



WrightMUN

High School Model UN Background Guide

General Assembly 3rd Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Issues

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Wright State University

White Hall

GA3 Background Guide

Staff:

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Topic: Ethical AI in Human Rights

Message from the Director of the Third Committee of the General Assembly

Delegates,

Welcome to the WrightMUN! My name is Molly Holloway and I am the Director of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. The GA Third Committee tackles social, humanitarian and cultural issues. It has universal membership of the 193 UN Member States. Helpful background and information on GA3 can be found here: <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/>. It is encouraged to become familiar with the nature and mandate of this organization.

This background guide is intended to offer delegates a starting point for research on human rights and the humanitarian crisis. In this topic, delegates will explore how the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence is reshaping global human rights protections, raising new ethical challenges, and prompting urgent calls for coordinated international governance ethical AI and human rights impacts. Delegates are advised to ensure they can address all the questions posed by the Director at the end of this topic

Please remember, this is a learning conference and all delegates are encouraged to please participate! That means raising your placard, making policy speeches, and creating working papers. Should you have any questions, please approach the Dais and we would be happy to assist.

Sincerely,

Molly Holloway
Director, General Assembly Third Committee

Chloe Johnston
Chair, General Assembly Third Committee

Topic: Ethical AI in Human Rights

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become one of the most influential technologies shaping global governance, development, and human rights. The United Nations (UN) generally describes AI as digital systems capable of performing tasks that “normally require human intelligence,” such as reasoning, learning, and problem-solving, a definition reflected in UNESCO’s Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence adopted by the General Conference in 2021.¹ As with all emerging technologies, the UN grounds its approach in its foundational understanding of human rights, articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which affirms that all individuals are entitled to rights and freedoms “without distinction of any kind,” including rights to privacy, equality, dignity, and non-discrimination.²

As AI systems increasingly shape decisions about access to services, information, and opportunities, the UN has emphasized the need for ethical AI, defined through UNESCO’s global standard as AI developed and deployed in ways that uphold transparency, accountability, fairness, and human rights.³ Closely related is the concept of responsible AI, highlighted by the UN General Assembly in its 2024 resolution on “safe, secure, and trustworthy” AI systems, which calls on Member States to ensure that AI throughout its lifecycle respects, protects, and promotes human rights.⁴ Central to these principles is data protection, which UN bodies, including OHCHR and UNHCR, frame as the safeguarding of personal data from misuse, discrimination, and unauthorized surveillance, ensuring that individuals retain meaningful control over their information in accordance with international human rights law.⁵ As GA3 considers the ethical implications of AI, these UN established concepts provide the foundation for evaluating how states can uphold human rights in an era of rapidly advancing technology.

Background

The pace of AI development has surpassed the world’s ability to regulate it, prompting growing concern across the UN system about the risks unfolding in real time as increasingly complex and autonomous systems begin influencing decisions that affect human rights, governance, and global stability. Reporting from the UN Chronicle notes that generative AI is accelerating at a pace that is reshaping information ecosystems and public decision-making in real time.⁶ OHCHR similarly cautions that the rapid deployment of AI technologies is outstripping existing human rights safeguards, creating immediate risks for privacy, equality, and democratic participation.⁷

¹ UNESCO. *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. UNESCO General Conference, 2021.

² United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. 1948.

³ UNESCO. *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. UNESCO General Conference, 2021.

⁴ United Nations General Assembly. Resolution on “Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Systems.” 2024.

⁵ UNHCR. *Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR*. 2015.

⁶ UN Chronicle. “Safeguarding Human Rights and Information Integrity in the Age of Generative AI.” 2024.

⁷ OHCHR. “Human Rights Must Be at the Core of Generative AI Technologies.” 2024.

