PREVIEW STATEMENT

Civil Society Priorities for G20 Action on Artificial Intelligence

Five policy pillars from the Shadow C20 AI Governance Working Group in response to the G20 Innovation Ministerial Statement of 2 September 2026

SHADOW C20 AI GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP CO-LEADS

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2026 Shadow C20: Civil Society Priorities for G20 Action on AI

The G20 endorsed AI Principles in 2019, committing to AI grounded in "the rule of law, human rights, and democratic values throughout the AI system lifecycle." In the seven years since, AI capabilities have raced ahead of governance, placing these principles at risk and leaving the public increasingly exposed to escalating harms, including infringements on their core human rights.

Ownership of, and the benefits from, the AI value chain are rapidly accruing to the already highly privileged, while the true costs are often borne by communities excluded from such rewards. AI infrastructure is built on minerals extracted disproportionately from Global South nations, on labor outsourced to jurisdictions selected for weak employment protections, on intellectual property and personal data taken without consent or compensation, and on land, water and power in regions under already-severe environmental stress.

AI models are increasingly deployed across public services and consequential decision-making contexts, including healthcare, housing, immigration, and judicial decisions, as well as for authoritarian and commercial surveillance, with individuals and communities lacking clear pathways to remedy wrongful outcomes or mitigate damages. Agentic AI systems have escaped human control, previewing the risks posed by "rogue" model behaviors on top of the immense hazards created intentionally by actors leveraging this powerful technology toward adversarial ends.

Previous G20 presidencies worked to advance AI governance, addressing the technology's profound risks and committing to ensuring its opportunities would benefit all. Under India's G20 presidency in 2023, the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration championed "[h]arnessing Artificial Intelligence for good and for all," reaffirming the 2019 G20 AI Principles. During Brazil's presidency in 2024, the Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration confronted AI's implications for labor, information integrity and intellectual property, tasking G20 labor and employment ministers with establishing guidelines for the safe, secure and trustworthy use of AI in the workplace. G20 engagement groups had contributed meaningfully to discussions on AI that year through the São Luís Declaration on Artificial Intelligence, issued jointly by the C20, L20, T20 and W20. South Africa's 2025 presidency carried policy conversations forward through its sherpa track, establishing a Task Force on Artificial Intelligence, Data Governance and Innovation for Sustainable Development to address harms caused by extreme market concentration, exploitative labor practices, and the energy and water demands of AI infrastructure.

Given the G20's track record of advancing AI governance, the Shadow C20 notes with dismay the backsliding shown by this year's G20 presidency. For the first time since 2013, civil society representatives, including public interest advocacy organizations, academics and independent researchers, were entirely excluded from G20 participation, while industry leaders and business interests have been granted unprecedented access and influence. Human rights went unmentioned in the 2 September 2026 G20 Innovation Ministerial Statement, and its proposed "light touch" approach rejected enforceable obligations on the most powerful actors in the AI value chain.

The regression toward endorsing industry-led governance reflected in the 2026 G20 Innovation Ministerial statement weakens the G20's own leadership position. As the leaders of the most powerful global economies prepare for the G20 summit in the United States this December, this body remains in a unique position to set AI governance on a more equitable, sustainable, safer course that genuinely centers human rights in fulfillment of its stated AI principles. If G20 leaders fail to enact binding governance over this increasingly powerful and ubiquitous technology, they risk missing a policy window to scaffold a global AI ecosystem that encourages human flourishing rather than deepening inequalities, economic instability, environmental harms, and further infringements on human rights and dignity.

In defense of the G20's own foundational AI Principles, the Shadow C20 urges G20 leaders to commit to the following five AI policy pillars:

1	**Red Line Prohibitions for Systems that Violate Human Rights or Evade Human Control**
2	**Meaningful Multi-Stakeholder Governance with Global Inclusion and Participation**
3	**Equitable Distribution of AI Value across Communities and Geographies**
4	**Privacy, Security and Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure**
5	**Macroeconomic Coordination on AI, Employment and Economic Disruption**

PILLAR ONE

Red Line Prohibitions for Systems that Violate Human Rights or Evade Human Control

THE PROBLEM

AI systems increasingly risk infringing human rights, determining outcomes in public and private services across healthcare, education, social protections, migration, policing and the justice system, often with limited human oversight and negligible checks on whether the underlying models uphold fairness, safety or human rights. This accountability gap has led to documented harms; the most vulnerable individuals and communities remain at the highest risk and without the means to remedy wrongful outcomes. The public is increasingly exposed to hazards caused by both "rogue" AI behaviors of agentic models that have escaped human control and AI intentionally leveraged toward adversarial ends, without meaningful oversight or accountability.

