A People-Centered Justice Approach to Implementing AI Governance

How the Justice Sector Can Support Inclusive, Equitable, and Enforceable AI Governance

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Table of Contents

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About Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies

Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies is a cross-regional and member state-led, multi-stakeholder coalition committed to advancing action on peace, justice, equality and inclusive institutions through the Sustainable Development Goals and beyond (SDG16+). It is convened by 46 governments, works with over 100 partners across civil society, the United Nations (UN), and regional and international organizations, and is hosted by the Center on International Cooperation at New York University. The Justice for All program within Pathfinders acts as an impact hub, convening countries, civil society, and multilateral and regional organizations to close the justice gap by accelerating action on people-centered justice. This program provides a platform to exchange innovative practices on data collection, evidence-based policy making, and effective use of resources to bridge silos and transform justice systems in preventing and resolving people's common justice problems.

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Executive Summary

Global efforts to govern AI have expanded rapidly over the past few years. While top-down AI governance policy regimes have proliferated, less attention has been paid to the operationalization of these regimes at the local level. **Ultimately, domestic legal systems, operating at national and local levels, will be the ones to implement AI governance priorities.** As the principles outlined in normative frameworks turn into local laws, people and businesses will seek their enforcement through local justice systems. Legal aid and community justice workers will supply people with the aptitude to understand those principles in terms of rights. Lawyers and paralegals will represent those seeking remedy. The judiciary will decide if, how, and when to enforce those principles.

Inclusive, equitable, and enforceable AI governance that matters in people's daily lives will require policymakers to prioritize access to justice. To make such a priority meaningful, justice actors need to be moved upstream in AI governance discussions and become participants in its design.

Today, the justice sector is either missing or marginal in mainstream AI conversations on the implementation of AI governance frameworks. This is in part because rapid technological development has proceeded faster than cross-sector collaboration, while justice expertise has often been sought reactively when systems fail, rather than proactively during design. Bringing a people-centered justice approach[1] to the table now can support equitable access to rights and help uphold livelihoods later. **Effective and inclusive AI governance can only exist in a world where everyone has equal access to its enforcement. Evidence suggests, however, that 5.1 billion people in the world lack meaningful access to justice.[2]**

The current global AI governance ecosystem is complicated. Regardless of whether countries support strong regulatory frameworks or promote limited AI regulation, the justice sector will be asked to enforce existing rules and provide remedy and accountability in the case of rights violations. At the same time, many countries in the Global South are calling to close the digital gap, emphasizing the need for resources for frontier technology, access to computing power, capacity building, and sovereign AI (see *Emerging Priorities in AI Governance on page 17*). These issues have implications for the types of justice problems that will arise from AI use.

The geopolitics of AI governance converge at the United Nations (UN), a uniquely inclusive platform where universal AI governance principles are being designed. While there are many entry points for engagement with the UN on AI governance, justice is largely left out of the conversation. Neither the Global Digital Compact nor the UN's High-Level Advisory Board on AI address the link of AI with the justice system. As the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI is established and priorities for the Global Dialogue on AI are set, the justice sector must take a more prominent role within the UN's AI governance architecture or risk being left behind.

AI governance is being shaped not just by states and multilateral bodies, but also by the private sector. OpenAI, Google, Anthropic, Microsoft, and other frontier labs are at the governance table as technical experts, standard setters, and conveners. Some of these private entities take part in voluntary frameworks like the Frontier Model Forum[3] or establish internal AI ethics boards.[4] Others have been directly involved in the development of global governance standards and principles like the UNESCO Business Council for Ethics of AI.[5] And a number participated in the UN's High-Level Advisory Board on AI.[6]

Some perceive the private sector's overall engagement with AI governance to be limited. Evidence suggests, however, that there are numerous benefits for private companies supporting AI governance. For example, some private companies rely on the public sector's role to protect the public domain and shape AI's deployment. AI governance can support standards for fair competition, create legal and financial risk mitigation, facilitate consumer trust in products that leads to their adoption, and even promote innovation by removing internal bureaucracies and prompting greater investment.

