and based on accurate scientific foundations. - The final decision should remain with humans in cases involving decisions believed to have irremediable or difficult-to-remedy consequences, or relating to matters of life and death. In particular, the use of AI systems to assess the impact of internet users and social media or for mass surveillance purposes should be avoided[7].

- Safety and security:

Efforts should be made to prevent and address unintended harm (safety-related risks) and vulnerabilities to attacks (security-related risks) throughout the lifecycle of artificial intelligence systems, in order to ensure the safety and security of humans, the environment and ecosystems. Ensuring the safety and security of AI systems requires the establishment of sustainable frameworks for data utilisation that allow for privacy preservation and improve the training and approval of AI models using quality data for this purpose.

- Justice, fairness and non-discrimination:

Those involved in artificial intelligence should promote social justice, ensure fairness and prevent discrimination in accordance with international law. A comprehensive approach is required to ensure that the benefits of AI technology are accessible to all, empowering everyone to access and enjoy these benefits. This approach must take into account the special needs of various age groups, cultural systems, linguistic communities, people with disabilities, girls and women, and marginalised, vulnerable or underprivileged populations. Member states should enhance the accessibility of AI systems for all stakeholders, including local communities, in ways that are relevant to local contexts, while respecting linguistic plurality and cultural diversity. Additionally, Member States should strive to address digital divides and ensure that everyone can benefit from AI and participate in its development. At the national level, Member States should promote justice and fairness between rural and urban areas, as well as among all individuals, regardless of race, colour, descent, gender, age, language, religion, political opinions, national or ethnic origin, social status related to birth, disability or any other grounds for discrimination[8].

- Sustainability:

Building sustainable communities requires achieving a variety of interconnected goals related to human, social, cultural, economic and environmental factors. The development of artificial intelligence technologies can either support or hinder the achievement of sustainability-related

goals, depending on how these technologies are utilised in countries at different stages of development. Therefore, it is essential to continuously evaluate the human, social, cultural, economic and environmental consequences of artificial intelligence technologies, bearing in mind their impact on sustainability as a set of constantly evolving objectives. These objectives are currently reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations[9].

- Right to privacy and data protection:

The right to privacy is essential for preserving human dignity, safeguarding independence, and protecting personal endeavours. Consequently, privacy must be respected, protected and promoted throughout the lifecycle of AI systems. Data related to AI systems must be collected, used, shared, stored, and deleted in a manner consistent with international law and the values and principles outlined in this recommendation. This must be done in accordance with national, regional, and international legal frameworks pertaining to this issue[10].

- Human oversight and decision-making:

While humans may sometimes choose to rely on AI systems for efficiency reasons, the decision to relinquish control or oversight in specific contexts remains in human hands. While humans can use AI systems to make decisions and take action, no AI system can ever replace humans in bearing ultimate responsibility and accountability.

- Transparency:

The transparency and explainability of artificial intelligence systems are often essential for ensuring respect for, and protection of, human rights, fundamental freedoms and ethical principles. Transparency is also necessary for the effective implementation of national and international accountability systems. A lack of transparency can limit the ability to effectively challenge decisions based on AI system outcomes, which could lead to violations of the right to a fair trial and the right to remedies, as well as restrictions on the legal use of these systems[11].

- Responsibility and accountability:

Those involved in artificial intelligence, including member states, must respect, protect and enhance human rights and fundamental freedoms. They should also promote environmental protection and ecological systems, taking on the ethical and legal responsibilities that fall upon them in accordance with national and international law, especially provisions concerning member states' human rights obligations. This includes responsibilities relating to AI actors physically present in their territories and under their control, and adherence to ethical guidelines throughout the AI system lifecycle. Ultimately, the ethical responsibility for decisions and actions based in any way on an AI system should be attributed to the AI actors depending on their respective roles in the system's lifecycle[12].

- Awareness and knowledge:

Efforts should be made to raise awareness and understanding of artificial intelligence technologies and the value of data among the general public. This can be achieved through accessible education, civic engagement, digital skills training, training in AI ethics, media and information literacy, and joint training initiatives involving governments, international governmental organisations, civil society, the private sector, academia, the media and local community leaders. It is also essential to consider existing linguistic, social and cultural diversity to ensure effective public participation and

enable all members of society to make informed decisions about using AI systems and enjoy protection from unlawful influences[13].

- Governance and adaptive multilateral cooperation:

International law and national sovereignty must be respected in data usage. In accordance with international law, states may regulate data produced within or passing through their territories, and take measures to effectively regulate data matters, including data protection, while respecting the right to privacy, in accordance with international law and other rules and standards related to human rights[14].

In this context, it is also noteworthy that:

a. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a report in 2020 outlining a set of guidelines for the ethical use of AI. The aim was to promote responsible and ethical practices. These principles include:

Transparency: AI systems should be understandable, allowing individuals to understand how decisions are made.

- Accountability: Responsibilities should be clearly assigned in the event of any errors by the systems.

- Inclusion: All segments of society should benefit from AI technologies without discrimination[15].

b. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has indicated a set of principles aimed at ensuring the safe and reliable use of AI. These principles include:

- Safety: AI systems should be designed to withstand and safely handle errors.

- Data privacy: This standard emphasises the strict protection of individual and user data.

AI Governance Standards:

Enhancing International Cooperation

Aims to establish joint strategies that enable countries to tackle the risks and challenges associated with artificial intelligence.

Focus on sustainable development: emphasises the necessity of using AI technologies to enhance economic development.

- Monitoring risks and negative impacts: These entities aim to develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that raise awareness of risks and assist in formulating strategies to mitigate their effects.

- Focus on education and training: knowledge and training are considered essential for empowering individuals to understand technology and use it in a way that qualifies them to compete in the job market.

- Interaction with the private sector: providing an appropriate legislative environment that supports private initiatives and ensures modern technologies serve society and achieve the public good[16].

In September 2024, the United Nations, through the High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, issued a comprehensive report titled Artificial Intelligence Governance for Humanity. In this report, the international community agreed on a set of principles that all artificial intelligence users should adhere to. These principles are as follows:

- Artificial intelligence governance must be comprehensive and inclusive of everyone for their benefit.
- AI governance should prioritise the public good.
AI governance must align with data governance and ensure the availability of public data.
- AI governance should be global, networked and based on adaptive cooperation between multiple stakeholders.
AI governance should be based on the United Nations Charter, international human rights law and other agreed international obligations, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.
These principles emphasise the importance of human rights and the need for greater clarity regarding the effective implementation of the guidelines, including those related to data governance. We must ensure that inclusivity is more than just rhetoric and that marginalised groups are represented[17].

Conclusion:

The governance of artificial intelligence is one of the most complex and dangerous challenges that society may face in the future. This complexity stems from the fact that, by its very nature, artificial intelligence is based on the unknown, rendering its future unpredictable. Additionally, rapid technological advancements present a significant challenge as technology is interconnected with various factors. If artificial intelligence were to result in risks or errors in technological systems, it could pose a great threat. The social and psychological impacts of AI, along with its economic and political implications, are considerable. Therefore, it is essential to regulate AI in accordance with principles agreed by the international community within the United Nations framework.
I therefore conclude that the recommendations issued by the United Nations in the 2024 report Artificial Intelligence Governance for Humanity must be adopted. These recommendations include:
- establishing a scientific team focused on AI.
- Launching a political dialogue on AI.
- Creating a forum for AI standards.
- Developing a capacity-building network.
- establishing a global AI fund.

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