CENTER for LAW & INNOVATION

GLOBAL NETWORK OF **INTERNET AND SOCIETY** RESEARCH CENTERS – SECRETARIAT

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF AI IN AFRICA

Policy Brief and Recommendations from the Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting on Innovative Governance and Capacity Building held on October 2024

Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting

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FOREWORD

It is a privilege to present this policy brief, which outlines the outcomes of the Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting on Innovative Governance and Capacity Building, co-convened in October 2024 by the Center for Law and Innovation at Certa Foundation and the Global Network of Centers Secretariat. The Stakeholder Meeting brought together a diverse coalition of experts, policymakers, industry leaders, startups, and civil society organizations to explore the critical role of governance in articulating Africa's Artificial Intelligence vision.

The discussions, which welcomed 80 stakeholders from 20 African countries and members of the African Union Commission, underscored a pressing truth: Africa must not merely adapt to the global wave of AI innovation but actively shape its own AI future. The stakeholders recognized the significant strides the continent has made towards robust AI governance, including the Sharm El Sheikh Declaration, the Blueprint for Artificial Intelligence in Africa, and the African Union Continental AI Strategy.

In her welcome address, Hon. Minister Paula Ingabire, Minister for ICT and Innovation in the Government of Rwanda, emphatically stated: "*Our goal is to work collectively to leverage and advance AI across Africa, ensuring that no one is left behind. The future of AI will shape the social and economic landscape of the continent, and Africa stands on the brink of transformative growth, driven by the digital revolution.*"

While the potential for AI to drive economic growth in Africa is immense, challenges such as limited digital infrastructure, significant skills gaps, the lack of clear data management frameworks, and outdated legal frameworks remain. This brief highlights these challenges and the urgent need for a unified, pan-African approach to AI governance that fosters collaboration across sectors and borders. The recommendations will strengthen AI governance frameworks to ensure that the potential benefits of AI are harnessed responsibly, benefiting our communities in a sustainable, equitable and inclusive manner. The successful implementation of these recommendations will mitigate the risks associated with AI, unlock its immense potential, and drive progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

I am grateful to the Center for Law and Innovation team and humbled by the partnership and support of our colleagues and friends at the Global Network of Centers Secretariat, Microsoft, Meta, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Smart Africa, International Trade Center - Geneva, Rwanda ICT Chamber, and the African Leadership University, who ensured the success of the Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting on Innovative Governance and Capacity Building and who continue to work towards the goals set out in this Policy Brief. A big thank you also to the Global Network of Centers Secretariat and Microsoft's Office of Responsible AI for their review of the draft policy, which enriched the final document.

We are committed to supporting the African Union Commission in the implementation of the AI Continental Strategy and contributing to the formation of harmonized AI policies that will flow from the multitude of conversations taking place on the continent, including the inaugural Global AI Summit on Africa under the theme "AI and Africa's Demographic Dividend: Reimagining Economic Opportunities for Africa's Workforce" hosted by the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Ministry of ICT & Innovation, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum. We look forward to building transformative partnerships this year and reconvening in October to assess our progress against the roadmap we conceived at the Stakeholder Meeting.

Isobel Acquah
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief presents the outcomes of the Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting on Innovative Governance and Capacity Building held in Kigali, Rwanda, in October 2024 and convened by Certa Foundation's Center for Law and Innovation and the Global Network of Centers Secretariat in partnership with Microsoft, Meta, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Smart Africa, International Trade Center, Rwanda ICT Chamber, and the African Leadership University.

It highlights the urgent need for Africa to proactively shape its AI future by embracing a pan-African approach that fosters collaboration, innovation, and ethical AI development to drive economic growth, job creation, and social inclusion. The meeting identified key challenges, including limited infrastructure, skills gaps, and outdated legal frameworks, which hinder Africa's ability to fully leverage AI's potential. To address these challenges, the brief offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, governments, the private sector, civil society, regulators, industry leaders, and researchers, focusing on strengthening AI governance, fostering innovation, and ensuring that AI technologies are developed and deployed responsibly and ethically for the benefit of all Africans. This brief serves as a call to action for collaborative efforts to unlock AI's transformative power for Africa's sustainable and inclusive development.

