

UN STI Forum May 2026, Side event- **“AI for 2030 Agenda and Beyond: Inclusion, Accessibility and Equity”, 5th May 2026**

Speech by

Professor Manzoor Hussain SOOMRO, BRISEC/AETDEW

AI Education for Teachers and the Youth to pursue SDGs

Dear Colleagues, Greetings from Islamabad Pakistan!

My grateful thanks to Professor MU Rongping and the organizing team for availing me this opportunity to share my thoughts in this important event. Indeed, it's a great pleasure for me to join in.

Dear Colleagues,

- Economic development has been and remains the target and priority of each entity, community and country around the globe; hence the UN SDGs were launched in 2015. All the UN member countries are committed to achieving the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
- However, the progress of many countries, especially the developing ones, has been slow and they lag far behind in some SDGs. They require transformation of many sectors, and can fast track the SDGs, by employing AI to enhance the pace of development on sustainable basis and achieve the SDGs.
- There is little doubt that AI will be the prime engine of growth in the world economy. Thus, nations, big and small, rich and poor, can't ignore the AI, and are devoting resources for AI development, its use & governance including ethics. For AI ethics, the UNESCO guidelines are of course available.
- But there are numerous challenges to using AI in developing countries which include; digital divide, infrastructure gaps, policy framework limitations, governance & ethics, fragmented STEM education ecosystems, skills deficit, and institutional coordination failures as well as the social & environmental constraints.

- On the other hand, the youth engagement in various SDG activities can enhance the progress of SDGs and provide the much-needed sustainable supply of human resource as well as push the SDGs implementation on a fast track. Because the youth are destined to shape the future of the world. A 2019 study by the Asian Development Bank titled; **“Understanding Youth's Role to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”** has provided evidence that the youth can cut short the hierarchical process of SDGs implementation. I shall be happy to provide the link in the chat box.
<https://www.adb.org/news/features/understanding-youths-role-achieving-sustainable-development-goals>)
- Therefore, investing in youth and their teachers- who are the key players, is crucial for developing their capacities in understanding and using AI to pursue sustainable development. However, learning and using AI in isolation, without the hands-on minds-on STEM education approach and ethics, is not recommended and could even be counter-productive and unsustainable.
- It is also important that there should be a globally accepted and uniform STEM education ecosystem framework to guide it through, across the developed, the developing and the least developed countries. Hence, the UNESCO has embarked upon developing a global and uniform STEM Education Ecosystem Framework, that I am humbled to be one of the contributors. The draft framework is in final stages of refinement before its submission to the UNESCO Forums for consideration.

Dear Colleagues,

- In 2024, I with a coauthor published a paper in the Journal of Sustainable Development, Canada with the title; **“AI for Sustainable Development in the Belt and Road Countries - Need for Capacity Building”** (doi:10.5539/jsd.v17n5p43). That paper highlights the need for capacity building, particularly for students at all educational levels, to prepare them for future challenges and to achieve the SDGs through AI and technology-driven education. I shall share the PDF in the chat box shortly.

- Realizing the importance, we, the Academy of Engineering and Technology for the Developing World (AETDEW), in collaboration with the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO- ISTIC in KL Malaysia, have established the **“The Consortium of AI Education for the Global South”** in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. It began a program of AI Trainings for school teachers by Chinese Fellows of AETDEW in June 2025 and continues through 2026. I invite the UN System and Global South countries to partner with the consortium.
- I believe, we need to launch programs for university teachers and students as well. After all, they all will have to tackle the real challenges in their careers by using the digital technologies such as AI. And the university professors in the developing world so far not happy with the students using AI, should stop thinking, “How do I catch them” and begin asking, “How do I challenge them?” and design the assignments and assessments accordingly.
- In view of my above -mentioned points, it is proposed that each UN member country in the developing world must develop a comprehensive ecosystem, thereby integrating the policy support, STEM education and innovation including the AI, the partnerships, and resources that collectively support and enrich the overall learning and that of digital technologies especially the AI use to pursue SDGs through 2030 and beyond.
- Thereby ensuring that AI and machine learning systems do not perpetuate racism, gender, or other biases and inequalities; and that the solutions should be inclusive and aim to reduce, not widen, the gap between the privileged and the marginalized.
- Collaboration between governments, academia, industry, and civil society is essential for driving innovation and integrating AI responsibly and inclusively in education, industry and other sectors to ensure sustainable development.

Finally, my friends, let’s keep in mind that technology is not neutral; it can either exacerbate or alleviate the social inequalities, it is therefore, up to us, how we manage it! I thank you Ladies and Gentlemen, very much.