

Report on Designing AI Governance: Human Rights and Multistakeholder Leadership

Introduction

On July 8, 2026, following the inaugural UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance (UNGDAI), the [Global Network Initiative \(GNI\)](#) and the [Centre for Communications Governance \(CCG\)](#) at the National University of Delhi convened a diverse group of stakeholders at the Palais des Nations in Geneva under the [Multistakeholder Approaches to Participation in AI Governance \(MAP-AI\)](#) initiative. This session built on the [submissions the MAP-AI community has made](#) to the UNGDAI conversations MAP-AI organized in February 2026 during the India AI Impact Summit, and brought together participants from civil society, academia, industry, and multilateral institutions with strong global majority representation.

Members heard from the co-chairs of the first UN Global Dialogue on AI governance, built cross-regional connections on the four themes of the Dialogue, and strategized on how to effectively embed human rights-based processes, priorities, and commitments into AI governance, looking ahead to the 2027 UNGDAI in New York and the 2027 Swiss AI summit. The session formed part of a [larger Multistakeholder Convening on AI Governance](#), coordinated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) B-Tech Project, BSR, Global South Network for Trustworthy AI, and the Citizens' Track on AI Governance.

After a fireside chat with the UNGDAI co-chairs, and scene-setting remarks from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and UNESCO, participants collaborated in four breakout groups mirroring the [UNGDAI's thematic clusters](#), held under the Chatham House rule. The session closed with a plenary discussion and concluding remarks from the OHCHR.

Fireside Chat with the UNGDAI Co-Chairs

Moderated by [Rumman Choudhary](#) (Humane Intelligence PBC), the fireside chat featured UNGDAI co-chairs: [Ms. Egriselda Lopez](#), Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations, and [Mr. Rein Tammasaar](#), Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United

Nations. The moderator opened by noting that, at a moment of accelerating governance, MAP-AI stands out for its targeted approach to inclusivity in both AI policy and implementation. Regulation, she observed, is not the only lever to enforce human-centred AI governance: community norms, standards, and convenings like the Global Dialogue can provide targeted direction while regulation follows. Building these norms requires rethinking what counts as evidence, expanding participation, and grounding governance in a range of lived realities.

Ambassador Tammsaar described the Dialogue as a three-phase process: preparation, the Dialogue itself, and the forthcoming co-chairs summary and follow-up. He celebrated the Dialogue's rich discussion and the participation of over [100 countries](#), 1,800 entities, and 2,200 participants. The Dialogue's core achievement, he said, was creating a UN-convened platform for meaningful institutional exchange, one he hopes will yield coalitions to carry the agenda forward.

Acknowledging criticism that not all member states could be accommodated, he noted efforts to finance participation for those unable to travel, and credited the Independent International Scientific Panel's report for grounding the discussion in a shared baseline of evidence. He urged stakeholders to raise awareness and keep building evidence to ensure that the second Dialogue will be more substantial and oriented towards practical results, including new institutional thinking.

Ambassador Lopez focused on participation and inclusion. She thanked the Swiss Government for supporting the Dialogue, and told participants their involvement "is not an accessory, it is essential". She acknowledged missing voices – indigenous peoples, environmental groups, women's groups – partly due to language barriers, which made the regional dialogues especially effective, and urged stakeholders to organize deliberately to bring those voices in next time. She stressed that the Dialogue builds on rather than replaces national and regional processes, offering a process that captures lessons, identifies areas of action, identifies gaps, and invests in capacity building so that developing countries are not overwhelmed by a fragmented landscape. As new co-chairs take over, Ambassador Lopez urged continued trust in the process. Closing, the moderator observed that "access without agency is dependence" – Dialogues like this give people the agency to move the agenda forward.

Scene-Setting Remarks

[Remy Friedman](#), Senior Advisor on Business and Human Rights at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign affairs, described preparations for the 2027 Swiss AI Summit, including: (i) convening academia, industry, experts, and civil society through connecting existing communities rather than creating new ones, in line with the Freedom Online Coalition's commitment to strengthen Global South representation; (ii) consistently linking governance with human rights, on the conviction that innovation and human rights should reinforce rather than compete with one another, consistent with the [São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines](#); and (iii) investing in dialogue before regulation or policy, bringing stakeholders in at the outset.

