



UGRA DECLARATION 2024

“INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE”



Final document of the VI International Conference “Tangible and Intangible Impact of Information and Communication in the Digital Age”

The VI International Conference “Tangible and Intangible Impact of Information and Communication in the Digital Age” was held in Khanty-Mansiysk (Russian Federation) on June 18–20, 2024, within the framework of the implementation in Russia of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Information for All Programme and within the XV International IT Forum with the participation of the BRICS and SCO countries.

Since 2018, the conference has served as a unique platform for discussing the most topical changes in the field of information and communication due to the development of advanced information technologies. Conference participants analyse both positive and negative consequences of the introduction of these technologies, as well as new relationships and forms of social expression, new methods and formats of work, new business models that it causes.

In 2024, international experts focused their attention on the following issues:

- specifics of the development and implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and the impact of their mass use on society,
- ethical frameworks for the operation of AI systems and for the interpretation of their activities,
- threats to privacy and data security caused by the use of AI systems,
- measures to protect users from the risks of social engineering,
- creative industries as a multi-purpose driver of the economy in the face of new challenges,
- modern technologies of producing creative content in the context of information technology development and protection of rights for the products created,
- digital technologies as a tool for preserving and developing multilingualism in cyberspace,
- prospects of global digital cooperation for inclusive sustainable development.

Conference participants confirmed that the event is aimed primarily at providing opportunities to discuss the problems and prospects of using advanced information technologies in the context of increasing global challenges, as well as at further improving international and national policies of information society building.

Experts highlighted the following key aspects of the current stage of technology development:

- Today, AI and machine learning are taking the lead in the world of technology and are used in a wide variety of fields, including education, science, healthcare, finance, industry, business process automation, etc.
- At the current stage, AI is developing at an incredibly fast pace, demonstrating the ability to interpret complex data structures and interact with them in a deeper and more creative way. It can undoubtedly push the boundaries of human capabilities, ensuring increase

in productivity, encouraging research and creativity, bringing access to information and knowledge to a new level through improved search engines and personalised learning using digital education platforms.

- Advanced technologies are becoming more powerful and accessible to a wider range of users, but the development and implementation of innovations require extremely high financial and intellectual investments, that only a narrow range of countries can boast of. This situation further exacerbates the digital divide and favours new grounds for concentration of power.
- The use of AI technologies has an enormous impact on the psychological state and well-being of citizens in general, as well as on their ability to make intelligent and informed decisions. The results produced by generative AI, which is already capable of convincingly mimicking human thinking, can maintain and reinforce the existing biases and ideological polarisation, filter bubbles and echo chambers. It thereby increases the risk of cognitive distortions, narrowing the information field and diversity of content, spreading misinformation, inciting panic, changing geopolitical paradigms and destabilising society as a whole.
- The Internet of Things is connecting more and more devices, creating smart ecosystems in households, cities and industries, but it also brings new opportunities for collecting data, including sensitive and personal information that can be misused and abused.
- Global digital platforms can have a negative impact on urban and technological infrastructure, citizen mobility, and labour, exacerbating the already existing social inequalities. Hence, there already exists an urgent need to address conflict situations triggered by the development of the platform economy.
- While AI facilitates the creation of multilingual content through machine translation technologies, and digital archives and image recognition tools can help preserve cultural and linguistic heritage to ensure its accessibility for future generations, biased algorithms can perpetuate stereotypes and ignore cultural nuances.
- It is already evident that over the next few years, regulating advanced technologies, including AI systems, will become a major challenge for the international community, requiring constant monitoring, transparent decision-making and an unwavering commitment to the global principles of responsible and ethical use of technology.