Overall, debates on AI governance have moved from theory to practice. Today's experts are particularly concerned about issues related to the digital divide, sovereign AI, procurement, data, multistakeholder inclusion, coherence across sectors, and trust and transparency. People are ready to engage in discourse on how AI governance will be localized and implemented in diverse contexts. Implementation of AI governance through legal systems will be key to localizing frameworks.

Most governance efforts prioritize technical robustness and catastrophic risk, and many reference human rights, rule of law, fairness, and remedy. However, when justice is discussed, it is usually in one direction: how AI will affect justice systems, rather than how justice systems and people-centered justice principles should shape AI. This leaves a persistent gap: frameworks invoke rights and accountability but rarely include justice actors in their design, leaving the practical machinery for oversight and redress underdeveloped. When AI makes errors and there is no accessible way to challenge those errors, no independent review of system design, and no mechanism capable of operating at scale to remedy them for large numbers of affected people, this reflects a failure of justice.

The foundations for the justice sector to support the implementation of AI governance already exist. What's missing is operational clarity. People-centered justice provides that reframing. It positions justice expertise based on data and evidence as essential governance infrastructure. This helps ensure the translation of principles into enforceable protections; voluntary commitments into accessible remedy; and rights language into lived reality. AI governance rarely specifies how people will understand algorithmic decisions, navigate systems when something goes wrong, or access remedy when harmed.

Justice actors possess the precise expertise needed to translate abstract principles and commitments into functioning institutions. People-centered justice systems are designed to create independent, trusted, accessible pathways for challenge and redress. Justice actors see AI failures earliest and most directly, offering a unique lens to provide early warning functions for AI. Justice interventions moreover have the capacity to manage uncertainty, not just risk, thus limiting the need for constant governance reform of changing technology.

Regardless of how AI governance frameworks are drafted, justice actors will ultimately be the ones who make them real. There are currently no internationally coordinated redress avenues in the case of AI harms, meaning complaint and remedy pathways are embedded in domestic justice institutions. Courts, ombud institutions, regulators, tribunals, legal aid providers, and community paralegals handle disputes, interpret rules, and ensure individuals can exercise their rights. Excluding them from governance design leads to frameworks that overlook the interconnected nature of people's justice problems, and how flawed AI systems can quickly amplify these problems.

Equal access to justice is central to the promotion, protection, and fulfillment of human rights. AI governance grounded in a people-centered justice approach can therefore play a critical role in the implementation of human rights frameworks. By embedding transparency, accountability, and access to remedies into the governance of AI systems, governments can better ensure equality before the law and protect individuals from discriminatory or harmful uses of technology.

People-centered justice reframes AI governance as an implementation challenge, not just a technical or ethical one. It also focuses on fair outcomes for all, not just procedural design and reform. People-centered justice insists that rights are only as strong as the systems that enforce them. It also ensures that those systems are designed with the same rigor as the technologies they govern, and with people's needs in mind. Ultimately, people-centered justice helps to correct a deeper problem in AI governance: individuals are often treated as data subjects, not rights holders.

Justice problems don't begin at AI deployment. They're embedded throughout the AI lifecycle. This includes the norms that define "fairness;" the data that trains models; the compute infrastructure that determines who can build AI; the model architectures that encode bias; and the applications of technology that affect people's lives. Governance that waits until deployment has already missed most opportunities to prevent harm, ensure fairness, and build in accountability. The justice sector, utilizing people-centered justice approaches, can offer benefits across the AI lifecycle.

