

## Governments must act now to manage AI for the public good

**27 March 2026**

We call on governments worldwide to manage Artificial Intelligence with an urgency that reflects both scientific evidence and public concern.

A government's first responsibility is to protect its citizens.

As the scale of AI capability accelerates exponentially, the current gap in governance is becoming a crisis. This must change. Governments have the power to change it - in their people's interests.

We join together as a diverse group of AI leaders, Nobel prize winners, and former Presidents and Prime Ministers to recognise this pivotal moment for the world. AI innovation has the potential to bring great benefits, in healthcare, education, agriculture and elsewhere. But the harms are already visible, and expanding rapidly.

People expect their governments to regulate companies so profit is not prioritised over public safety. We reject claims that governments cannot or should not regulate AI: because technology moves too quickly, because companies will regulate themselves, because geopolitical competition matters more than public safety. These narratives are all misleading.

There is nothing inevitable about how AI develops. Who it benefits and harms is a shared global challenge, not a race between a handful of countries or companies.

We identify three areas demanding particularly urgent action:

**Peace and security.** Militaries are integrating commercial AI systems into weapons prematurely. These systems are already enabling violations of international law. The biological, chemical and nuclear risks could be catastrophic.

**Rule of law and human rights.** AI systems are enabling mass surveillance, discrimination and the erosion of civil liberties. AI is driving political misinformation, undermining truth, and exacerbating a breakdown in trust.

**Environmental sustainability.** AI data centres already consume more electricity than entire countries, and are depleting water reserves in drought-affected regions. These harms often fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable.

We call for a more inclusive global dialogue on AI governance, grounded in scientific research and committed to transparency and accountability. AI safety must be broadened to include its social, political, and economic impact. The United Nations has an essential role.

AI is here to stay. We urge governments and other stakeholders to work collectively to change its trajectory and build a more positive vision. AI should serve humanity, contributing to a safer, more peaceful and prosperous future for everyone.

ENDS

**Juan Manuel Santos**, former President of Colombia, Nobel Peace Laureate and Chair of The Elders

**Gro Harlem Brundtland**, former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director-General of the WHO

**Helen Clark**, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former head of the UN Development Programme

**Elbegdorj Tsakhia**, former President and Prime Minister of Mongolia

**Mary Robinson**, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Yoshua Bengio**, most cited computer scientist, Turing Award winner, and Professor at Université de Montréal

**Cynthia Dwork**, Gordon McKay Professor of Computer Science at Harvard University

**Alondra Nelson**, Harold F. Linder Professor, Institute for Advanced Study; former Acting Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

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**Stuart Russell**, OBE, FRS, Distinguished Professor of Computer Science, University of California, Berkeley, and President, International Association for Safe and Ethical Artificial Intelligence

**Marietje Schaake**, Non-resident fellow at Stanford, Author of The Tech Coup

**Lucy Suchman**, Professor Emerita, Anthropologist of Science and Technology

**Philip Thigo**, Special Envoy on Technology, Republic of Kenya

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