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CSTD 2025-2026 priority theme on “Science, Technology and Innovation in the age of AI”

Statement submitted by

Uzbekistan

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REMARKS BY

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Mr. Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. We are grateful to the Chair and the Secretariat for bringing us together for this critical conversation on science, technology and innovation in the age of artificial intelligence, a conversation that is both timely and necessary.

There is a sense that we are entering a new phase. Artificial intelligence is now part of our everyday lives. It is helping us read satellite images to monitor droughts, analyse medical data for better diagnoses and manage the complex logistics chains that connect our economies. Put simply, AI is reshaping how we do science, how we build technology and how we innovate.

Just a few days ago, Uzbekistan had the honour of hosting the 43rd session of the UNESCO General Conference in Samarkand, from 30 October to 13 November 2025. For the first time in more than forty years, this session was held outside Paris. Throughout the debates, delegates repeatedly underlined the importance of artificial intelligence, its opportunities, its risks and the need for ethical guidance. For us, this was a powerful reminder that the questions we are discussing today are at the centre of the global agenda.

In Uzbekistan, we recognised this shift early. In 2020, our President launched the “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy. But this strategy was never just about new software or hardware. It is fundamentally about transforming public administration, education, healthcare and agriculture by bringing modern digital tools to every region and sector.

How are we making this a reality in practice? We now evaluate our ministries and local authorities on their progress in digitalization. We are implementing digital transformation programmes across our economy. And we are paying special attention to digital skills from training our public officials in IT and cybersecurity to ensuring that our wider population gains basic digital literacy.

For us, this is the essential foundation for any AI future. Without reliable connectivity, digital public services and a population comfortable with technology, talk of AI remains just that talk. With these basics in place, AI

becomes a practical tool to make our services more transparent, our farms more productive and our cities more liveable.

Our Agency, the Agency for Innovative Development of Uzbekistan, is at the heart of this effort. Our mandate is to strengthen the country's intellectual and technological potential. Through initiatives like our "Modernizing Uzbekistan's National Innovation System" project with the World Bank and by developing a national strategy for technoparks with international partners, we are building the infrastructure that an AI-ready innovation system needs.

From this experience, we have learned three key lessons.

First, AI only adds real value when it is anchored in strong national science, technology and innovation systems. In Uzbekistan, our digital strategy explicitly tasks ministries with proposing annual research and innovation programmes on the digital economy. This means we are not treating AI as a stand-alone trend, but as part of our long-term agenda for scientific research, applied innovation and industrial modernization.

Second, we see a real risk of an "AI divide" becoming a new scientific and innovation divide. Access to computing power, high-quality data and skilled talent is highly uneven. While some countries can train large models and test them in many domains, others struggle with basic infrastructure or with keeping their best talent at home. If this continues, some societies will help shape global AI, while others will mainly import systems that do not fully reflect their languages, cultures or needs.

And third, we must be clear-eyed about governance. The same models that can help us adapt to climate change can also be used to spread disinformation. AI is not a neutral force, it reflects the data on which it is trained and the rules we choose to set.

That is precisely why we welcome this global conversation under the UN umbrella. We need governance that is human-centred and development-oriented, but also realistic for countries at different levels of capacity. And we must ensure that developing countries are not just "policy takers", but also active participants in setting global norms and standards.

So, what does this mean in practice?

For us, it means continuing to weave AI into our national policies, not treating it as a separate agenda. It means investing in our people from introducing AI literacy in our schools, to advanced training for our researchers, to supporting the policymakers who must evaluate AI's risks. It

means creating platforms where our universities, start-ups and government can test AI on real challenges, from managing irrigation to controlling traffic.

And crucially, it means international cooperation. Uzbekistan cannot and does not intend to build a full AI ecosystem alone. We are already working with partners on technoparks, on upgrading research infrastructure and on joint projects. This cooperation is valuable for all of us, because it ensures that AI development is informed by a wider range of contexts, languages and real-world uses.

At the multilateral level, this Commission has a clear role. The CSTD can help ensure that we always discuss AI in connection with real science, technology and innovation systems, not in an abstract or purely commercial way. You can document what is actually working for the Sustainable Development Goals and where the stubborn barriers remain.

Dear colleagues,

Uzbekistan's experience shows that innovation and ethics are not opposites, they are complementary forces. When science respects humanity, and technology serves social good, true progress becomes possible. Let us build together a world where responsible AI and human-centered design shape a future that is intelligent, fair and profoundly humane.

Uzbekistan stands ready to share our experience, learn from others and build partnerships that make AI work for people in every region.

Thank you.