Center for AI and Digital Policy

CAIDP Update **2.25 (July 2, 2021)** – *UNESCO Finalizes Recommendation on AI Ethics*

In a statement released today, UNESCO reported that after months of constructive dialogue and negotiation, representatives from UNESCO's member states have agreed on the draft text of an ambitious and wide-ranging new template for the ethical development and deployment of Artificial Intelligence. The UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics is divided into several sections: (I) Scope of Application, (II) Aims and Objectives, (III) Values and Principles, (IV) Areas of Policy Action, and (V) Monitoring and Evaluation. UNESCO member states will take up the Recommendation at the November 2021 meeting.

The UNESCO AI Recommendation builds on earlier AI policy frameworks, including the OECD AI Principles and the G20 AI Guidelines. Familiar topics include transparency, accountability and privacy. The UNESCO AI Recommendation also contain action-oriented policy chapters on data governance, education, culture, healthcare and the economy, and provide governments and policy makers with a global framework for regulating AI. The UNESCO AI Recommendation notably finds that "greater transparency contributes to more peaceful, just, democratic and inclusive societies." The Recommendation also states "AI systems should not be used for social scoring or mass surveillance purposes," a point emphasized by many civil society organizations and contained also in the Universal Guidelines for AI.

According to UNESCO, the Recommendation of AI Ethics will establish a global framework to ensure that digital transformations promote human rights and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, said, "Once adopted, leaders everywhere will have a shared reference point on how to control the risks and harness these new technologies as a force for good. AI has the potential to radically reduce inequalities, promote diversity, and benefit humanity as a whole." Algorithmic justice is one of top goals for the UNESCO policy framework. Emphasizing "fair outcomes," UNESCO said it will seek to ensure that real-world biases are not replicated online. UNESCO will also analyze the level of advancement of each country in the field of AI to promote implementation.

CAIDP has followed closely the development of the UNESCO AI Recommendation. We described the work in our report Artificial Intelligence and Democratic Values. In *CAIDP Update 1.04*, we wrote "Key challenges ahead for UNESCO will include the need to address bias in AI-based systems. It has become increasingly difficult to determine how automated decisions about people are made. The practical consequence can be to reinforce systems of social bias and to create additional barriers to inclusion and diversity. . . . UNESCO will also need to consider whether the scoring of citizens or the use of AI techniques for mass surveillance are consistent with existing international human rights law or the goal of human dignity.

UNESCO has addressed these issues and more in the final text. We strongly support adoption of the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.