Ministry of State for Investment and Technology

Info Note
Consultative Meeting on National AI Strategy
Beirut, UNESCWA, 31/01/2020

Background

Artificial Intelligence is one of the new promising technologies that can contribute efficiently to achieve the globally adopted 2030 Sustainable Agenda[1]. It can be harnessed to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, on the national level.

The United Nations is involved in enhancing the use of new technologies for sustainable development. In September 2018, the UN Secretary General launched the UN strategy on New Technologies[2], that included UN commitment to support member states in building capacities and promoting dialogue on normative and cooperation frameworks.

In the world, many countries have developed their own national AI policies. In France, for example, a budget of 1.5 B Euros[3] is dedicated to transform France into a global leader in AI research, training, and industry

Most Arab countries are interested in harnessing new technologies in general, and Artificial Intelligence in particular, to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Few Arab countries have developed their national AI policies to spell out the needed objectives, identify the role of main national stakeholders and specify the principal focus areas. In UAE, as an example, the aim of the strategy, launched in 2017, was to use AI to enhance government performance and efficiency. The UAE government will invest in AI technologies in nine sectors: transport, health, space, renewable energy, water, technology, education, environment, and traffic. In doing so, the government aims to cut costs across the government operations, diversify the economy, and position the UAE as a global leader in the application of AI.

UN-ESCWA, through its technical cooperation program, is committed to provide technical assistance to its member states to boost national efforts towards the achievement of the 2030 Development Agenda. Most recently, the Ministry of State for IT and Investment (MITI) in Lebanon requested UN-ESCWA's assistance in developing a national Artificial Intelligence strategy in Lebanon.

Objectives

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[1] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld
[2] https://www.un.org/en/newtechnologies/images/pdf/SGs-Strategy-on-New-Technologies.pdf
[3] https://www.aiforhumanity.fr/pdfs/MissionVillani_Synthese_FR.pdf

This consultative meeting aims to discuss among national stakeholders the current assessment of the national context of AI and to collect information from represented entities on their needs, plans and focus areas that could be included in the draft national AI strategy.

Topics

During this meeting the following themes will be discussed:

- Showcase of AI strategies and policies in and outside the Arab region;

- National plans related digital transformation and digital economy;

- Preliminary readiness assessment for AI strategy in Lebanon;

- Main objectives and focus areas of foreseen National AI strategy in Lebanon.

Outcomes

This meeting is expected to achieve the following:

- Agreement on the level of AI readiness assessment in Lebanon;

- Identify the main areas that the AI strategy can assist Lebanon competitive positioning

- Define a clear roadmap to develop the AI strategy in Lebanon;

- Share information about examples of AI strategies in and outside the region.

Participation and registration

Participants will include representatives from relevant government entities and private sector players involved in AI projects and applications, and experts from civil society and academia. Participation is by invitation only.

Organization, format, venue and dates

The meeting is co-organized by ESCWA and Ministry of State for IT and Investment, will take place on 31 Jan 2020 at UN-House in Beirut, Lebanon.

Working language

Arabic and English are the working languages of the workshop. No interpretation is available

Additional information

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