INTRODUCTION

The Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting, held in Kigali, Rwanda, was a critical platform for collaborative discussion and knowledge sharing on the crucial aspects of AI governance and capacity building in Africa. The meeting welcomed participants from 20 African countries, representing government officials, tech industry leaders, startups, lawyers, civil society, academia and, critically, senior policy representatives from the African Union Commission. The meeting also provided insights from other regions, including the European Union, Latin America, and the United States of America, in a session on global perspectives on AI policy. This brief encapsulates the insights and recommendations generated during this pivotal multi-stakeholder event, aiming to guide AI's responsible and inclusive development across the continent.

The meeting is aligned with the African Union's (AU) Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa.[1] It brought together stakeholders to consolidate ongoing national, regional, and pan-African AI efforts. Recognizing the transformative potential of AI in a rapidly evolving digital ecosystem, the meeting aimed to harness this potential while mitigating its associated risks. It acknowledged the progress made in establishing a foundation for AI governance in Africa, including initiatives like the Sharm El Sheikh Declaration and the African Union Continental AI Strategy. These initiatives and national efforts in various countries to establish expert bodies and develop AI strategies demonstrate a continent-wide commitment to shaping a robust legal and governance landscape for AI.

This brief further explores the contextualized needs of Africa, focusing on assessing and mitigating AI risks, understanding and addressing regulatory knowledge gaps, enhancing stakeholder capacity across various sectors, and navigating the complex cross-domain challenges that arise in the development and deployment of AI technologies. It analyzes the key challenges, emerging opportunities, and actionable recommendations identified during the meeting, serving as a valuable resource for African governments, policymakers, industry professionals, the legal fraternity, and civil society organizations.

[1] African Union, 'The Digital Transformation Strategy For Africa (2020-2030)' (2020) <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-dts-english.pdf>.

The meeting emphasized the importance of fostering a cooperative atmosphere among stakeholders at various levels, including policymakers, youths, legal experts, the technology industry, academia and research institutions. This collaboration aims to build capacity and ensure that any agreed-upon resolutions are acceptable and feasible for all participants and reflect an independent decision-making process.

This brief, therefore, serves as a roadmap of the governance framework required to realise the vision of an Africa where AI technologies are leveraged to address critical challenges, promote inclusive growth, and enhance the quality of life for all citizens. It provides a comprehensive overview of the key challenges and opportunities identified during the meeting and offers actionable recommendations to shape the future of AI in Africa. Ultimately, this brief aims to catalyze collaborative action and informed policymaking to ensure that AI technologies are developed, deployed and used responsibly, ethically, and for the benefit of all Africans.

The Journey So Far

The meeting recognized the significant strides made on the continent. Africa has embarked on a journey towards robust AI governance, which has been marked by significant strides at both the continental and national levels. This progress reflects a growing trend towards proactive engagement of governments across the continent, driven by recognizing AI's transformative potential and significant contribution to socio-economic goals as set out in the AU's 2063 Agenda.

At the continental level, key milestones include the 2019 Sharm El Sheikh Declaration, which initiated the formation of a Working Group on AI;[2] the 2021 Blueprint for Artificial Intelligence in Africa, which offered ethical and governance recommendations; and the 2021 resolution by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) urging the development of a comprehensive legal and ethical framework for AI.[3]

Building on this momentum, 2022 saw the adoption of the Windhoek Statement on Artificial Intelligence by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), advocating for Africa-centric governance frameworks.[4] In 2023, the African Union Convention on Cybersecurity and Protection of Personal Data came into effect, marking a crucial step towards data governance.[5]

[2] STC-CICT "Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information Technologies (STC-CICT) Third Ordinary Session, 22 - 26 October 2019, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt: 2019 Sharm El Sheikh Declaration STC-CICT-3" <https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/37590-2019_sharm_el_sheikh_declaration_-_stc-cict-3_oct_2019_ver2410-10pm-1rev-2.pdf>