External analyses reaffirm these concerns, including a 2024 report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which warns that confusion surrounding emerging “agentic AI” systems models capable of autonomous goal seeking behavior poses significant governance challenges if left unaddressed.⁸ UNRIC adds that the speed and scale of AI adoption have already begun to magnify structural inequalities, particularly in regions lacking strong regulatory protections.⁹ As these technologies become more embedded in essential services, humanitarian operations, and public administration, the UN stresses that the window for establishing effective global safeguards is narrowing rapidly.¹⁰

Generative AI has already reshaped information environments, influencing how people communicate, learn, and access public information.¹¹ OHCHR warns that these technological shifts are unfolding faster than regulatory frameworks can adapt, creating new vulnerabilities for individuals and communities.¹² UN human rights experts have emphasized that AI is increasingly embedded in decisions related to employment, policing, migration, and social protection, often without transparency or meaningful oversight.¹³ According to the United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC), these deployments can reproduce or even intensify existing inequalities when AI systems rely on biased or incomplete data.¹⁴ The UN has also raised concerns about the rapid expansion of AI-enabled surveillance technologies, which can disproportionately affect marginalized groups and undermine rights such as privacy and equality.¹⁵ General Assembly (GA) resolution 78/213 reinforced these concerns on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of digital technologies, underscoring that digital systems must be governed in ways that prevent discrimination, protect privacy, and uphold international human rights law.¹⁶ This commitment was further strengthened two years later in A/Res/80/215, which reaffirmed the need for human rights based digital governance and urged Member States to address emerging risks posed by rapidly evolving technologies, including heightened threats to equality, information integrity, and the rights of vulnerable groups.¹⁷

⁸ Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). “The Lost Definition: How Confusion Over Agentic AI Risks Governance.” 2024.

⁹ United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC). “Protecting Human Rights in an AI-Driven World.” 2025.

¹⁰ United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 78/213: Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Digital Technologies. 2023.

¹¹ *UN Chronicle*. “Safeguarding Human Rights and Information Integrity in the Age of Generative AI.” 2024.

¹² Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). “Human Rights Must Be at the Core of Generative AI Technologies.” 2024.

¹³ United Nations General Assembly. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, A/73/348*, 2018.

¹⁴ United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC). “Protecting Human Rights in an AI-Driven World.” 2025.

¹⁵ OHCHR. “The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age.” 2022.

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly. *Resolution 78/213: Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Digital Technologies*. 22 Dec. 2023.

¹⁷ United Nations General Assembly. *A/RES/80/215: Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Digital Technologies*. 22 Dec. 2025.

At the same time, UN bodies acknowledge that AI can strengthen human rights protections when developed and governed responsibly, including through improved accessibility tools, humanitarian early warning systems, and more efficient public-sector services.¹⁸ However, OHCHR stresses that these benefits depend on strong safeguards that prevent discrimination, misinformation, and intrusive monitoring.¹⁹ The UN General Assembly reinforced this position in its 2024 resolution on “safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems,” urging Member States to ensure that AI throughout its lifecycle is aligned with international human rights law and does not exacerbate inequality or discrimination.²⁰ Non Governmental Organizations(NGOs) engaged in UN processes have likewise stressed that strong human rights safeguards must guide AI governance, cautioning that inadequate oversight could deepen existing inequalities and expose vulnerable communities to greater harm. UN analyses further highlight that generative AI has intensified challenges related to information integrity, including the spread of synthetic content that can distort public discourse and weaken democratic participation.²¹ As AI capabilities continue to evolve, the General Assembly has emphasized that coordinated global action is necessary to ensure that AI strengthens, rather than undermines, the dignity and freedoms of all people.²²

Existing Frameworks

The United Nations has developed a steadily expanding set of frameworks to guide the ethical governance of artificial intelligence, reflecting the rapid growth of AI systems across sectors. One of the most significant global instruments is UNESCO’s Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, adopted unanimously by 193 Member States in 2021, which establishes shared values, principles, and policy actions for responsible AI governance.²³ The recommendation outlines obligations for states to adopt regulatory frameworks, conduct ethical impact assessments, and ensure that AI systems uphold human rights, fairness, and transparency. UNESCO has since supported Member States through tools such as its AI Readiness Assessment Methodology, which helps governments evaluate national preparedness for ethical AI governance.²⁴ Within the UN system, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination endorsed the Principles for the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations System in 2022, creating a unified approach for how UN agencies develop and deploy AI internally.²⁵ These principles draw directly from UNESCO’s Recommendation and emphasize accountability,

¹⁸ United Nations, *Safeguarding human rights and information integrity in the age of generative AI*. *UN Chronicle*. (2024)

¹⁹ OHCHR. “Human Rights Must Be at the Core of Generative AI Technologies.” 2024.

