

Position Paper – Kingdom of the Netherlands

Committee: United Nations Environment Programme

Agenda: Deliberation on Examining Whether Artificial Intelligence is Truly a Solution to Climate Change or a New Driver of Environmental Exploitation with Special Emphasis on Energy Consumption, E-Waste, and Green Inequality

Country: Netherlands

Opening Perspective

The Kingdom of the Netherlands recognizes artificial intelligence as one of the defining technologies of the twenty-first century, possessing the capacity to accelerate climate adaptation, improve energy efficiency, strengthen disaster prediction systems, and optimize sustainable infrastructure. However, the Netherlands equally acknowledges that the unchecked expansion of AI systems may intensify global environmental degradation through excessive energy consumption, growing electronic waste, unsustainable extraction of rare earth materials, and widening technological inequalities between developed and developing nations.

As a nation committed to sustainable innovation and international climate leadership, the Netherlands believes that technological progress must never occur at the expense of environmental justice. The Dutch delegation emphasizes that AI should remain a tool for sustainable development rather than become a catalyst for exploitative resource consumption. In alignment with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” reaffirmed in the Paris Agreement and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Netherlands advocates for the responsible governance of AI systems through transparent environmental standards, green energy transitions, and equitable international cooperation.

Legal and International Commitments

The Netherlands is a committed party to major international environmental agreements, including the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Basel Convention. These frameworks collectively establish the obligation of states to pursue sustainable industrial development while reducing ecological harm and ensuring intergenerational equity.

The Netherlands supports the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, particularly regarding the urgent necessity of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning toward renewable energy systems. Dutch environmental policy aligns closely with the European Green Deal and national climate legislation aimed at achieving climate neutrality. The government has consistently invested in

offshore wind energy, circular economy initiatives, and sustainable digital infrastructure to reduce the environmental footprint of emerging technologies.

Furthermore, the Netherlands recognizes the growing relevance of UNEP discussions concerning sustainable digitalization and electronic waste management. Reports published by the United Nations Environment Programme have highlighted the rapid increase in global e-waste generation and the disproportionate environmental burden placed upon developing nations. The Dutch delegation therefore stresses the importance of responsible production chains, ethical mineral sourcing, and extended producer responsibility mechanisms for AI-related technologies.

Historical and Political Context

The Netherlands has long maintained a reputation for balancing technological advancement with environmental stewardship. As one of Europe's most digitally connected economies, the Netherlands understands both the opportunities and risks associated with large-scale data infrastructure and AI deployment. Dutch institutions have increasingly examined the environmental impact of data centers, including concerns surrounding electricity demand, water consumption, and land use.

At the same time, the Netherlands recognizes AI's potential contribution to climate resilience. AI-assisted systems are already being utilized internationally for flood prediction, agricultural efficiency, renewable energy optimization, and climate modeling. For a low-lying country historically vulnerable to rising sea levels, technological innovation remains essential for climate adaptation and water management. Nevertheless, the Dutch delegation maintains that environmental benefits cannot justify unrestricted industrial expansion without sustainability safeguards.

The Netherlands is particularly concerned about the emergence of "green inequality," wherein technologically advanced states benefit disproportionately from green innovation while resource extraction, toxic waste disposal, and environmental degradation are outsourced to vulnerable regions. Such inequality contradicts the principles of sustainable development promoted by the United Nations Development Programme and multiple United Nations General Assembly resolutions concerning environmental justice and equitable development.

Consequently, the Netherlands supports international cooperation to establish environmentally sustainable AI standards, improve global e-waste recycling systems, strengthen renewable-powered digital infrastructure, and ensure that developing nations are not excluded from technological progress. The delegation also encourages increased collaboration between governments, private technology companies, and

international institutions to create transparent environmental accountability frameworks for AI industries.

Final Consideration

The Kingdom of the Netherlands firmly believes that artificial intelligence is neither inherently a solution nor inherently a threat to climate change; rather, its impact depends upon the regulatory, environmental, and ethical frameworks governing its development. AI possesses extraordinary potential to support global sustainability goals, yet without effective oversight it may deepen ecological exploitation, accelerate energy demand, and intensify global inequality.

The Netherlands therefore urges this committee to pursue a balanced international approach that promotes sustainable innovation while safeguarding environmental integrity. This includes investing in renewable-powered AI infrastructure, strengthening international e-waste regulations, promoting circular economic models, supporting climate-conscious technological research, and ensuring equitable access to green technologies for all nations.

The Dutch delegation reaffirms that technological advancement must remain guided by the principles of sustainability, accountability, and international solidarity. Only through cooperative global governance can artificial intelligence become a genuine instrument for climate action rather than another source of environmental injustice.