[3] Resolution on the Need to Undertake a Study on Human and Peoples' Rights and Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics and Other New and Emerging Technologies in Africa - ACHPR/Res. 473 (EXT.OS/ XXXI) 2021,' (*African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights*, 14 February 2024). <https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/473-resolution-need-undertake-study-human-and-peoples-rights-and-art>

[4] Southern African Sub-regional forum on Artificial Intelligence, "Windhoek Statement on Artificial Intelligence in Southern Africa Windhoek", (*UNESCO,* 9 September 2022) <https://sarfai2022.org/assets/documents/Windhoek_Statement_on_Artficial_Intelligence%20in%20Southern%20Africa_English.pdf>

[5] African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection | African Union" (*Digital Watch Observatory,* June 2024), <https://dig.watch/resource/african-union-convention-on-cyber-security-and-personal-data-protection-african-union>

The year 2024 witnessed further advancements with the adoption of the Digital Trade Protocol under the AfCFTA, addressing data protection and mandating ethical technology use.[6] AUDA-NEPAD published a draft Whitepaper[7] and Roadmap[8] for a continent-wide AI strategy, and the Eastern African countries adopted the Nairobi Statement on AI, fostering cooperation and responsible AI principles.[9]

Culminating these efforts, the AU Executive Council endorsed the Continental AI Strategy in July 2024, prioritizing a people-centric approach and recommending the establishment of independent oversight bodies and country-specific AI strategies.[10] This landmark strategy provides a comprehensive framework for AI governance in Africa, emphasizing ethical considerations, human rights, and inclusive development.

At the national level, many countries have adopted or are developing national AI strategies, policies, charters, and roadmaps.[11] Dedicated AI bodies have been established in some countries for oversight and guidance,[12] and there is a growing trend towards adopting ethical AI principles.[13] Data protection authorities are playing an increasingly important role,[14] and Africa is actively contributing to global AI governance discussions.[15] Efforts are underway to enact

[6] Ninth (9*) Extraordinary Session of the Specialised Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs (STC - JLA), 7-10 February 2024, Durban, South Africa. Draft Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade, dated 09/02/2024', (Bilaterals.org, 9 February,2024) <https://www.bilaterals.org/IMG/pdf/afcfta_digital_trade_protocol_-_9_february_2024_draft.pdf>

[7] AUDA-NEPAD (African Union Development Agency), "AUDA-NEPAD White Paper: Regulation and Responsible Adoption of AI in Africa Towards Achievement of AU Agenda 2063. Draft 1.0." <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wYJDAfd1sC3QnehWeWqAALfaxDWiY0D1/view>

[8] AUDA-NEPAD (African Union Development Agency), "AUDA-NEPAD Artificial Intelligence Roadmap for Africa: Contributing Towards a Continental AU Strategy on AI", <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18DKNDwhOpl-tzmsWaF_6Yd91wlNVaHIA/view?usp=drive_link>

[9] UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), "Eastern Africa sub-Regional Forum on Artificial Intelligence 24-26 June, 2024, Nairobi, Kenya: Nairobi Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies in East Africa" <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390381>

[10] 'African Union Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy Harnessing AI for Africa's Development and Prosperity' <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44004-doc-EN-_Continental_AI_Strategy_July_2024.pdf>.

[11] These frameworks provide a clear direction for AI development and deployment, ensuring alignment with national priorities and ethical considerations. Algeria, Benin, Egypt, Ghana, Mauritania, Mauritius, Senegal and Zambia have adopted a national AI strategy, while Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Tunisia are developing theirs. Ethiopia and Rwanda have a national AI policy, while Ghana and Mauritius are working on their national AI policy and South Africa has a draft national AI policy framework and national AI plan. Egypt published its national charter on responsible AI in 2023, while Tunisia has a national AI roadmap. 'State of AI Regulation in Africa: Trends and Developments' <https://www.certafoundation.rw/resource/state-of-ai-regulation-in-africa-trends-and-developments> accessed 26 November 2024.