²⁰ United Nations General Assembly. Resolution on “Safe, Secure and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Systems.” 2024.

²¹ *UN Today*. “Information Integrity and Human Rights in the Age of Generative AI.” 2024.

²² United Nations General Assembly. Resolution on “Safe, Secure and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Systems.” 2024.

²³ UNESCO. *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. UNESCO General Conference, 2021.

²⁴ UNESCO. “AI Readiness Assessment Methodology.” 2022.

²⁵ United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. *Principles for the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations System*. 2022.

sustainability, and human rights-centered design across all UN operations. They also establish expectations for transparency in UN-run AI systems, including documentation, risk mitigation, and safeguards for affected populations. Human rights protections are further reinforced through the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), which apply to technology companies and AI developers.²⁶ Building on these commitments, General Assembly resolution 79/325 (2025) established an Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and launching a Global Dialogue on AI Governance. This framework creates the UN's first dedicated scientific body for assessing AI risks and opportunities and provides a formal mechanism for international cooperation, transparency, and evidence-based policymaking.²⁷

A 2025 OHCHR report analyzing the application of the UNGPs to AI related activities stresses that states must protect against human rights abuses linked to AI, while companies must conduct due diligence to identify, prevent, and remedy harms arising from algorithmic systems.²⁸ The report highlights challenges such as opaque supply chains, biased training data, and insufficient oversight of private-sector AI deployments, urging stronger regulatory alignment with international human rights law. At the General Assembly level, Member States adopted A/Res/78/265 (2024), marking the first global consensus on safe, secure, and trustworthy AI.²⁹ The resolution calls on states to promote inclusive governance, strengthen data protection, and ensure that AI systems are aligned with the UN Charter and international human rights standards. It also encourages capacity building for developing countries and emphasizes the need for global cooperation to address cross border AI risks. Together, these frameworks form a multilayered governance architecture that guides Member States, UN agencies, and private actors in advancing ethical and rights-based AI development.

Conclusion

As artificial intelligence continues to advance, the international community faces a pivotal moment in determining how these technologies will shape the future of human rights. The United Nations has consistently emphasized that AI's benefits, whether in development, accessibility, or governance, can only be realized when systems are designed and deployed within a rights-based framework. At the same time, the risks posed by biased algorithms, opaque decision-making, and expanding surveillance capacities underscore the urgent need for coordinated global action. Existing UN frameworks, from UNESCO's ethical standards to the General Assembly's recent consensus resolution, provide a strong foundation for Member States to build upon. Yet they also reveal gaps that require further attention, particularly in enforcement, accountability, and equitable access to AI governance resources.

²⁶ United Nations. *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. 2011.

²⁷ United Nations General Assembly. *A/RES/79/325: Establishment of an Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance*. 2025,

²⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). *The Practical Application of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to the Activities of Technology Companies, Including Those Related to Artificial Intelligence*. 2025.

²⁹ United Nations General Assembly. *A/RES/78/265: Safe, Secure and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Systems*. 2024.

For GA3 delegates, the challenge lies in translating these principles into actionable, forward looking policies that reflect both technological realities and the needs of diverse populations. Ensuring that AI strengthens human dignity rather than undermines it will require sustained cooperation, investment in capacity-building, and a commitment to centering human rights at every stage of AI development. As Member States deliberate, the question is not whether AI will influence global society, but how the international community will guide that influence toward outcomes that uphold fairness, transparency, and justice. This session offers an opportunity for delegates to shape a shared vision for ethical global AI governance, one grounded in the values of the United Nations and responsive to the challenges of an increasingly digital world.

Questions to consider

1. How can countries support innovation in AI while still protecting human rights, and what challenges or trade-offs might they face in doing so?
2. What responsibilities do governments, technology companies, and international organizations have in preventing discrimination caused by AI, and how can these responsibilities be shared fairly?
3. How can the international community help developing countries build the skills, technology, and laws they need for ethical AI governance, especially when digital resources are unequal around the world?
4. How should the UN respond to the rise of AI-generated misinformation and synthetic content, and what role can GA3 play in protecting information integrity?

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