We urge the G20 to ensure:

- **International human rights as baseline:** recognize international human rights law as the foundation for AI governance across the AI lifecycle and ensure that AI governance assures the indivisibility of these rights.
- **Pre-deployment mandatory impact assessments:** require pre-deployment assessments of potentially high-impact systems, including public sector systems and foundational systems which interact with the public across various applications, covering human-rights impacts and differentiated impacts across gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, parental status and other grounds of discrimination, subject to mandated periodic review.
- **Traceability of AI agents:** require AI agents to be traceable to an identifiable entity to ensure the basis for accountability.
- **Red line prohibitions:** establish explicit, enforceable prohibitions on systems and uses that violate human rights, including but not limited to:
  - emotion recognition and psychological inference models except for assistive, medical and therapeutic uses undertaken with informed consent and clinical oversight;
  - biometric categorization systems that sort based on race, ethnicity, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, parental status and other protected characteristics;
  - mass surveillance AI using facial recognition to track people in public spaces;
  - social scoring systems which aggregate behavior to determine access to critical services without transparency, due process or pathways for human review;
  - systems capable of evading human control and those lacking effective safeguards against ready exploitation by adversarial actors to produce harms;
  - systems designed, marketed or deployed to enable technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), including the creation or manipulation of non-consensual intimate or sexual content, sexualized deepfakes, or other forms of gender-based abuse, exploitation and harassment.

PILLAR TWO

Meaningful Multi-Stakeholder Governance with Global Inclusion and Participation

THE PROBLEM

The need for coordinated, global AI governance is evident given an AI value chain that crosses international borders in its infrastructure, in the data and training underlying its development, and in its profoundly consequential outcomes. Yet the proliferation of international policy spaces, ranging across AI summits, the OECD, G7, G20 and multiple UN initiatives, heightens risks of a fragmented governance response, exacerbating the difficulty of establishing actionable commitments. The sharpest costs for such AI governance fragmentation fall on marginalized stakeholders, particularly those in the Global South.

The BRICS Leaders' Declaration on AI Governance (2025) proposed the centralization of AI governance efforts within the UN system while preserving the autonomy and sovereignty of all countries. As the principal multilateral forum where Member States engage on an equal footing, the United Nations is well-positioned to coordinate global AI governance with an emphasis on inclusive participation. However, to successfully fulfill this leadership role, the UN must build multistakeholder participation into its agenda, devoting time and resources to meaningful input from stakeholders. The São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines from NETmundial+10, distilled from Internet governance, offer an established framework for such engagement. The UN Global Dialogue on AI governance can directly address the findings and outputs from other processes, including the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI, G7, G20 and established AI Summits, coordinating technical standards in a framework firmly grounded in human rights and aligned with the public interest.

We urge the G20 to:

- **Affirm the UN's coordinating role:** back the United Nations as the central forum for international AI governance, and press for concrete, binding and enforceable outcomes from the UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance.
- **Adopt participatory procedures:** apply the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines across AI governance processes, including G20 engagement groups, ensuring that negotiated outcomes follow clear, participatory procedures through multilateral negotiation.
- **Dismantle barriers to participation:** eliminate barriers to participation of civil society representatives, independent researchers and human rights defenders, particularly from the Global South, through streamlined visa and travel exemptions.

PILLAR THREE

Equitable Distribution of AI Value across Communities and Geographies

THE PROBLEM

In 2019, the G20's AI Principles committed to inclusive, sustainable AI development and deployment to scaffold progress toward meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which had been endorsed by all G20 member states four years earlier. Yet today, AI capital and compute are increasingly concentrated within a small number of countries and firms, enabling extractive practices that threaten to dramatically reverse progress toward the SDGs. The Global South supplies data, labor and energy yet receives neither equity nor governance rights in return. Data centers are sited disproportionately in environmentally-stressed regions, with energy and water diversion borne by communities who see little value flow back to them.

We urge the G20 to promote equitable distribution of AI value and costs by:

- **Revenue/compute-sharing tied to origin:** ensure companies share a portion of revenue or compute access with jurisdictions and communities supplying labor, data and resources, apportioned by observable inputs and burdens including hours worked and environmental costs borne, modeled on precedents for resource-revenue-sharing in extractive sectors.
- **Labor rights and standards across AI value chains:** require fair trade style certification across the AI vendor chain, setting wage floors, psychological support where relevant, and transparency about subcontracting arrangements, with obligations attached to the contracting developer rather than the intermediary employer.
- **Collective data stewardship:** offer legal standing to community bodies that negotiate licensing terms for data on their constituents' behalf, creating collective bargaining power and recognizing cultural and linguistic data as communally held and collectively licensable.
- **Capacity building as reciprocity:** require companies to share the capacity to build and adapt AI systems as a condition of sourcing labor, data and compute from these jurisdictions, to allow supplying countries to develop their own capabilities so gains don't remain perpetually downstream.
- **True-cost accountability:** ensure companies rather than the public are financially accountable and liable for true costs and harms across the AI value chain, including environmental costs and/or harms to individuals and communities.
- **Multilateral leverage:** leverage trade and digital economy agreements and UN processes, including the Global Dialogue on AI governance, to ensure these measures are binding rather than voluntary.

