

# CAMEROONIAN DIGITAL ACTORS DECLARATION ON THE CHALLENGES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

We, Cameroonian civil society organizations working to promote a healthy internet and spaces of public freedoms, gathered in Yaoundé on June 09, 2023, make the following observation:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a next-level technology that is developing rapidly and has the potential to positively revolutionize many aspects of our lives. However, the development of AI also raises a number of ethical and existential questions that need to be addressed urgently in the world but also in Cameroon ;
- The development of AI is a complex and difficult issue for citizens. However, we need to engage in deep thinking on the potential risks and benefits of AI for our social, political and economic context before it goes too late.

In view of the above, the main concerns regarding AI are worth examining:

**The risk of job losses:** As AI becomes more sophisticated, it is likely to automate many tasks that are currently performed by humans. It will revolutionize the world of work. Millions of people will be affected. Some will earn fortunes, others - the vast majority - will be replaced by AI. Translators, content producers, journalists, lawyers, accountants could see their work automated in part or in full. This could lead inexorably to large-scale unemployment, as well as social troubles, economic and even political instability in a context where unemployment and underemployment remain worrying.

**Biased and doctored data:** AI algorithms are based on data, and if the latter is biased, invented or doctored, the algorithms will also be biased. This can lead to AI systems that tamper with data and make unfair or discriminatory decisions, with the aim of misleading consumers and controlling public information above all else.

**Lack of transparency:** AI systems are often complex and hermetic, making it difficult to understand their functioning. It will also be difficult to hold them accountable for decisions they may make because our country's legislation seems not yet to integrate aspects of AI.

**Security risks:** AI systems can be hacked or manipulated, which could lead to personal data's theft or critical infrastructures' disruption.

**The risk of misinformation:** practices involving the manipulation of images and videos by AI are already visible, with a frightening level of authenticity. Ill-intentioned people can use this to manipulate large numbers of people and destroy the foundations of democracy.

**The risk to humanity:** there is the question of whether AI could eventually become so intelligent or surpass human intelligence. This could lead to a scenario in which AI takes over

from humans and makes autonomous decisions. Artificial Intelligence can also become a dope, leading to addictive behavior.

**Invasion of privacy:** Artificial Intelligence uses personal data to provide research information. This information can be misused by the AI end-user to harm private individuals. More than 1,000 technology professionals have called for a moratorium on certain Artificial Intelligence systems to protect digital human rights in their use. In 2021, UNESCO had already issued a recommendation on the ethics of AI, which describes how to amplify the benefits of AI while reducing the risks this technology entails.

**The risk of cyber-colonization:** the AI's use is not without risks, especially in the case of Africa, where comprehensive legislation on cybersecurity and personal data protection has not yet been fully implemented, which consequently turns the continent into an open book, vulnerable to any digital exploitation. AI poses the risk of a new form of colonization resurgence that could be described as cyber-colonization. This is a policy or practice that takes total or partial control of another country's cyberspace, occupying it with technologies serving foreign interests and exploiting it economically.

**The risk of socio-political unrest:** Artificial Intelligence could be used by ill-intentioned individuals to alter election data and propose politically-oriented content, as has been the case in some countries.

**The erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms:** in a world where democracy is constantly in crisis, AI could be used by governments to increase control over populations, activities or opposition groups.

In the light of these concerns, which could put African countries with fragile democracies at risk, it is urgent to think about the strategies to be put in place for a positive and progressive appropriation of AI, and to frame its use and development.

All over the world, actors are mobilizing to prepare for the imminent and ongoing transformations of our world. We, Cameroonians, must not be left behind.

According to the above, we, civil society actors,

**We call on the Cameroonian government to :**

- Develop public policies in favor of the AI framework
- Create a consultation framework between government and other stakeholders involved in the development, use and regulation of AI.
- Invest in AI research and development to develop expertise and necessary infrastructure to develop and use AI responsibly.
- Create ethical guidelines for the development and use of AI. These guidelines should address issues such as data bias, data protection, transparency and security.

- Set up an AI risk monitoring and alert system that will enable information to be shared rapidly and appropriate decisions to be taken.
- Promote public awareness of the challenges and opportunities of AI. This will help to ensure that AI is deployed and used for the benefit of all.

**We call on Cameroonian civil society to:**

- Work with government agencies and academia to protect the rights and freedoms threatened by the exploitation of AI in Cameroon.
- Identify the critical effects linked to the use of AI and make proposals for action to the government to mitigate them.

**We call on the Cameroonian media to:**

- Provide regular information on developments in AI and its uses at national or international level, in order to keep stakeholders alert to new issues.

In this way, the Cameroonian government and other stakeholders will contribute in making AI a force for inclusive development in Cameroon.

Signed by :

1- **Cameroonian Association for Media Education (EDUK-MEDIA)**  L'Esprit critique  
au service des  
pratiques  
pédagogiques

2- **ADISI-Cameroun**  ADISI - CAMEROUN

3- **Civic Watch Cameroon**  Association Civic Watch

4- **Fondation Conseil Jeune** 

5- **Digital-Access** 

## CONTACT

Tel : (237) 691567363

Email : [edukmediacameroon@gmail.com](mailto:edukmediacameroon@gmail.com)