

CI 2024 initial greeting Chairwoman Anna Maria Tarantola

June 21, 2024

The advent of AI, particularly generative AI, and the prospects of further significant innovations have triggered a revolution that will profoundly influence our future, arousing great enthusiasm and many concerns.

AI is a complex and articulated system that is part of a broader technological development process that includes *machine learning*, the use of *big data*, quantum *computing*, robotics, digital communication infrastructures and biotechnologies. AI, like all technological progress, poses a **significant dilemma** : how to reconcile its ability to improve society, work and the business world, life with the danger of fueling further inequalities, discrimination, exclusions, digital authoritarianism, unemployment and even lead to humanity being outclassed.

This innovative, irreversible process is attracting the attention of scientists, organizations, institutions and the Church in search of the most appropriate ways of development and use to increase the well-being and productivity of organizations and people without harming humanity.

Many countries are wondering how to regulate innovation when significant risks are associated with it; the European Union was the first in the world to regulate Artificial Intelligence with the "AI Act" which introduces a common regulatory and legal framework that prohibits all AI systems considered a clear threat to security, livelihoods and people's rights.

Aware of the complexity and enormous influence of the world of AI and the numerous risks involved, we have decided to dedicate our 2024 International Conference to examining this new tool in the autumn of 2023.

This choice took into account the indications formulated on many occasions by Pope Francis starting from the encyclical *Laudato si'* and the apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* . It then proved to be more appropriate than ever in light of the concerns raised by Pope Francis in the Message for the LVII World Day of Peace, 1 January 2024 for the distortions that an unethical development and use of AI can cause, aggravating discrimination, prejudice and exclusions to the detriment of the most vulnerable, manipulating people, influencing their choices and limiting their freedoms, and allowing military use with terrible consequences.

not least, in his speech to the **G7 on 14 June** , the Holy Father carried out an important "reflection on the effects of artificial intelligence on the future of humanity". The Holy Father defined AI *as a fascinating and tremendous tool*, and insisted on considering it a **tool** that must be **designed and used in an ethical way** for the construction of the good of every human being and of a better tomorrow and which must always be guaranteed that let the human being, and not the machine, decide. In this regard, the Holy Father stated that "We need to guarantee and protect a space for significant human control over the process of choosing artificial intelligence programs: human dignity itself is at stake."

I was struck by what the Holy Father said about generative artificial intelligence, a recent and still evolving innovation, declaring that **it is not properly generative but "reinforcing"** because "it does not develop new concepts or analyses" but "repeats those it finds, giving them an attractive form", and this risks consolidating known contents, without checking whether they contain errors or prejudices, legitimizing fake *news* , to strengthen the advantage of a dominant culture, to undermine the educational process " *in nuce* ". These are words that make you think.

Above all, the Holy Father stated, the greatest weakness in the implementation and development of these innovative systems lies in the risk of diminishing **the perception of the value and dignity of the human person. This is why there is a need for ethics in AI** both in the configuration of algorithms and artificial intelligence programs, which Pope Francis called "algorithethics", and in its use by institutions, organizations, the educational world and individuals.

The CI 2024 starting from the question " **what is AI for?**" **aims** , as indicated by the title itself, to identify if and how it is possible to develop and use AI for the pursuit of the well-being of humanity, the care of nature and a world of peace, avoiding the risk of strengthening the technocratic paradigm, and therefore the enrichment of a few, the increase in power of the large producers of AI and its use not for the benefit but to the detriment of humanity.

Our objective is therefore to think about how it is possible to achieve technological progress that is able to combine increased efficiency and productivity with respect for fundamental human values, protecting people's freedoms, dignity and rights.

To answer this question we involved personalities from the world of the Church, institutions, academia, economy and civil society. I thank all the speakers and moderators for agreeing to participate in our work, we are truly honored.

We asked them many questions:

- Where are we at, what further developments lie ahead with what benefits, risks and problems,
- What is the impact of AI for the various economic-social systems, how to incorporate the key principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC) into the innovation process and how to apply ethics to the development and use of AI, how to make it knowable, universal, general, transparent and respectful of people's fundamental rights,
- How to solve the problem of individual responsibility and AI companies and the extremely delicate problem of responsibility for decisions,
- How to combine technological development with integral human development and the profound sense of progress and peace. And, in particular, whether it is possible to place a limit on creative activity, on the development of science if this risks causing serious damage to the point of putting an end to the very human presence on earth. Geoffrey Hilton, a great promoter of generative AI, left Google a year ago, claiming that the technology is advancing too quickly for man's management capabilities and that he risks losing control of it.
- Evaluate in depth the impact on the world of work. Currently it is not yet clear whether the balance between destruction and creation of jobs will be positive or negative. However, we know that AI requires a widespread and systemic review of the knowledge and skills of all workers with the consequence that a gigantic training process must be activated in companies, institutions, public administration, legislative and government bodies.
- Whether effective regulation on a global scale is possible and what it should look like, unfortunately so far attempts in this direction have come to a standstill, whether the one already issued in Europe is a good starting point and what further steps can be envisaged.

We know these are complicated questions and that the answers are difficult, but we try.

At the end of the CI we would like to be able **to draw up, with the contribution of our speakers, a list of possible actions to be activated** to make AI a tool of true progress for humanity. I launch the idea of a World Authority responsible for the ethical evaluation of the methods of development and use of AI in all its aspects, for the issuing of regulations and the control of its implementation.

Ours is the beginning of a journey : study, reflection, evaluation and action will continue by all our groups in the various countries in which we are present so that technological progress is truly a tool for building the common good and peace. We need it so much.

The word goes to HE Mons. Piccinotti, President of the APSA, whom I truly thank from the bottom of my heart for the honor he does us with his presence.