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The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law

***Explanatory memorandum submitted by the co-Rapporteurs,
Ms. M. Rempel Garner (Canada) and Ms. N. Lugangira (United Republic of Tanzania)***

1. When ChatGPT was launched in 2022, the world crossed a new frontier in technological advancement, with the development and deployment of large language models, and a new chapter opened in the development of artificial intelligence (AI). This presented an opportunity for engaged Member Parliaments of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to explore ways to close the gap between technological advancements and the pace of legislative oversight. Legislators around the world were also presented with an opportunity to express an interest in understanding the related benefits and challenges affecting their constituents, and how best they might protect them from the negative impacts of irresponsible use of AI.
2. At the 147th IPU Assembly held in Angola in October 2023, a debate was initiated among interested delegates about the need to strengthen dialogue on the critical issue of AI, particularly in relation to its impact on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. At this Assembly, the co-Rapporteurs of the draft resolution initiated a dialogue and commenced work towards the adoption of a resolution that would reflect the values of the IPU and which would provide a space for delegates to discuss their priorities in relation to this increasingly important issue.
3. In December 2023, ahead of the development of the draft resolution, the co-Rapporteurs established a framework to begin exploring the structure of the future debate on the impacts of AI as well as to collect expert opinions. It was determined that a series of [online workshops](#) would be held to bring together representatives of the IPU Member Parliaments and subject matter experts in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the benefits and challenges relating to emergent impacts of AI. It was decided that these workshops would be chaired and led by the co-Rapporteurs.
4. The first workshop was held on 22 January 2024 and was entitled "[A changing landscape: An overview of recent advances in artificial intelligence](#)". During this session, parliamentarians heard from leading experts about the fundamentals of AI, which technologies are affecting the world and in which ways, and how they are developed and deployed. The session was moderated by Ms. M. Rempel Garner (Canada), co-Rapporteur of the resolution, and included guest presenters Mr. Yoshua Bengio, Founder and Scientific Director of the Montreal Institute for Artificial Intelligence (Mila) and Ms. Inma Martinez, Chair of the Multi-stakeholder Experts Group and Co-Chair of the Steering Committee at the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI).

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5. On 15 February 2024, the second workshop was held, entitled "[The emerging impacts of artificial intelligence on society.](#)" In this session, parliamentarians heard from international experts with critical perspectives on the impacts of AI on democratic institutions, labour, human rights, warfare and industry. The session was moderated by Ms. N. Lugangira (United Republic of Tanzania), co-Rapporteur of the resolution, and included the following leading authorities: Mr. Joel Blit, Senior Fellow at the Centre of International Governance Innovation and Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Waterloo; Mr. Philip Thigo, Adviser to the Government of Kenya and Member of the UN High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence; and Mr. Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
6. On 6 March 2024, the third workshop was held, entitled "[Global responses to emerging advanced artificial intelligence technology.](#)" In this session, parliamentarians discussed the large-scale deployment of society-changing AI around the world, and considered the development of frameworks governing its research, development, deployment and use. The session provided an overview of various current issues, including AI-related initiatives currently underway, approaches emerging as best practices, and the existing gaps between advances in AI and regulatory frameworks. The session was moderated by Mr. D. Naughten (Ireland), Chair of the IPU Working Group on Science and Technology, and it included the following experts: Ms. Carol Roach, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bahamas; Mr. Martin Ulbrich, Senior Expert on AI Policy, DG CONNECT, European Commission; Mr. Quintin Chou-Lambert, Senior Programme Officer, Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology.
7. At the 148th IPU Assembly in Geneva in March 2024, the co-Rapporteurs participated in the debate on the draft resolution on AI at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. The debate also featured presentations by Mr. Tomas Lamanauskas, Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and Mr. Prateek Sibal, Programme Specialist, Digital Policies and Digital Transformation Section, UNESCO. The presentations explored the positive outcomes and opportunities arising from AI in health, digital agriculture, natural disaster management, radio telecommunications and climate change. They also underlined the reality that 2.6 billion people around the world still remain offline and have benefited little from the advancements in AI-based technology. It was also stressed that the regulation of AI should be grounded in normative frameworks, such as international human rights law.
8. In addition, on 25 March 2024, a workshop on artificial intelligence (AI) was held during the 148th Assembly. Main takeaways from the workshop included the need for international collaboration, the importance of striking a balance between the need to regulate AI and allow innovation, the need for greater digital literacy through education and the risks posed to democracy through election interference. Participants noted that government policy on AI should not be dictated by a handful of multinational corporations located in the Global North and that the perspectives of countries in the Global South should be considered when discussing the regulation of AI technologies; and that there was also consensus regarding the need for AI to be used safely.
9. The IPU President, Dr. Tulia Ackson, in her opening remarks to the workshop, noted that the experts had outlined the scale of the challenge to be addressed, and that it was now with parliamentarians to ensure that the legislative framework was in place to allow everyone to participate in the benefits that AI could bring, while also managing the risks. Dr. Ackson further noted that: "It is very rare that parliament is called upon to take action in an area where there is very little existing legislation. Yet, that is where we are today. We need to create a regulatory framework for AI almost from scratch, even as the technology itself continues to evolve very fast. It is a big challenge, perhaps also a big opportunity for regional and international cooperation."
10. On behalf of the IPU, the co-Rapporteurs provided written input in March 2024 to the *Interim Report: Governing AI for Humanity* of the UN Secretary-General's AI Advisory Body. The co-Rapporteurs underlined the role of parliaments as enablers of AI governance. In their input, the co-Rapporteurs observed that through their legislative and oversight functions,

parliaments provided the bridge between internationally agreed principles and obligations and the reality of people's lives. Yet, too often, executives participated in inter-governmental negotiations without due consultation with the legislative branch. Implementation gaps were the logical conclusion. The co-Rapporteurs invited the UNSG's AI Advisory Body to insist on the need for implication of parliaments at all levels, international, regional as well as national.

11. The resolution underlines the alarming rate at which unchecked advances in AI affect some of the most vulnerable citizens, including those that are unable to enjoy the benefits of these advances. As previously mentioned, the resolution works toward closing the gap between the advances in human-driven technological innovation and the negative impacts often unregulated by the rule of law. Particularly of concern is the vulnerability of existing democratic institutions in relation to AI, and the harmful impact of irresponsible use of AI on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. At the same time, the resolution recognizes the value of harnessing and strengthening existing and new legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure the responsible and ethical development, deployment, and use of AI.
12. Finally, the resolution renews the call for attention on the responsible creation, deployment, and use of AI as a critical goal of the work of parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.