[12] Some countries have established specialized AI task forces, expert bodies, responsible AI offices, agencies, councils, or committees. Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, and Uganda have established at least one of these.

[13] For instance, the Rwanda Utilities Regulation Authority is developing Practical Ethical AI Guidelines that is due to be published. Supporting Rwanda's Bold Steps towards Responsible and Ethical AI' (*Unesco.org*2023) <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/supporting-rwandas-bold-steps-towards-responsible-and-ethical-ai>

[14] Dorcas Tsebee and Ridwan Oloyede 'DPAs and AI regulation in Africa' (Iapp.org 2024) <https://iapp.org/news/a/dpas-and-ai-regulation-in-africa/?utm_source=social&utm_medium=X&utm_campaign=Pubs_110624_1>

[15] For instance, Kenya, Nigeria, and Rwanda signed the Bletchley Declaration for Responsible AI Use. Policy Paper: The Bletchley Declaration by Countries Attending the AI Safety Summit, 1-2 November 2023' (*GOV.UK,* 1 November 2023), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-safety-summit-2023-the-bletchley-declaration/the-bletchley-declaration-by-countries-attending-the-ai-safety-summit-1-2-november-2023>

AI-specific legislation,[16] and there is an emergence of sector-specific regulatory interventions for AI, such as in healthcare and finance, demonstrates a nuanced approach to AI governance that considers the specific needs and risks of different sectors.[17] These initiatives demonstrate a continent-wide commitment to responsible AI development, harnessing AI for Africa's unique needs and development priorities.

Vision for the Future

The meeting participants envisioned an Africa where AI technologies are leveraged to address critical challenges, promote inclusive growth, and enhance the quality of life for all citizens. This vision is rooted in the principles of:

- **Responsible AI Development:** Ensuring AI technologies are developed and deployed ethically and transparently, respecting human rights and promoting societal well-being.
- **Ethical Governance:** Establishing clear and accountable governance frameworks for AI that prioritize human values and promote fairness, inclusivity, and sustainability.
- **Accountability:** Ensuring that machines remain subject to effective oversight by people and that individuals who design and operate AI systems remain accountable. AI systems must remain under human control at all times.
- **People-Centered Design:** In designing AI systems and determining how people interact with them, we must always keep people at the center of all AI decisions. The purpose of the AI system should be aligned with human values, ensuring that it serves the needs and aspirations of individuals and communities.
- **Equitable Access:** Bridging the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to the benefits of AI across all segments of society, including marginalized communities and youth.
- **Experimentation and Learning:** Encouraging adaptive regulatory approaches, policy experimentation, and knowledge-sharing to better understand the societal impacts of AI and foster innovative solutions.
- **Adaptability to Rapid Change:** Recognizing the fast-paced evolution of AI and digital technologies, policies and governance frameworks must remain flexible and responsive, ensuring that regulations evolve alongside technological advancements while safeguarding ethical principles and societal interests.

This vision necessitates a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach that considers African countries' unique needs and contexts, fosters innovation, and prioritizes capacity building and knowledge sharing.

[16] Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria have draft AI-specific laws at different legislative stages, while government officials in Ghana, Uganda, and Zimbabwe have demanded the need for an AI-specific law. 'State of AI Regulation in Africa: Trends and Developments' <https://www.certafoundation.rw/resource/state-of-ai-regulation-in-africa-trends-and-developments> accessed 26 November 2024.
[17] Ibid.

Problem Statement

The rapid advancement of AI presents unique challenges and opportunities for Africa. While the continent has the potential to leverage AI for significant economic and social development, several key obstacles hinder its progress. These challenges, identified during the stakeholder meeting, fall into several key themes:

1. **Data Governance and Accessibility**

- The lack of clear data management frameworks, inconsistent data governance across jurisdictions, and limited understanding of data regulations hinder data sharing, especially cross-border and AI development. This impedes innovation in critical sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and finance, limiting the potential for economic growth and job creation opportunities.

