

# AI, Human Rights and Engaging in Policymaking

## Transcript of Webinar #2: Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technologies at the UN Human Rights Council

### 01 Welcome & Agenda

This session, delivered by Fridtjof Dunkel, First Secretary (Human Rights) at the German Mission to the UN in Geneva, looks at opportunities for civil society organisations to engage at the UN Human Rights Council on issues relating to AI and other digital technologies, including key Human Rights Council Resolutions.

The session takes the form of a fireside chat, with Fridtjof Dunkel providing an overview of the work of the UN Human Rights Council and key opportunities for engagement, followed by questions and conversation among attendees.

### 02 Human Rights Council & Resolutions

- The Human Rights Council is a body that allows for multiple representatives of many different countries to discuss human rights.
- The UPR, Universal Periodic Review, is a mechanism that tracks the progress of human rights based on periodic reviews.
- There are opportunities for non-governmental actors to engage in both of those mechanisms.

- There are resolutions focused on the situation of specific countries, and there are thematic resolutions. Some of the most prominent thematic resolutions are focused on freedom of expression, religion and belief, arbitrary arrest, socio and economic rights.
- Special Rapporteurs also exist, focused on different thematic areas or looking at the human rights situation in a country.

3 resolutions by the Human Rights Council that touch on digital issues:

- **Internet Resolution:** looks at freedom of expression and the digital divide.
- **New and emerging technologies:** addressing different approaches to new and emerging technologies to protect and respect human rights.
- **Privacy in the digital age:** addressing privacy violations through state surveillance. Creates a Special Rapporteur on surveillance and privacy. To understand the digital age, the understanding of how technology and data works and is collected, is crucial to monitor any violations or issues such as racial bias decisions.

One of the challenges for the groups working on these resolutions at the Human Rights Council is that the discussions have become quite technical, so they need stakeholders' input and feedback to inform the discussions.

### 03 Where and how can civil society engage with the Human Rights Council?

There is a rule that only organisations that have been accredited by ECOSOC are permitted to be present in Human Rights Council meetings. In Geneva, however, civil society and NGOs play a huge role and their feedback is held highly when understanding and discussing human rights issues. For example, at the end of the Council meetings, the floor is usually given to civil society to contribute to the process.

#### REFLECTION/QUESTIONS SESSION

- *What is a particular value of the HR Council resolutions when assessing global norms compared to other parts of the UN family?*
  - The approach is different towards the consideration of technology as the Human Rights Council looks at technologies through a human rights lens i.e. racially biased decisions made by these algorithms.
- *Does the UN have a legitimate voice to try and influence global standards on AI?*
  - Sometimes human rights can seem very far away when trying to implement global standards, however the UN has been trying to approach new aspects that have not been used traditionally in the council, discussing algorithms and technologies affecting human rights globally.