

ABOUT ECLAC and the CDCC

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established in 1948 to support Latin American governments in the economic and social development of that region. Subsequently, in 1966, the Commission (ECLA, at that time) established the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain to serve all countries of the insular Caribbean, as well as Belize, Guyana and Suriname, making it the largest United Nations body in the subregion.

At its sixteenth session in 1975, the Commission agreed to create the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) as a permanent subsidiary body, which would function within the ECLA structure to promote development cooperation among Caribbean countries. Secretariat services to the CDCC would be provided by the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. Nine years later, the Commission's widened role was officially acknowledged when the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) modified its title to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Key Areas of Activity

The ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean (ECLAC/CDCC secretariat) functions as a subregional think-tank and facilitates increased contact and cooperation among its membership. Complementing the ECLAC/CDCC work programme framework, are the broader directives issued by the United Nations General Assembly when in session, which constitute the Organisation's mandate. At present, the overarching articulation of this mandate is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Towards meeting these objectives, the Secretariat conducts research; provides technical advice to governments upon request; organizes intergovernmental and expert group meetings; helps to formulate and articulate a regional perspective within global forums; and introduces global concerns at the regional and subregional levels.

Areas of specialization include trade, statistics, social development, science and technology, and sustainable development, while actual operational activities extend to economic and development planning, demography, economic surveys, assessment of the socio-economic impacts of natural disasters, climate change, data collection and analysis, training, and assistance with the management of national economies.

The ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean also functions as the Secretariat for coordinating the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The scope of ECLAC/CDCC activities is documented in the wide range of publications produced by the subregional headquarters in Port of Spain.

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Antigua and Barbuda	Haiti
The Bahamas	Jamaica
Barbados	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Belize	Saint Lucia
Cuba	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Dominica	Suriname
Dominican Republic	Trinidad and Tobago
Grenada	
Guyana	

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The illustrations used in this issue of the Focus were generated using Artificial Intelligence.

COVER

SOURCE: Adobe Stock

PROMPT: Hands of a African Caribbean child holding crystal glowing globe, planet Earth at a sunny green meadow background, copyspace, taking care Ecology, sustainable nature, conversation concept

PAGE 4

SOURCE: Adobe Firefly

PROMPT: Woman working in a futuristic office sci fi style

PAGE 6

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PROMPT: Globe in robot hand with icon on nature background,

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TOWARD AI POLICIES FOR THE CARIBBEAN

by Erica Simmons, Paula Isturiz Caverro and Paul Hector (UNESCO)

Artificial Intelligence offers extraordinary opportunities for accelerating human progress across a range of fields from healthcare and education, to combating climate change and disasters. However, if left unregulated, AI could exacerbate inequalities, undermine human rights and threaten peace.

2023 has been a watershed year for Artificial Intelligence. Generative AI¹ has captured the public's attention due to its user-friendliness and the wide range of practical uses it has opened for non-techies. Earlier this year, ChatGPT set a record by becoming the first application to reach a monthly user base of 100 million people in just two months. In early November 2023, OpenAI, the developers of ChatGPT, announced that 2 million developers and over 92% of US Fortune 500 companies were using the platform.²

The capabilities and availability of AI systems has provoked a range of reactions. While some educators are enthusiastic about its potential to support learning, others are concerned it might circumvent learning opportunities or contribute to misinformation.³ At Inspire, Microsoft's annual developer conference, Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, spoke enthusiastically of AI as the most significant platform shift and market expansion in computing history, enabling organizations and individuals

to do more.⁴ There is much speculation about the impact of AI on jobs. Some believe AI will degrade "good" jobs into poorly paid "bad" ones. Yet others see AI as an inevitable development, so they call for regulations on the pace of AI's entry into the workplace, as well as retraining for displaced employees to find new jobs and reduce workforce disruptions.⁵ On the other hand, some believe AI will eliminate monotonous, dangerous and repetitive work. This would enable workers to increase the time they can spend on more interesting aspects of work, enabling them to be more creative, productive and find greater work satisfaction.⁶

At the international policy level there is consensus that AI must be used responsibly and ethically to advance human rights, peace and prosperity^{7,8,9}. Algorithms, for example, can replicate or embed biases that exist in our societies, exacerbating different forms of discrimination and inequalities. In order to uphold human rights and address ethical concerns of AI, in 2021, UNESCO's 193 Member

States unanimously adopted the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, the world's first global standard on AI ethics.¹⁰ The Recommendation represents a unique agreement of Member States on the values, principles and policies that should govern the development of AI. Furthermore, it acts as an ethical guiding compass providing concrete pathways to maximize the positive impact of AI, while addressing the associated risks. UNESCO is rolling out policy tools to support countries in effectively applying the recommendations.

The Caribbean region is at a pivotal juncture, facing developmental challenges such as the need to modernize its institutions, infrastructure, and systems across various sectors. AI presents a transformative opportunity for inclusive, social, and economic growth. To harness AI's potential effectively, Caribbean nations need to formulate policies and safeguards to mitigate against the negative impacts of AI.

