



Concept Note

AI Impact Summit 2026 – Pre-Summit Event

Advancing Innovation for Equitable AI Access

17 November 2025, 13:15 – 14:15, Geneva

Background

Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems are advancing and being adopted at unprecedented scale and speed, expanding real-world impacts on economies, societies, and governance. There are a number of ongoing international efforts to ensure that AI systems are safe, inclusive, and deployed in a manner that supports sustainable development and digital transformation, while minimising the risks of bias, harm and widening inequalities. This requires the creation of AI systems that are inclusive, transparent and trustworthy, being accessible to all and deployed for the global good.

However, many developing and least developed countries remain marginalised in decision-making on the design, deployment, and governance of these technologies. According to UNCTAD, around 60 percent of UN member countries are excluded from discussions shaping global digital rules. This exclusion is most visible in the governance of AI, where asymmetries in technological capabilities and regulatory capacities are deepening the global divide.

The Global South is one of the important sources of data used by AI systems. There is a need to develop policy frameworks that can protect countries' data sovereignty, promote AI-driven economic growth and ensure the equitable sharing of benefits. Developing countries must not be passive recipients of AI, but work collectively as active participants in shaping AI's future. Building AI based on local ecosystems, using quality data sets that are free from biases, and ensuring equitable access for the development and use of AI is necessary to make it effective and useful for all. AI systems must themselves be sustainable, and efficient in their size, data needs and energy requirements for enabling their widescale adoption.

Effective implementation of the UN Global Digital Compact's Objective 5, to enhance the international governance of AI for the benefit of humanity, is key to that end. These efforts must be strengthened and operationalised to ensure that AI advances inclusive and sustainable development across all countries. It is imperative to pursue collective global efforts to establish governance and standards that uphold shared values, build trust, and balance innovation with risk management. Governance must not only mitigate risks and rivalries but also enable innovation and ensure AI's deployment for the global good

The AI Impact Summit, to be hosted by the Government of India, on 19-20 February 2026 will provide a strategic platform to address these challenges, foster inclusive and democratic discourse on addressing fragmentation and inequities in AI governance, and promote fair access to AI resources, infrastructure, and capacity building so that benefits are equitably distributed within and among all countries. This event is being convened to take forward these

objectives and to catalyse dialogue on the impacts of safe and trusted AI and its contributions to sustainable development and leaving no one behind.

Objective

This pre-summit event is being designed as a strategic side event to the Inter-sessional Panel of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), 2025-2026, scheduled for 17 November 2025, which will address the priority theme on Science, Technology and Innovation in the age of AI. Building on the South Centre's ongoing work on AI and data governance, which bridges high-level global debates with actionable policy frameworks for developing countries, the event will advance dialogue and collaboration on AI.

Discussions at the pre-summit event will entail two key approaches:

First, the event will consider the implications of AI for the future of work, emphasising the need for inclusivity in AI value chains and fostering investments in digital skill development to prepare societies for a future with AI. The aim is to ensure that societies are effectively prepared for AI-driven processes and benefit from fair access to opportunities created by these technologies.

Second, a core objective of this pre-summit event is to foster peer exchange and knowledge sharing in AI. Participants will be able to identify pathways and build partnerships for strengthening national and regional capabilities in AI research, development, deployment, and governance, thereby empowering developing countries to act as active contributors and leaders in the global AI landscape.

The event is fully aligned with the AI Impact Summit's mission to bridge the global AI divide by fostering inclusive, responsible, and impactful cooperation on the development, governance, and use of AI. Leveraging Geneva's multilateral ecosystem and the convening power of the UN, the event will strengthen global engagement with the Summit, ensuring participation from governments, international organisations, private sector, academia, and civil society, with a strong focus on boosting representation from developing and least developed countries. The event will also be an opportunity to generate actionable insights and policy recommendations from important stakeholders on enhancing AI impacts to support sustainable development, contributing directly to the deliberations and outcomes of the AI Impact Summit. The event will reinforce the AI Impact Summit's vision of harnessing AI responsibly, for Good and for All.