Taking into account the above factors and reaffirming the commitment to the provisions of the Ugra Declaration (2018), Ugra Resolution (2019), Ugra Memorandum (2021), Ugra Communiqué (2022) and Ugra Statement (2023), adopted under the general title “Information and Communication in the Digital Age”, conference participants elaborated the following recommendations:

- In a situation when the world is undergoing dramatic changes and facing new threats to security, including information security, cooperation between countries becomes particularly relevant. Global technology development strategies should encourage innovation and promote geopolitical advantages without dragging the world into a new arms race.
- To ensure the spread of technological benefits and avoid dangerous rivalries between countries, it is necessary to join efforts at the international level to develop legislative

norms and rules governing the development, implementation and use of AI systems and ensuring their maximum accountability, transparency, fairness, privacy and security.

- Elaborating common principles for the use of dynamically developing new technologies through a global dialogue will help to reduce potential risks and ensure the best possible balance of interests. Notably, due to the unpredictable and rapid development of technologies, mechanisms for regulating their use should be flexible and adaptive, reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- Since AI systems should be inclusive and representative, engaging representatives of different cultures and communities in the design of these systems will help to consider cultural specifics and prevent the perpetuation of stereotypes.
- Given that modern AI systems development requires ever increasing amounts of data, computing power and money, there is a need for increased funding, including from government sources, for research into the impact of AI on people and society and for the development of appropriate regulatory mechanisms based on the principles of accountability and transparency.
- The possibility of using AI for destructive purposes poses significant ethical risks that need to be kept in mind while further developing AI systems. It is advisable to consider the possibility of elaborating specialised codes of ethics of AI for specific industries or specific areas of activity, taking into account the UNESCO Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.
- The principles of AI systems development and use elaborated at the international level (in particular, with the participation of UNESCO) may serve as a basis for further practical actions in the field of AI development, which include, among others:
 - ✓ Creating specialised structures for the protection of rights and licensing of AI systems, ensuring mutual trust in AI systems within the framework of international cooperation, including in the BRICS and SCO countries,
 - ✓ Elaborating, promoting and developing AI literacy standards at all levels of education and in public discourse,
 - ✓ Tracking, monitoring and analysing the production of AI-related scientific knowledge, programmes and higher education materials,
 - ✓ Establishing and maintaining international scientific databases (in chemistry, bioinformatics and other fields of science), ensuring the independence and reliability of such data and their use in AI training,
 - ✓ Organising international educational and scientific exchange programmes on the ethics of AI development and use, and introducing AI ethics issues in training programmes for IT specialists,
 - ✓ Developing an international data exchange platform with the involvement of UNESCO Chairs at universities around the world, as well as a standard for data exchange within such a platform.
- Text corpora in indigenous languages, as well as sources on the culture, traditions, folklore of indigenous peoples, can be used as databases for training AI. This will also provide additional opportunities to preserve cultural and linguistic diversity.

- While striving to accelerate the adoption of scientific development and digital technologies for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is necessary to make these technologies human-centred, reflecting universal values and contributing to an open, free, secure and inclusive digital future. Sound and efficient AI policies that balance innovation and regulation will allow to take full advantage of the potential of this technology while minimising possible threats to society.

This document was developed jointly by the participants of the VI International Conference “Tangible and Intangible Impact of Information and Communication in the Digital Age”, representing 41 countries: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Canada, China, Central African Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Ghana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Zambia. The Conference followed the line of the five previous international events under the same title, held in Khanty-Mansiysk in 2018-2023 with great success. These events had received a wide resonance and set the context for further discussions.

The VI Conference was traditionally organised by the Russian UNESCO IFAP Committee, the Interregional Library Cooperation Centre and the Government of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra with the support of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and the Permanent Delegation of the Russian Federation to UNESCO.

The event gathered about 150 experts – representatives of intergovernmental, international, regional and national non-governmental organisations, public authorities, prominent experts in communication, information technologies, information security, creative industries, management, international relations, sociology, political science, psychology, linguistics, pedagogy.

All participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Ugra and other organisers for their long-term efforts to hold such a significant event at the highest possible level in order to ensure open dialogue on the key issues of modern digital society development.



