United Nations

Security Council
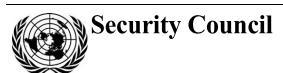
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Letter dated 14 July 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of July 2023, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland intends to organize a briefing on the theme "Artificial intelligence: opportunities and risks for international peace and security", to be held on Tuesday, 18 July 2023.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, the United Kingdom has prepared a concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Barbara **Woodward**

Annex to the letter dated 14 July 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council briefing on the theme "Artificial intelligence: opportunities and risks for international peace and security", 18 July 2023

Rapid developments in artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have the capacity to transform our societies, with wide-ranging effects. This high-level briefing will discuss potential implications of AI on international peace and security and promote its safe and responsible use.

Background

AI technologies have the capacity to transform the way we live and work. The technology is evolving at breakneck speed. Foundation models and large language models, such as those that power ChatGPT, are trained on very large unlabelled data sets. When provided new inputs they can create genuinely new, statistically generated content by sampling from a model. Such tools are now multimodal, outputting and inputting images, speech and text. This is a shift from AI developed to execute specific tasks to AI models that can perform a wide range of applications and cognitive tasks. The economic opportunities afforded by AI are immense. Globally, generative AI is set to become a $1.3 trillion market by 2032 from just $40 billion in 2022, according to Bloomberg research.

Opportunities for international peace and security

AI and its complementary digital and data technologies have the potential to enable major advances in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Experts have suggested that when applied to United Nations peace and security tools, AI has the potential to improve conflict analysis, early warning and prevention efforts and support mediation and peacebuilding activities. In the field, AI could support efforts to promote data-driven and technology-enabled peace operations with potential benefits for situational awareness, mission planning and community engagement. It could be used for monitoring ceasefires in real time to flag breaches and to improve accuracy of mine clearance operations. The United Nations has also been exploring the use of AI for mediators to hold real-time consultations with a large group of individuals in local dialects and languages, allowing for analyses and segmentation based on demographic interests.

United Nations humanitarian missions could benefit through the optimization of supply and distribution of aid. AI technologies have the potential to support humanitarian actors as they transition from reactive to anticipatory approaches to humanitarian action in conflicts or crises. Project Jetson, an initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), uses predictive analytics to forecast forced displacement of people, giving UNHCR and other organizations the potential to become more proactive in their response efforts – a transformation that could significantly improve on-the-ground relief services and the lives of those who are forcibly displaced.

AI could also support monitoring of compliance regimes, including sanctions, and assist with existing counterproliferation challenges by identifying risks,

improving reporting mechanisms, bolstering enforcement capability and accelerating verification of potential concerns.

Finally, many commentators have highlighted the potential benefits of AI for development initiatives that contribute to global prosperity and stability. This could include tackling challenges such as improving global health by using advanced AI techniques to increase the pace of drug discovery by identifying chemicals, molecules and compounds that may best target specific diseases; adapting to the worst effects of climate change by using AI to advance weather prediction; tackling corruption and illicit finance by allowing financial services companies to better identify fraudulent or corrupt activities; and enabling and enhancing a quality education for all through the development of personalized, adaptive and intelligent learning systems.

Risks to international peace and security

In addition to the potential opportunities, many leading experts have warned about the potential for more general AI technologies – as yet undeveloped – to endanger humanity. The range of "AI frontier risks" – risks associated with new capabilities enabled by the most recent advances in these technologies – stretches from the intersection of AI and biosecurity, the misuse of advanced AI systems for cyberattacks, and disinformation and its impact on democracy, to the design of weapons of mass destruction.

Widespread military adoption of AI-enabled capabilities will change the nature of armed conflict. Depending on how it is deployed, AI presents both military risks and opportunities, including for peaceful resolutions before the point of conflict. For example, it can accelerate and exacerbate existing risks, such as those presented by cyber capabilities, and introduce novel risks through convergence of AI with other (emerging) technologies.

Generative AI creates new risks and amplifies existing ones around mis- and disinformation, with the ability to create and distribute highly realistic manipulated imagery, video and audio – so-called deepfakes – at an unprecedented pace and scale. The level of realism may increase susceptibility to disinformation among populations and could be used by actors in conflict to generate fear and division, for example through election interference. United Nations peace operations may be targeted through the direct impact of disinformation on global security and the United Nations itself if people are not able to believe what they see and read, especially in times of tension. A 2022 survey found that nearly half of all United Nations peacekeepers consider mis- and disinformation to severely impact mandate implementation and threaten their safety and security, obstructing missions from conducting life-saving work.

There are a number of vulnerabilities within AI systems that can leave them open to threats. Unsecured systems can be hijacked and either shut down or manipulated by malign actors. As AI becomes a more integral part of modern systems, it is vital that its safety and security are prioritized as systems are being designed, to protect from both unintentional and malicious acts.

The role of the Security Council

As the United Nations body with primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council has a role to play in considering how new technologies intersect with its mandate.

Security Council members can champion the transformative potential of AI in preventing and responding to conflicts and for enhancing United Nations peace and security capabilities. They can also offer a platform for civil society experts to advise

on how best to harness the opportunities and mitigate the risks of AI. The Council can affirm the importance of inclusive, international cooperation towards the safe and responsible use of AI, based on a positive, aspirational vision that promotes and protects human rights in the context of AI development. Council members can also consider how to manage the potential risks for peace and security stemming from the use of AI, by taking account of developments in AI in relevant mandates and resolutions.

This technology can and should be a force for good. International engagement is vital to ensuring that both the technologies and the rules governing their use are developed in the right way. As such, creating an enabling environment for innovation in the design, development and deployment of these technologies is a societal imperative. Innovation should, however, be responsible. Our approach should build public trust and support the safe and responsible widespread adoption of these technologies in a way that advances the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

Guiding questions

- How can Security Council members promote the safe and responsible development of AI to maintain international peace and security, while seizing the opportunities it brings for sustainable development?

- How can AI be used to enhance the United Nations peace and security toolkit and, at the same time, what mitigations may be necessary to adapt to the potential transformative impact of AI on United Nations peace operations and peacebuilders?

- How can the Council better monitor and prevent the emerging risk that the development and use of AI could exacerbate conflicts and instability?

Format and briefers

The meeting will be chaired by the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom, James Cleverly.

The following speakers will brief the Security Council:

- Secretary-General of the United Nations

- Co-Founder of Anthropic, Jack Clark

- Professor at the Institute of Automation, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Yi Zeng

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