Aboul Gheit's address at the opening session of the Arab Dialogue Circle on Artificial Intelligence in the Arab World

2 February 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you today at the Arab House for this significant gathering—the Arab Dialogue Circle on "Artificial Intelligence in the Arab World: Innovative Applications and Ethical Challenges." This event is convened pursuant to the decision of the 56th ordinary session of the Higher Coordination Committee for Joint Arab Action. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport, as well as Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, for their outstanding efforts in organising this important forum.

The topic of artificial intelligence has become one of the most critical fields of our time, given its rapid advancement and deep integration into our daily lives. AI is revolutionising work, communication, education, and virtually every aspect of modern existence.

A growing number of Arab countries are making concerted efforts to harness the vast potential of artificial intelligence, striving to stay abreast of global advancements and the evolving demands of this transformative field. This commitment has become increasingly evident in recent years, as several Arab states have launched ambitious initiatives to enhance AI applications across key sectors, unlocking latent opportunities for progress and innovation.

We are all witnessing the astonishing pace of AI development, particularly in the realm of large language models and generative intelligence. The global landscape now resembles an arms race among major powers, each vying to pioneer new AI systems and applications with unprecedented efficiency, enhanced capabilities, and reduced costs. We recently saw how the emergence of a new Chinese AI application sent shockwaves through the markets and rattled leading technology companies. This fierce competition is expected to intensify further in the coming period, leaving no room for stagnation—particularly given AI’s direct implications for military and strategic affairs.

However, amid this race for supremacy, grave concerns persist regarding the impact of AI on human ethics, values, and societal norms. Many fear that the unregulated expansion of AI technologies could lead to disastrous consequences for humanity. We have already witnessed the dark side of AI, notably in the recent brutal war on Gaza, where the Israeli occupation deployed AI-powered systems that likely contributed to a sharp increase in civilian casualties and the tragic rise in Palestinian martyrs.

While we firmly condemn the unethical applications of artificial intelligence and warn of its potential dangers to the future of humanity—should competition and market forces be allowed to operate unchecked and without restraint—we must also recognise the unprecedented opportunities that AI presents for human growth and prosperity. Striking the right balance between these risks and the anticipated benefits is one of the most pressing challenges of our time. It is imperative that the Arab intellectual community actively engages with this question, offering meaningful contributions to the global discourse. In this regard, the discussions that will unfold within the Arab Dialogue Circle serve as an essential and timely step towards formulating a clear and informed Arab perspective.

The Arab region cannot afford to lag behind in keeping pace with these developments. Our scientists, policymakers, and intellectuals must remain at the forefront of AI advancements, as this transformative technology is poised to permeate every aspect of life. AI is not merely a tool—it is a general-purpose technology that will reshape the way we work, communicate, and live, accelerating societal change at a pace not witnessed since the advent of the printing press six centuries ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Artificial intelligence is not just a technological innovation; it represents a fundamental shift in how we think, operate, and engage with the world. It is a platform for generating new technologies and ideas across all fields and must be harnessed wisely and responsibly. Among the many domains being reshaped by AI is the field of diplomacy, which has been allocated a dedicated session in this forum under the theme: "Artificial Intelligence in the Service of Diplomacy and Peacekeeping: Prospects for International Cooperation and Its Role in Conflict Prevention."

Let us envision a diplomatic landscape where routine tasks are managed with exceptional efficiency, allowing diplomats to focus on strategic priorities. A world where AI enhances cross-cultural communication, facilitates precise and rapid decision-making, and enables early detection of crises—providing solutions before conflicts escalate. This is the future AI can help us build: a world where technology serves as a force for peace, stability, and international cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenges posed by AI demand a concerted effort to develop legislative frameworks that protect individual rights, uphold ethical principles, and preserve human values. Achieving this goal requires not only national-level initiatives but also robust global cooperation—an imperative we advocate for to ensure AI is integrated into the multilateral system, rather than left solely to the dictates of global competition.

I am confident that today’s dialogue will sow the seeds of such cooperation. You have gathered from across the Arab world, bringing with you invaluable expertise and forward-looking perspectives to contribute to the development of a historic document—one that calls for safeguarding Arab identity amidst the rapid and unbridled march of technological progress. This document, which we hope will serve as a guiding framework for the future, will assess AI’s opportunities and challenges while proposing foundational legislative principles to regulate its use in accordance with Arab values and interests. It must ensure that AI not only respects but also enriches our cultural and civilisational heritage.

In conclusion, I wish you all great success in this critical endeavour.

I am certain that your discussions and recommendations will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of AI in the Arab world, ensuring that this powerful technology is harnessed to advance our developmental and civilisational aspirations.

Thank you.