

**Schlusswort des
Staatsministers im Auswärtigen Amt**

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bei der Konferenz

***„Human Rights in the Era of AI -
Europe as international standard setter for
Artificial Intelligence“***

Berlin, 20. Januar 2021

State Secretary Kastrop,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As we come to the end of this conference, I would like to thank all of you who have taken part in our lively discussions today.

I am sure that they have helped many of us to better understand Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how we can engage with its opportunities and mitigate its possible threats.

Artificial Intelligence offers fascinating opportunities. I am not going to go back over everything that has been said today. However, if I may mention only one example, I would like to highlight, in the period we are going through, the use of AI applications in the search for an anti-COVID vaccine. The crisis is not yet behind us, but we have already achieved a lot and Artificial Intelligence has helped. We should be aware of that.

On the other hand, Artificial Intelligence creates challenges and risks that can affect our lives, not only as individuals but also as societies. We, as governments, have to respond to this. We need to confront new developments if we want to bring Artificial Intelligence in line with the fundamental principles and values of our societies.

Tackle these technological developments head-on is no less than a matter of preserving our sovereignty.

Let me just emphasize some important aspects:

First of all,

transparency is an important value in our democracies and has become increasingly important in recent decades for citizens. This is a good thing. However, then, transparency has also to apply to AI applications. Artificial

Intelligence does not create a separate, parallel universe, but it shapes our daily lives in a considerable way.

We all, as citizens, have to know when Artificial Intelligence is being applied, how it works, what data it uses and what for.

That is why we need an open, inclusive and democratic debate on Artificial Intelligence.

Today's conference has provided a good platform for this. I found it particularly useful to hear views from many different angles, including business companies and academia, NGOs and civil society.

Secondly,

If we need transparency, we also need to give Artificial Intelligence a direction.

When using Artificial Intelligence, we have to consider the overall impact on our societies.

Artificial Intelligence has a tremendous potential to improve our public services, our

health systems or our strategies against climate change. It can help generate economic growth and create employment to the benefit of all.

What's more, a fair use of AI can help us to overcome inequalities, for example, when it comes to access to public services or access to the labor market.

I'm convinced, these are areas where AI applications could really make a difference, help improve social standards and build an inclusive society.

In order to achieve this, we must set political objectives and use the potential offered by Artificial Intelligence to go in the direction we want it to go. People must be at the very heart of the developments.

Last but not least,

the use of Artificial Intelligence poses great challenges for our fundamental democratic

values and human rights. Once again, I do not want to go back over what has been said. Literature and cinema have produced masterpieces by developing pessimistic scenarios based on the main risks of Artificial Intelligence: mass surveillance, spread of hate speech, fake news, increased discrimination...

For all these reasons, we have to strive to establish AI regulations in conformity with human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Human Rights Commissioner Dunja Mijatović highlighted this very well in her keynote address at the opening of this meeting.

In today's world, no country can meet this challenge on its own. We need a truly joint European engagement.

Historically, Europe has been a standard setter, when it comes to a world based on rules, and at the forefront of the protection of human rights. In recent decades, it has also found adequate responses to new technological challenges, for example data protection and the fight against cybercrime.

Faced with today's developments in the area of Artificial Intelligence, it is time for us as Europeans to assume this historical role once again.

By doing so, not only can we set future-oriented international standards, but also strengthen Europe's cohesion.

Given its history, its geographical scope and legitimacy when it comes to human rights, democracy and rule of law, the Council of Europe has a major role to play. With the help of experts, the coming months will be

dedicated to assessing how and under which conditions a legal framework based on Council of Europe Standards could be developed for the development and application of Artificial Intelligence.

In short we have now started to tackle these challenges, both at the EU and at the Council of Europe. These efforts have to continue hand in hand. The active participation from Brussels and Strasbourg in today's conference has underlined this very well. That will help us to find synergies in Europe and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The high level of interest in our meeting today and the positive feedbacks are very encouraging. It confirms the relevance of the issue as a priority for Germany's Presidency

of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

On behalf of the Federal Foreign Office, I would like to thank our colleagues from the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, as well as the Council of Europe's Secretariat, for making this possible.

I hope that this meeting will bring a stone to the edifice and contribute to the ongoing work in the Council of Europe – in the Parliamentary Assembly and in the Committee of Ministers.

We will continue to strongly support this process during our Presidency.

Thank you.