[Cedric Wachholz](#), Chief of Section for Digital Policies and Digital Transformation at UNESCO, drew lessons from implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, which were endorsed by more than 80 countries, explaining how it provides a shared normative baseline and a common assessment language. His central message reinforced the day's theme: Multistakeholder participation cannot be an afterthought, it must be ensured from the outset.

Breakout Discussions

Participants were divided into four groups aligned with each of the UNGDAI's four thematic clusters. Discussions were held under Chatham House Rule; the summaries below convey all substance without individual attribution.

[AI Opportunities and Implications](#)

This group examined the strengths and gaps of the first Dialogues, with the goal of coming up with recommendations for the co-chairs. This included:

Process transparency and clarity of purpose: Participants sought clarity on the Dialogue's goals, how contributors are selected, and how inputs are used. Several civil society organizations reported having no chance to engage, describing some consultations as "more monologue than dialogue", and asked how parallel UN processes connect and how human rights work is resourced across agencies.

Framing of opportunities V/S risk: The scientific panel's report was seen as leading with opportunities, lacking language on contextually specific types of risk and bias and harms – a notable omission given fundamentally biased systems and concerns over data extraction

and safeguards. Its treatment of agentic AI struck some as misleading, though its push-back on AI inevitability and attention to accountability were welcomed.

Community grounded engagement: Participants underscored that engagement with communities around AI should start from communities' own problem definitions, urged mechanisms to reach more vulnerable communities, including indigenous perspectives, and flagged missing topics such as health and labour during the Dialogue.

Language equity and AI sovereignty: AI tools remain biased towards specific languages with degrading performance for others. Countries should be able to use AI in their own environments and for their own communities, lest the technology deepen segregation.

Environmental impacts across the lifecycle: Participants pressed for transparency on AI's environmental footprint – including addressing the friction between digital sovereignty ambitions, compute demand and the climate emergency, and addressing the need for different inference models, e-waste, and standard for repair and reuse.

Education, skills, labour markets: Underinvestment in education, outdated teaching models, few avenues for young people to engage, and AI's implications for informal and agricultural labour markets in the Global South all call for stronger government and UN capacity building for the jobs transition.

Bridging AI divides

This group interrogated who is present in AI governance conversations, who benefits, and what actual inclusion requires, including:

Agenda setting and access: Participants questioned how the Dialogue's agenda and participation were structured: what is discussed, who is in the room, and noted that fragmentation and clashing convenings make it hard to track, access, and shape the conversations that matter.

Inclusion versus participation: The voices of those most affected – marginalized communities and the people whose data and identities AI systems utilize, were largely absent. Participants proposed a citizens' track paired with a published casebook documenting participatory work as an evidence mechanism, so citizen and government tracks speak to each other.

Technology should not be the default solution: Rather than assuming AI is the answer, policymakers should ask what an issue actually needs and consult communities of practice.

The solution may be better training or institutional change, not AI. Global AI governance should also connect more closely to development priorities, as many people still lack basic needs.

Governance readiness, not just adoption: National AI strategies emphasize adoption over governance of deployment and sectoral readiness, and convenings such as AI for Good remain disconnected from governance discussions. Developers should sit alongside policymakers on ethical and human rights based AI.

Financing the divide: Financing is the single biggest dimension of the AI divide for the Global Majority, it is discussed too rarely, often tokenistically, and without feeding into concrete outcomes.

Affected communities and information ecosystems: Communities affected by AI infrastructure, such as those near data centres, should be brought into decisions currently made by the same high-level actors. Supporting journalists to report and hold governments accountable, building citizen awareness of AI's potential disruption of democratic systems, and ensuring the UN implements its mandate well were also highlighted.

Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy AI

This group focused on near-term deliverables the Dialogue and the 2027 Summit could advance in tandem, alongside longer-term structural questions. Near-term ideas included:

AI redlines: Essential to agree on a minimum set of prohibitions. For example, no child sexual exploitation material, which would build on redlines already identified and secure, and develop a concrete framework approved through the Geneva or New York process with signatories within a year.