PILLAR FOUR

Privacy, Security and Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure

THE PROBLEM

Digital public infrastructure and smart city initiatives might in certain contexts offer the potential to raise living standards and improve service delivery, but the same systems create the means to monitor, profile and intimidate human rights defenders, opposition politicians, journalists and ordinary citizens, particularly across the Global South. The opaque procurement and deployment of AI-powered smart city systems raise concerns for human rights. Digital public infrastructure must not be deployed until binding legal safeguards are in place, so that digital inclusion and transformation agendas do not trade away privacy and human rights protections in exchange for access. The notice-and-consent model is functionally broken: terms of service are unreadable and data flows are opaque even to the companies operating them. AI has sharply lowered the cost of inference attacks, expanding harms through re-identification from aggregated data and voice cloning for identity theft, while collective and relational privacy issues remain unaddressed, so that harm caused to a caste group or community falls outside individual-consent frameworks. Decryption mandates, compulsory digital identity registration and weakened privacy standards erode the public trust that will be required for a healthy digital public infrastructure.

We urge the G20 to:

- **End the exploitative trade in personal data:** require personal and biometric data processing to comply with robust data protection principles including data minimization, purpose limitation, necessity, proportionality, transparency, security and accountability.
- **Guarantee agency over personal data:** ensure “ARCO” rights for individuals, preserving the rights of access, rectification, cancellation and opposition regarding their personal data.
- **Enforce obligations on actors that collect, infer and deploy personal data:** establish protections for individuals and against group-level harms, enforceable by independent, adequately resourced data protection authorities with effective investigative, enforcement and sanctioning powers.
- **Ensure public-sector data transparency:** require disclosure of what personal data public-sector systems collect, infer and share through a public register, ensuring accessible routes for individuals to view, contest and correct the data and inferences held about them.
- **Mandate procurement transparency and accountability:** require public registration of AI vendors and subcontractors, purposes and intended uses.
- **Enforce rights-based procurement:** prohibit public procurement of systems from companies whose products, services or practices conflict with international human rights standards.
- **Protect against tracking and harassment:** institute protections with independent oversight against unlawful tracking and digital harassment, including where sponsored by state actors.
- **Uphold the right to private communications:** guarantee the right to use end-to-end encryption to secure personal safety and democratic discourse.

PILLAR FIVE

Macroeconomic Coordination on AI, Employment and Economic Disruption

THE PROBLEM

Artificial intelligence has become a critical pillar of the global economy, propping up growth and market performance. Yet economists and AI industry leaders themselves warn this technology has the potential to trigger significant market disruptions, including mass labor displacement, shocks to financial systems, and a profound deepening of the current wealth concentration. As a small share of firms and individuals capture the overwhelming share of AI-driven gains, large swaths of populations across the G20 States and beyond remain subject to the consequences of potential AI-driven crises.

The G20 served as a critical forum coordinating a global response to the 2008 financial crisis. Unfortunately, that response allowed for lasting harm to the most vulnerable communities and economies, while the institutions and individuals responsible faced little accountability. As AI reshapes the global economy, G20 leaders can ensure that this pattern is not repeated.

We urge the G20 to:

- **Jointly monitor macroeconomic risks:** establish an ongoing framework spanning G20 finance and sherpa tracks to assess, plan for, and mitigate harms related to labor and financial market disruption, sector-specific job losses, and the true environmental and resource costs stemming from AI development and deployment, with particular attention to effects on marginalized communities and Global South economies.
- **Modernize economic indicators for the digital age:** require reporting on labor income share and employment quality (e.g. wages, hours and job security, disaggregated by sectors and regions) alongside inflation and GDP so that headline growth figures do not obscure the distribution of AI's gains and costs to workers.
- **Ensure the public receives its fair share of AI gains:** implement the global minimum effective tax without further delay, ensure digital service providers are taxed in the jurisdictions where they earn revenue, and deliver on the 2024 Rio commitment to effectively tax ultra-high-net-worth individuals, with coordinated baselines across jurisdictions. Direct the resulting revenue toward public services, health and climate resilience in line with the SDGs, fulfilling the G20's 2019 commitment to AI that advances inclusive growth, sustainable development and well-being.
- **Extend debt relief:** deliver debt relief alongside these AI-related revenue measures to allow debt-distressed economies to fund public investment rather than creditor payments.

Conclusion

The civil society organizations represented in this statement work across four continents, advocating for the public based on documented evidence and policy analyses of how AI systems are shaping people's fundamental human rights, livelihoods, and access to public services. Though civil society has been excluded from formal participation within this year's G20 process, G20 ministers and leaders must know their legitimacy depends upon the public they govern. We urge G20 ministers and leaders to prioritize the public interest in their remaining deliberations on AI governance leading up to the G20 Leaders' Summit in Miami, 14–15 December 2026.

Contributors

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Comprehensive detail on these priorities is available from the contributing organizations.

Shadow C20 Preview Statement · Civil Society Priorities for G20 2026 Action on AI · A response to the G20 Innovation Ministerial Statement of 2 September 2026, submitted ahead of the Third G20 Sherpa Meeting, 1–2 October 2026