- Limited access to relevant, structured, and unstructured data for training AI models due to issues like data scarcity, limited historical data, privacy concerns, and limited data collection and digitalization efforts further hinders local AI development and deployment in Africa.

2. **Infrastructure**

- Inadequate infrastructure, including a shortage of data centers and insufficient internet connectivity, limits AI development and deployment. This digital divide exacerbates existing inequalities and prevents equitable access to AI's benefits, particularly in rural areas.

- Access to high-performance computing resources, crucial for AI development and research, is often limited in Africa, hindering the ability to train complex AI models and conduct advanced research.

- The increasing demand for data centers to support AI development raises concerns about their environmental impact, particularly in Africa, where resources like energy and water may be limited. The energy-intensive nature of data centers requires significant electricity consumption, which can strain existing power grids and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, especially in countries where energy generation falls short of local consumption needs. Additionally, data centers require substantial amounts of water for cooling, potentially exacerbating water scarcity issues in certain regions where water resources are already limited and even a source of conflict. This raises concerns about AI infrastructure competing with essential human needs and potentially contributing to environmental degradation and social tensions.

3. **Capacity Building and Inclusion**

- A lack of technical AI skills and awareness, particularly in underserved communities and among girls and women, limits participation in the AI economy and widens existing inequalities. This skills gap restricts innovation and limits the potential for AI to drive job creation and economic growth.

- There is limited research required to inform policymakers and the business community about AI strategy. There is a need to review how to address building capacity within existing educational curricula and upskill the existing workforce.

- While not unique to Africa, a lack of understanding of AI technologies and their implications among policymakers and regulators poses challenges for effective governance and policy development. There is a need to ensure capacity building for regulators and policymakers tasked with setting out the guardrails for AI.

4. Ethical and Societal Considerations

- Global AI principles and guidelines do not appreciate the contextualized African realities, such as the unique needs of diverse communities, including those with disabilities, the cultural norms that the AU AI Strategy seeks to retain, and the 2000+ languages on the continent, particularly those that are written in non-Latin script, that are not reflected in AI applications that tend to favour English or French speakers.

- There is a risk of focusing on AI innovations that do not address the genuine societal needs of the continent and fail to benefit all members of society.

- The energy-intensive nature of AI computing raises concerns about its environmental impact, given the continent's climate burden and its role in the semiconductor chip value chain. There is a need to align sustainability and AI strategies on the continent.

- There is a need to address potential negative impacts such as job displacement, psychological impact associated with manual content moderation and data labelling tasks that are often outsourced to the continent, technology-facilitated gender-based violence and the reinforcement of social inequalities.

- Beyond bias and discrimination, there is a need to address the potential for AI to infringe on privacy, autonomy, and human dignity and ensure transparency and explainability in AI systems.

5. Regulatory Landscape

- Outdated legal frameworks and a lack of regulatory clarity create uncertainty and impede AI innovation. This discourages investment in AI research and development, hindering economic growth and job creation.

- Gaps in the legal system in some countries where key laws such as data protection laws have not been enacted may delay the implementation of the AU AI Strategy. The regulatory readiness across the continent is vast; a comprehensive implementation approach is required to realise the potential of AI.

- AI systems are vulnerable to attacks, data breaches, and malicious use, posing security risks that must be addressed through clear and comprehensive regulatory frameworks across all countries to mitigate this risk.

6. Funding

- Limited funding for AI research and development and an over-reliance on external funding perpetuates Africa's role as a consumer rather than a producer of AI technology. This limits the continent's ability to develop homegrown AI solutions that address its unique challenges and contribute to economic growth and job creation.

- Limited funding on the continent for AI research and the establishment of AI Safety Institutes are critical for assessing risk, conducting foundational research, and addressing the safety and governance of AI.