A principle of controllability: As systems become more autonomous, controllability by design should be a developer obligation. This used to be a requirement but has since been deprioritized, and is not satisfiable through transparency and accountability alone. Representativeness must be enforced as a scientific standard in training data before a model is deployed, and public procurement can be used as a lever to integrate guardrails without waiting for legislation.

Sandboxes, trade fairs, and trust signals: Essential to define what an AI sandbox is, and also ensure it is oriented toward societal and post-deployment impact, not purely technical implications. We must also ensure that no AI uses incompatible with agreed redlines are showcased at parallel trade fairs, and integrate trustworthiness as a socially agreed

trademark, bringing social and policy dimensions into overly technical evaluation benchmarks.

A pluralistic AI safety architecture: AI safety institutes are dominated by the West while most countries lack the skills, space, and resources to participate; the architecture should be rethought to incentivize the Global South, complemented by social audits of model performance and constructive engagement of frontier labs, which often welcome external pressure to justify internal change.

Protocol-level institutions and identity: Drawing on ICANN's model, participants asked whether a similar body could exist at the protocol level for AI; they recognized digital identity as an unsolved problem and insisted that freedom to remain anonymous be integrated into AI systems, especially under authoritarian governments.

Participants also stressed that safety must not be reduced to a purely technical matter — reframing it more broadly shifts agency from developers alone to anyone able to defend the public interest. Longer-term ideas beyond the UNGDAI included multistakeholder and regionally diverse safety workstreams spanning technical and non-technical tracks, narrowing national security exceptions for AI, and moving large technology companies from voluntary commitments to legal obligations. On a possible permanent governance body, participants noted that speed is the critical challenge, since implementation ultimately happens through national law. They pointed to blueprints such as the Financial Action Task Force and nuclear non-proliferation bodies, warned against repeating the pattern of broken climate commitments, and proposed a parallel "model law" for countries lacking drafting expertise, with standards mainstreamed into regional conversations.

[Respecting, Protecting, and Promoting Human Rights](#)

The breakout discussion on human rights welcomed the fact that human rights served as an anchoring pillar in the Dialogue, but noted that the actual discussion over the two days was weaker on human rights than desired. Participants noted that:

UNGPs and AI: The Dialogue should promote the private sector's adoption of the UNGPs and application to the development and deployment of AI. This will be critical to ensuring corporate accountability and to helping companies build transparency and stakeholder engagement into their products and services.

Application of the international human rights law: Governance processes, including the UNGDAI, should clearly recognize that international human rights law applies to the design, development, procurement, governance, and use of AI.

Guardrails and redlines: Participants noted that AI-enabled biometric surveillance, manipulation of the information environment, manipulative product design, and the use of AI for lethal force all raise significant human rights concerns, and that agreed-upon guardrails and redlines should be established around them.

HRRD and HRIA: Human rights due diligence and human rights impact assessments were noted as key mechanisms towards understanding the impact on human rights as the technology and its adoption continue to rapidly evolve across contexts.

Accountability, liability, and remedy: The need for clear accountability and liability mechanisms that address the various actors in the AI supply chain was also noted, as was the need for meaningful remedies. The latter requires not only the establishment of legal remedies but also judicial training and capacity-building.

Looking Ahead

The discussions in Geneva made clear that the first UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance was a milestone for inclusive participation and its promise now depends on continuity, follow-through, and deliberate effort to reach the voices that were missing. Across the day, several recurring priorities emerged: transparent modalities and clarity on how stakeholder input shapes outcomes, what inclusion of affected and global majority communities actually means beyond symbolic participation, attention to financing, capacity building, language equity and environmental impacts, and concrete, rights-centric commitments from AI redlines to controllability that can be advanced through the intersessional period. Through MAP-AI, GNI and CCG will continue to facilitate multistakeholder engagement across these processes, elevating underrepresented voices and ensuring that international AI governance remains grounded in the international human rights framework.