The event will feature a keynote address, followed by an interactive panel discussion to facilitate inclusive, multistakeholder dialogue and strengthen collaborative efforts toward advancing equitable AI governance and capacity-building for sustainable development in the Global South.

The South Centre is organising the event in collaboration with the Center of Policy Research and Governance (CPRG), and IT for Change, with the support of the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva.

Discussion Questions

1. Which approaches are needed to ensure the development and deployment of transparent, accountable, and inclusive AI systems in emerging economies?
2. What strategies can accelerate AI skill development and institutional capacity, especially in the Global South to foster AI readiness for the future of work?

3. How can the global community contribute to shaping international AI governance and innovation models to support the development of AI systems that are efficient in size, data needs, and energy requirements, while promoting sustainability and inclusive economic growth?
4. How can international cooperation, including South–South and triangular cooperation, foster wider access to AI resources, infrastructure, and expertise?

Agenda (60-70 mins)

Opening Remarks (5-10 minutes)

Representative of the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva

Keynote Address (15-20 minutes)

High-level representative from the Government of India (TBC)

Panel Discussion (30 minutes)

- High-level Representative from an African State (TBC)
- Ms. Anita Gurumurthy, Executive Director, IT for Change
- Dr. Ramanand, Director, Center of Policy Research and Governance

Moderated by Ms. Vahini Naidu, Coordinator, Trade and Development Program, South Centre

Q&A (5-10 minutes)

Target Audience

The target audience for the event includes representatives of UN Member States through their Permanent Missions in Geneva, UN agencies and other international and regional organisations. It will also seek to engage stakeholders from academia, civil society organisations and the private sector, including micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) and technical communities, with a focus on voices from the Global South.

Expected Outcomes

- Identification of priority issues for the international community on AI impacts for the future of work and sustainable development, particularly the Global South, which can be taken up at the Summit to advance global discussions and outcomes;
-
- Greater awareness and enhanced dialogue among governments, UN bodies, private sector, academia, and civil society on the India - AI Impact Summit;
- Fostering opportunities for international cooperation on AI, particularly South–South and triangular cooperation, including for capacity-building and technical assistance to developing countries;
- A summary report which will feed into the deliberations of the India - AI Impact Summit, focusing on the AI impacts for the future of work and sustainable development, building inclusive, safe and trusted AI, and democratisation of AI resources.

Background Materials

- [The AI Race: A Tightrope Walk Between Innovation, Inclusivity and Prosperity for All](#) (South Centre, Research Paper 221, 15 July 2025)
- [Education & Learning and the Global Digital Compact](#) (South Centre, Policy Brief 142, 22 May 2025)
- [Global Digital Compact: Charting a New Era in Digital Governance?](#) (South Centre, Policy Brief 140, 30 April 2025)
- [Advancing International Cooperation under the Global Digital Compact](#) (South Centre, SouthViews No. 285, 28 March 2025)
- [Will the Global Digital Compact Ensure an Equitable Future for Developing Countries?](#) (South Centre, Policy Brief 138, 27 March 2025)
- [The United Nations Call to Enhance International Cooperation for Capacity-Building on Artificial Intelligence](#) (South Centre, SouthViews No. 273, 22 August 2024)
- [UNGA Adopts First Resolution on Artificial Intelligence](#) (South Centre, SouthViews No. 269, 16 July 2024)
- [AI Adoption in Education Report](#) (CPRG, Future of Society Working Paper Series-1)
- [Data Daan](#) (AI4India.org and CPRG, February 2025)

Date and Venue

17 November 2025, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Room VIII.

Contact

For registration please use the following link: <https://indico.un.org/event/1020363/> (Indico Account required)

For more information, please contact: Mr. Danish (danish@southcentre.int)

or call: +41 22 791 8050