- A lack of involvement from key stakeholders familiar with the AI landscape in decision-making conversations to ensure that limited funding goes towards ecosystem building, which includes supporting businesses and startups, upskilling and reskilling the workforce, and enabling governments to create harmonized, interoperable AI governance frameworks to facilitate cross-border trade in line with the ambitions of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

7. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

- Insufficient engagement with diverse stakeholders, including marginalized communities and youth, and pan-African grassroots organizations focused on AI innovation and participatory data collection limits the diversity of perspectives and hinders the development of inclusive AI policies.

- A gap in understanding and awareness between policymakers and the broader population regarding AI poses challenges for policy implementation and public trust.

- There is a need to foster greater collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders, including the establishment of platforms for sharing best practices, data, and research findings.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and harness the transformative potential of AI, the following recommendations were proposed:

For Policymakers

- **Amend Existing Laws:** Review and amend existing laws and regulatory frameworks, such as those related to data protection, competition, product safety, consumer protection, cybersecurity, cybercrimes, intellectual property and human rights, among others, to address the unique challenges and risks posed by AI, ensuring responsible innovation and mitigating potential harms. These amendments should adopt an outcome-based approach, focusing on achieving desired outcomes and preventing harms, regardless of the specific technology employed, to ensure that legal frameworks remain relevant and effective as new technologies emerge.

- **Ensure Inclusive Policymaking:** Establish mechanisms for meaningful participation of diverse stakeholders, including civil society, academia, the private sector, grassroots organizations focused on AI, and marginalized communities, in AI policy development and implementation. Ensure that the perspectives, particularly women's and youth's needs, are adequately represented in AI initiatives.

- **Promote Transparency and Accountability:** Develop risk-based legal frameworks and promote transparency and accountability in AI systems, including requirements for explainability, auditing, and impact assessments.

- **Address Fragmentation of Laws:** Harmonize AI-related laws and regulations to avoid fragmentation and promote a unified approach to AI governance, including contributing to and referencing international standards and codes of practice. This includes actively collaborating with other African countries and regional bodies, such as the African Union and regional economic communities, to develop harmonized legal frameworks that facilitate cross-border cooperation, mitigate the security risk of AI, promote knowledge sharing, and support the development of a robust pan-African AI ecosystem.

- **Fostering Inclusive AI Governance through North-South Collaboration:** Policy and governance collaboration between the Global North and the Global South is essential for creating an enabling environment for AI with appropriate safeguards. This could be through knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and resource mobilization to bridge existing gaps, harmonize governance frameworks and ensure local stakeholders are involved.

- **Integrating African Perspectives in Global AI Governance:** Co-creating regulatory policies by the Global North and Global South allows for the development of guidelines that encourage innovation and protect citizens, drawing from global experiences while incorporating local insights unique to African contexts. Working towards international AI standards that include African perspectives ensures that the continent's specific needs are addressed within a balanced, globally integrated AI ecosystem. This collaborative approach shifts the focus from strategy to tangible action, driving progress in Africa's AI landscape through deeper international cooperation and moving towards practical implementations that benefit society.

For Governments (Executive Branch)

- **Build a Roadmap for AI Governance for the Next Four Years:** Governments should develop a structured and holistic roadmap to prioritize key actions, enhance institutional and human capacities, and position themselves as leaders in AI governance. Given the rapid evolution of AI technologies, the next four years will be critical in shaping regulatory approaches, fostering collaboration, and ensuring AI policies are aligned with national and regional priorities.

- **Support the Implementation of the AU Continental AI Strategy:** Actively champion the implementation of the AU Continental AI Strategy, adhering to established timelines for deliverables and prioritizing initiatives that promote stakeholder engagement, increase AI literacy across society, foster collaboration between public and private sectors, and address the digital divide. This includes building upon existing government-led safety frameworks tailored to each country's unique needs and strengthening oversight and control of AI in critical infrastructure to ensure human control and responsible use.

- **Invest in AI Infrastructure and Bridge Digital Divide:** Prioritize investing in robust AI and digital infrastructure, such as data centers, increased bandwidth, reliable connectivity, and access to high-performance computing resources, to support the training and deployment of AI models and advance AI research.

