



Closing Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

ECOSOC Special Meeting on Artificial Intelligence

6 May 2025

Thank you so much and thank you for staying.

I think we've really tried to have a stimulating overview of what are some critical questions around the governance of AI, the uses of AI, and the things we need to do to make AI much more accessible to everyone. I think we've had a good review of all this.

I want to thank the panelists very much. I want to thank them for coming. Many have had to travel a distance to get here, and I really want to thank all of you for doing this. I want to thank the moderators for keeping us on an even keel and for allowing as many speakers to speak as possible.

The last thought I want to leave with you is this: we all know that the UN is going through a rough time, and we know as well that there are lots of discussions about what the future holds for the United Nations, and also what the challenges that we face are. There are many detractors of the organization out there, only too eager to speak negatively of what the UN is doing and has to do. I just want to say to all of you, it is not possible for the UN to fail for the simple reason that there's too much for all of us to do together, and the reality is we can't do it unless we do it together.

That is the thrust of everything that's been talked about today. As has been said, partnerships, regional cooperation, building infrastructure in ways that will reach billions of people, developing rules, developing ways of governing AI in such a way



that it does not become a destructive force but remains something which allows people to learn more and have access to a better life. None of these things can be done without the networks that the United Nations has created since 1945. I think we need to understand that, and that just as we are going through a process of reconsidering how we can structure our work better, let there be no doubt whatsoever that there is work to be done.

There is work to be done, and this is something which I think has to animate our sense of purpose as we look at budgets, as we look at ways forward, as we try to winnow out some of the political arguments and come back to the foundation that the UN was created. Yes, to reduce conflict, but it was also created to allow people to develop in freedom and to develop in ways that will allow, as we say now, no one to be left behind. The mission of solidarity is still such a vital mission of the United Nations and all of the agencies and all of the people that are working.

Some people see only duplication. I have to say I disagree. The fact that we have many centers of excellence within the UN and around the world that are dealing with AI is not a problem. The need for us is to bring it together and to weave it together, not to create uniformity, not to have one central driving system because that's impossible, that's not going to happen, but to have a way of creating the means of cooperation and the means of consolidating what we know and making sure that we're taking the best advantage of what we have.

I'm delighted that the UN family has been able to participate so fully in the discussion, the agencies that have been involved and will continue to be involved. And yes, Tomas, I will be coming to the ITU summit, and I hope there'll be many others who will be coming. It's critically important that we keep this conversation alive, and I'm really delighted that ECOSOC has been able to play a constructive role in this conversation.

So, thank you all very much. Muchas gracias. Merci beaucoup.