¹ Generative AI describes algorithms that can be used to create new content, including text, audio, images or video.

² OpenAI's ChatGPT now has 100 million weekly active users. <https://tcrn.ch/3FOWjCO>

³ ChatGPT in education: global reactions to AI innovations <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-023-42227-6>

⁴ Microsoft Inspire <https://news.microsoft.com/inspire-2023/>

⁵ AI won't kill our jobs — but it will make them worse <https://www.washingtonpost.com/made-by-history/2023/06/19/ai-chatgpt-jobs-unions/>

⁶ How Does Artificial Intelligence Create New Jobs? <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/07/26/how-does-artificial-intelligence-create-new-jobs/?sh=43e24fc52586>

⁷ Stressing Artificial Intelligence Could Power Extraordinary Progress for Humanity, Secretary-General Says New High-Level Advisory Body 'Is the Starting Point' <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm22007.doc.htm>

⁸ The Bletchley Declaration by Countries Attending the AI Safety Summit, 1-2 November 2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-safety-summit-2023-the-bletchley-declaration/the-bletchley-declaration-by-countries-attending-the-ai-safety-summit-1-2-november-2023>

⁹ Forum on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence In Latin America and the Caribbean <https://foroi.alac.org/en/>

¹⁰ Ethics of Artificial Intelligence <https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics>

A key strategy for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is the development of a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach. This strategy should focus not only on deploying AI technologies but also on building digital infrastructure, enhancing human capacity and creating an enabling regulatory framework. UNESCO's proactive approach to AI's global impact and its potential for positive outcomes provides valuable guidance.

AI can address specific structural challenges in the Caribbean, such as limited resources, small markets, and climate change vulnerability. Nonetheless, the increased use of AI could disrupt local labour markets, affecting employment and livelihoods. Limited capabilities and resources create noticeable disparities in Caribbean countries' access to and development of frontier technologies. This highlights the need for building and enhancing human capacity, as well as creating people-centered regulatory frameworks. These frameworks must ensure fair access to AI's benefits, through an ethical lens, particularly for vulnerable populations, to prevent exacerbating inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind.

With the future of AI here, how can the Caribbean leverage transformative technologies to cope with developmental challenges when AI frameworks, policies and strategies are not yet in place? The answer perhaps lies in drawing on the strength of the region's resilience and focusing it on AI for growth. Although AI frameworks and laws are still in their infancy, much can be garnered by leveraging the expertise of experts and collaborators. Tools such as UNESCO's Readiness Assessment Methodology and Ethical Impact Assessment elaborated to render operational the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, as well as the UN Secretary General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, Guidelines for Regulating Digital Platforms and Digital Capacity

Building for Civil Servants, are freely available references that can assist with shaping AI policies for the Caribbean. The process to create a Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap began in 2020 under the Caribbean AI Initiative. It was initiated by the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica, working in close collaboration with the UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean, within the framework of the UNESCO Information for All Programme (IFAP). Under the Caribbean AI Initiative, broad consultative multi-stakeholder events were convened over the period December 2020 to September 2021. The process engaged stakeholders from the private sector, governments, academia, NGOs and the general public. The views of women, youth and persons with disabilities were specifically included. The resulting contributions became the Draft Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap. The Roadmap aims to raise awareness, promote reflection and stimulate policy action to harness the opportunities and address the challenges that AI and frontier technologies pose to the region. In early 2023 the Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap was updated to take into account:

- The post-COVID-19 context,
- New and emerging regulatory landscape with frameworks and tools such as UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, and the European Union's AI Act;
- Increased ethical concerns as AI plays a bigger role in supporting decision-making across different sectors;
- The widespread public adoption of large language models (LLMs), like ChatGPT, which have captured the public's imagination;
- Efforts by Caribbean states to leverage digital transformation in their sustainable development strategies;
- Renewed calls for digital technologies to be harnessed to accelerate sustainable

development, including in the United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation; and

- A desire to have an even broader range of Caribbean stakeholders engaged in the consultative process to ensure full regional ownership of the Roadmap.

The revised Roadmap has been presented at several interactive national and regional forums. The Roadmap is structured around four pillars (see below) that emerged from the stakeholder consultation process. The pillars provide strategic direction and guide policy development:

1. Governance & Transformation
2. Upskilling & Education
3. Resiliency & Sustainability
4. Culture & Creativity

While AI holds immense potential for the Caribbean, its deployment must be managed responsibly, ensuring the protection of human rights, and based on key principles such as transparency, fairness and human oversight. Given the rapid pace of development in this field we must take concerted, resolute and urgent action. These draft UNESCO Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap Pillars provide guidelines and potential policy options to harness artificial intelligence (AI) to fuel sustainable development and innovation in the region, while recognizing associated risks and ethical implications. With keen insights into AI's benefits and challenges, the roadmap envisions a multi-dimensional strategy that emphasizes AI governance, education, and digital infrastructure enhancement.

We welcome your comments on the draft pillars and invite you to take our survey and stay informed about the development of this work:

UNESCO Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap 2023 Survey: <https://forms.office.com/r/XCYGp2vHt4> ■