- **Bridge Digital Divide:** Expand internet connectivity and access to technology and digital literacy in underserved communities, particularly rural areas, through intentional programs in partnership with civil society organizations. Promote AI literacy initiatives across formal and informal learning spaces, encouraging the participation of women and marginalized communities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to foster a skilled and inclusive AI workforce.

- **Strengthen Capacity Building:** Invest in capacity-building initiatives for government officials, regulators, and other stakeholders to enhance their understanding of AI governance and policy development—support training and education programs to equip the workforce with AI skills for the AI era.

- **Research and Development:** Commit to national and continental-wide research budgets to enhance the capacity of academic institutions to support the development of AI in Africa and address the contextualized needs and challenges of the continent in sectors identified as “high impact” in the AU Continental AI Strategy (agriculture, education, healthcare, climate change).

- **Engage Youth:** Acknowledge the role of the youth in AI development, deployment, and use, as well as the future that is being shaped for them, and ensure their active participation during the implementation of the AU Continental AI Strategy.

- **Promote AI Adoption in the Public Sector:** Explore and implement AI solutions in the public sector. AI solutions in the public sector can improve efficiency, service delivery, and decision-making in areas such as healthcare, education, and public administration.

- **Building upon Existing AI Governance Frameworks Tailored to African Countries' Unique Needs:** In our efforts to promote a uniform AI governance framework in Africa, we recognize that each country may have different baseline concerns and needs. A useful cross-cutting starting point should focus on implementing and building upon existing government-led safety frameworks and regulations, which can then be tailored to each country's unique circumstances to advance AI safety.

- **Strengthen Oversight and Control of AI in Critical Infrastructure:** Governments need to ensure that operators of AI systems test and monitor those to maintain human control over critical infrastructure. Additionally, AI systems controlling the operation of designated critical infrastructure should be deployed exclusively in licensed AI data centers, providing a second layer of protection by enabling the application of safety brakes, thereby ensuring effective human control. To achieve effective oversight, the government, through its legislative arm, should establish clear regulations that mandate operators to regularly test and monitor high-risk AI systems and create a comprehensive framework for AI governance that includes regular audits and assessments of AI systems used in critical infrastructure.

For the Private Sector

- **Promote Ethical AI Practices and Build Public Trust:** Adopt ethical guidelines and principles in the design, development, and deployment of AI systems, ensuring alignment with human rights and societal values. This includes conducting ethical impact assessments, ensuring transparency in data usage, and building public trust through clear communication about AI technologies' functionality, data usage, and associated benefits and risks. Actively engage in public-private partnerships to contribute to the development of responsible AI policies and initiatives, sharing expertise on advanced AI models to help governments define regulatory thresholds.

- **Invest in AI Safety and Security:** Prioritize the development and implementation of AI safety and security measures to mitigate potential risks and harms associated with AI systems, including implementing security protocols and conducting vulnerability assessments.

- **Address the Environmental Impacts of AI:** Take steps to minimize the environmental impact of AI, such as by developing energy-efficient AI models and promoting the use of renewable energy sources for AI development and deployment.

- **Increase Investment in Local AI Development:** Increase investment in and support for African-driven AI innovation, fostering the growth of local AI companies, developing local talent and reducing reliance on external funding sources.

- **Showcase Tangible Impacts of AI:** Demonstrate AI's tangible benefits and positive impacts through workshops, case studies, and collaborative projects to build public confidence and encourage adoption.

- **Share Expertise to Define Regulatory Thresholds:** The private sector should share its specialized knowledge about advanced AI models to help governments define regulatory thresholds. This can be done by providing governments with detailed insights into the functioning and implications of advanced AI models through transparency notes and technical whitepapers explaining how AI technologies work, their potential risks, and the safeguards to mitigate those risks. They can also collaborate with government agencies through advisory committees, working groups, and public consultations. Finally, the private sector can provide training programs and workshops for government officials and regulators to enhance their understanding of AI technologies.

