DIRECTORATE OF PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATION NORTH-SOUTH CENTRE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE







<u>Lisbon Forum 2025</u> Al and Global Governance: Rights, Representativity and Readiness

28-29 October, Ismaili Centre Lisbon (Portugal)

Concept note

CONTEXT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming how societies communicate, learn, govern, and interact. It is also reshaping key public domains—such as education, legal systems, public services, justice and even democratic processes. As these technologies become increasingly embedded in daily life, the imperative to govern them in ways that uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as cultural diversity becomes more urgent.

In response to these challenges, the Council of Europe has adopted the world's first international treaty - the <u>Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights</u>, <u>Democracy and the Rule of Law</u>. This pioneering instrument establishes a human rights-based approach to the governance of AI technologies. Alongside initiatives such as the <u>EU AI Act</u>, the <u>African Union's Continental AI strategy</u>¹, or the forthcoming Arab AI Strategy, a new global governance landscape is emerging to ensure AI technologies are inclusive and anchored in international human rights standards.

Yet significant challenges remain. Cross-regional cooperation, legal harmonisation and knowledge exchange are still limited. Al literacy - especially among policymakers, regulators and young people, who represent the largest group of technology users - remains critically low.

A 2023 OECD survey found that only 14% of public sector employees across member states had received any training related to AI or data science, despite the growing integration of algorithmic tools in areas such as welfare, education, policing and immigration. Within the judiciary, studies and assessments by the Council of Europe's European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) have reported the need for assessing the legal implications of AI tools used in judicial processes by legal professionals. Globally, the World Economic Forum reports that fewer than 25% of teachers feel adequately prepared to educate students about AI. AI literacy remains largely absent from formal education systems, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. According to UNESCO's 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, two-thirds of young people surveyed use AI-enabled technologies daily, yet fewer than one in five had received any guidance on how AI works or how it may affect their rights, opportunities, or social environments.

Moreover, while issues such as algorithmic bias, privacy and regulation are gaining traction on international agendas, the intercultural dialogue dimension of AI remain notably underexplored. This gap presents risks for inclusive democratic societies. Most AI systems are developed and trained in dominant linguistic and cultural contexts, leaving many perspectives underrepresented or misrepresented.

This Forum is part of the policy programme of the <u>Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe</u> - which attaches great importance to the protection and empowerment of citizens

¹ Endorsed in July 2024 by African Union Executive Council during its 45th Ordinary Session in Accra, Ghana.

with a particular focus on children, youth and vulnerable persons in the face of new and emerging threats posed by AI. The 2025 Lisbon Forum will tackle the above-mentioned interconnected challenges through a dual lens of intercultural dialogue and capacity building - recognising AI not only as a regulatory issue but also as a cultural and civic challenge. It will promote inclusive, participatory and cross-regional responses to ensure that AI serves all communities and upholds shared values in an increasingly digital world.

THE LISBON FORUM - AN INTERREGIONAL PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE

Since 1994, the Lisbon Forum of the North-South Centre has been a flagship event providing a platform for interregional exchange among representatives of governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities, and civil society — the quadrilogue — to discuss the global role of the Council of Europe in the areas of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In line with the mandate of the North-South Centre, the Forum maintains a global focus, with particular attention to the Southern Mediterranean region and Africa.

Organised in close collaboration with the Council of Europe's Digital Governance and Sport department, the 2025 edition of the Lisbon Forum will build on the Council of Europe's new Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. It will provide a space for dialogue, policy reflection, and capacity-building, engaging stakeholders from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Reinforcing its mission of intercultural dialogue in the digital age, the Forum will place strong emphasis on AI literacy and capacity-building — targeting public authorities, legal professionals, and young people, with particular attention to vulnerable groups.

Organised back-to-back with the final meeting of the Steering Committee of the South Programme V—
"Protecting human rights, rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern
Mediterranean" — a joint initiative of the European Union and the Council of Europe, and supported by
this Programme, the Forum will further strengthen synergies between the Council of Europe's
Neighbourhood Policy in the Southern Mediterranean and the work of the North-South Centre, while
also broadening its outreach across the African continent.

PARTICIPANTS

The Forum will gather representatives from international and regional organisations (e.g., African Union, Arab League), as well as representatives of governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities and civil society, youth networks, and academia from Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Enhanced understanding of AI vis-à-vis the protection of fundamental rights and democracy principles having as a reference the Council of Europe's global Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.
- Strengthened contacts and cooperation among stakeholders from Europe, Africa and the Middle East on inclusive and rights-based Al governance.
- Identification and exchange of innovative practices in capacity-building and digital governance, including expanded use and regional adaptation of capacity-building tools such as the "HUDERIA methodology" (acronym for Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law Impact Assessment).
- Development of actionable proposals for integrating intercultural dialogue and digital literacy into Al-related policies and governance frameworks.

FORMAT

The Forum will take place over two days. It will feature a variety of plenary sessions, parallel workshops, and side events. Simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, English and French will be provided during plenary sessions.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Tuesday 28 October

9:00 Welcome remarks

- Nazim AHMAD, Ismaili Imamat's Representative in Portugal
- Pilar MORALES, Executive Director of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe
- Portuguese authorities (tbc)
- Christopher CUTAJAR, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Tourism at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of Malta

9:30 Fireside chat session

<u>Moderator</u>: Matthias KLOTH, Head of the Digital Governance and Sport Department, Council of Europe

- Gordon PACE, Centre for Distributed Ledger Technologies and Department of Computer Science, University of Malta (tbc)
- Damian EKE, School of Computer Science, University of Nottingham, and African Brain Data Network & International Brain Initiative
- Hoda BARAKA, Advisor to Egypt's Minister of ICT for Technology Talent Development
- Waldemar GONÇALVES, President-Director of the National Data Protection Authority of Brazil (ANPD)

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 Plenary session | Human Rights-based Al governance: from strategies to action

Overcoming the challenges of implementation through Al literacy

<u>Moderator</u>: Tobias FLESSEMKEMPER, Head of the Youth Department, Council of Europe

Panellists:

- Neema LUGANGIRA, Member of Parliament, Tanzania, Chair of African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance (APNIG) and Secretary General of Women Political Leaders (WPL)
- Kenneth BRINCAT, CEO of the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) (tbc)
- Janice RICHARDSON, Director at Insight
- Representative of Arab ICT Organisation (AICTO) (tbc)

13:00 Lunch break

14:30 Parallel workshops

16:00 Coffee break

16:30 Plenary session | Digital Dialogue or Digital Divide? AI, Inclusion, and Cultural Representation

Moderator: (tbc)

Panellists:

- Josep M. GANYET, Partner and CEO at Mortesen
- Representative of the OIF (tbc)
- Representative of ALECSO (tbc)

19:30 Reception (tbc)

Wednesday 29 October

9:00-11:00 Parallel workshops

14:00 *Lunch*

15:30 Presentation of the conclusions by the General Rapporteurs

- Salwa HAMROUNI, Professor of Public Law, Faculty of Legal, Political and Social Sciences of Tunis, Honorary President of the Tunisian Association of Constitutional Law
- Vera Lúcia RAPOSO, Associate Professor with Aggregation and Vice Dean,
 NOVA School of Law Faculdade de Direito da Universidade NOVA de Lisboa

High-level closing panel

- Alain BERSET, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Miguel Ángel MORATINOS, Under-Secretary of United Nations and High Representative of its Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC)
- Ambassador Francesca CAMILLERI VETTIGER, Permanent Representative of Malta to the Council of Europe, President of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe and President of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.
- Representatives of other regional/international organisations