- **Foster AI Innovation through Public-Private Partnerships:** The public and private sectors can pursue Public-Private Partnerships to advance AI innovation by combining resources, expertise, and infrastructure to develop and implement AI solutions that address societal challenges, fostering a more inclusive and effective approach to technological advancement.

For Civil Society Organizations

- **Advocate for Responsible AI:** Raise awareness about the ethical implications of AI use and advocate for policies that protect human rights, promote inclusivity, and ensure equitable access to the benefits of AI.
- **Monitor AI Development:** Monitor the development and deployment of AI systems to ensure they align with ethical principles, societal values, and human rights standards.
- **Empower Communities:** Empower marginalized communities with the knowledge and skills to participate in the AI ecosystem and advocate for their needs and interests.
- **Facilitate Public Dialogue:** Facilitate public dialogue and engagement on AI issues, promoting understanding and informed decision-making.

For Regulators

- **Develop Agile and Adaptive Regulatory Frameworks:** Adopt regulatory approaches that can adapt to the rapid advancements in AI, such as sandbox environments, iterative regulatory processes, and principle-based regulation, to foster innovation while ensuring responsible AI development.
- **Clarify Intellectual Property Rights for AI:** Provide clear guidance on intellectual property rights related to AI, addressing issues such as ownership of AI-generated content and the use of copyrighted data for AI training.
- **Bridge the Knowledge and Awareness Gap:** Bridge the knowledge and awareness gap between policymakers and the broader population regarding AI to ensure effective policy implementation and public trust.
- **Promote Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Actively collaborate with regulators in other African countries and international markets to share knowledge, best practices, and regulatory approaches. Engage with regulators in other domains, such as competition, consumer protection, product safety, and data protection, to share expertise, conduct joint investigations, and address cross-cutting issues related to AI governance.
- **Update Regulatory Frameworks for AI:** Sectoral regulators (e.g. in the healthcare, finance or other highly regulated sectors) should consider updating existing oversight and enforcement frameworks to encompass AI systems, including clarifying how existing authorities can oversee the use of AI in their respective fields.

For Researchers

- **Focus on African Challenges:** Focus research efforts on developing AI solutions that address Africa's unique challenges in areas such as healthcare, agriculture, education, and environmental sustainability.
- **Address Bias and Fairness in AI:** Develop methods and tools to identify and mitigate bias and discrimination in AI systems, ensuring fairness and equity in their application.

- **Collaborate with Industry and Government:** Engage in collaborative research projects with industry and government to ensure that research findings are translated into practical solutions and policy recommendations.
- **Conduct Contextual Academic Research:** Focus on conducting academic research relevant to the African context, addressing local challenges and contributing to developing solutions that benefit the continent.
- **Provide Expertise on AI Risks and Opportunities:** Researchers should provide expertise and best practices for identifying, measuring, and mitigating potential harms posed by AI systems while offering insights into exciting opportunities for AI innovation.
- **Promote Youth Engagement in AI Research:** Encourage and support the participation of young people in AI research, fostering the next generation of AI innovators and leaders.

Conclusion

The Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting was a crucial platform for collaborative discussion and knowledge sharing on the critical issues surrounding AI governance and capacity building in Africa. African countries can harness the transformative potential of AI for inclusive and sustainable development by addressing the identified challenges and implementing the recommendations outlined in this brief. The successful implementation of these recommendations will mitigate the risks associated with AI, unlock its immense potential to address Africa's unique challenges and drive progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063. It will unlock the potential of AI to drive economic growth, create jobs, and improve the quality of life for all Africans. It will also position Africa as a global leader in responsible AI innovation. Africa can shape an AI future that reflects its unique values, priorities, and aspirations, ensuring that AI technologies are harnessed for the benefit of all its citizens. This requires a collaborative and inclusive approach from all stakeholders, ensuring that all voices are heard and that AI technologies are developed and deployed responsibly, ethically, and for the equitable benefit of all Africans.

This brief calls for all stakeholders to join forces in shaping a future where AI empowers Africa and contributes to a more equitable and prosperous continent.

Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting

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