- **When establishing norms and values**, a people-centered justice approach can help to define rights, ensure fairness, and center the lived realities of impacted communities in governance priorities.
- **With data**, a people-centered justice approach can help to ensure individual agency and consent is central to data collection, and adequate redress mechanisms are in place.
- **When it comes to compute**, the justice sector can help ensure transparency, accountability, and equitability.
- **AI models carry risks of embedded abuse, bias, and errors**. The justice sector has a key role to play in embedding contestability and human oversight into model design.
- **At the point of application**, the justice sector has a responsibility to protect against discrimination, guarantee accountability, and ensure remedy in the case of rights violations.

People-centered justice ensures that governance is not only technically robust and respects rights, but that it is also workable, accessible, and anchored in the realities of people's lives. AI governance needs practical, institutional machinery that makes commitments a reality in people's lives. People-centered justice operationalizes governance across five domains:

1. Supporting **foundational infrastructure** including administrative guidance, data governance, and transparency
2. Ensuring public accountability in how **procurement** decisions will impact people and their rights
3. Designing **independent oversight** that is trustworthy and answers to people
4. Operationalizing **rights and remedies** by providing pathways from injury to accountability and redress when AI fails
5. Enabling **adaptive governance** for accountable and trustworthy AI even when technology changes

Justice actors, using a people-centered approach, can help to create more inclusive, equitable, and enforceable AI governance. Now is the time to bring the justice sector into the fold and adopt a people-centered approach to AI governance design. The establishment of the United Nations Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the promise of an inclusive Global AI Dialogue in July of 2026 both provide a critical window to ensure justice is on the agenda.

Private companies should be engaging in AI governance discussions and utilizing people-centered justice approaches to strengthening governance. AI governance is a risk mitigation strategy. Less public oversight means more corporate responsibility, not less: companies must now develop internal accountability systems to manage financial, legal, and reputational risks that government frameworks would otherwise address. This increases corporate burden and costs. Justice mechanisms provide key tools to strengthen risk mitigation, e.g., ensuring

accessible remedy. Furthermore, relying on external governance can also free up capacity for innovation, support market predictability, and improve investments in many contexts. Ultimately, markets are strengthened by consistent standards.

When it comes to product adoption, consumer trust can be built by ensuring meaningful and accessible accountability mechanisms. Clear AI governance, informed by a people-centered justice approach, can provide human-centered and outcome-oriented directives that support markets to work better for people and businesses.

Following are key **recommendations** for governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society to ensure that people-centered justice is made central in the implementation of inclusive, equitable, and effective AI governance:

Governments

- Include access to justice and remedy as a central component of AI governance strategies, frameworks, principles, and regulations across the lifecycle of AI.
- Consult justice sector experts when designing AI governance priorities, strategies, and principles.
- Institute early warning mechanisms through the justice sector for AI-related rights violations, in particular human rights.
- Include AI-related harms in legal needs surveys and take into account findings when designing AI governance regulations.
- Require community-informed impact assessments before procuring AI systems, with contracts mandating plain language explainability, human review authority, and user-facing grievance channels.
- Establish independent oversight bodies with powers to compel documentation, pause systems under investigation, and publish findings publicly.
- Prohibit fully automated decision making for high stakes decisions affecting rights, and require qualified human reviewers with authority to reverse AI outputs.

International Organizations

- Include access to justice as a central component of inclusive, enforceable, and rights-based AI governance by prioritizing it as a thematic focus in multilateral and regional platforms.
- Ensure people-centered justice experts are key constituencies as part of multistakeholder inclusion in AI governance.
- Bring AI governance as a thematic focus of rule of law and access to justice fora, promoting interdisciplinary engagement on AI governance.

- Develop model frameworks for procurement, independent oversight, and transparency using people-centered justice principles that can adapt to local contexts, especially in resource-constrained countries.
- Support regional cooperation and expertise pooling to build collective capacity without requiring full infrastructure in every jurisdiction.

Private Sector

- Support a people-centered justice approach to AI governance, including access to justice and remedy as a priority for implementation.
- Promote access to justice and remedy as a thematic priority for AI governance platforms like the Global Dialogue on AI Governance.
- Establish open channels with justice actors to understand AI impacts, potential harms, and rights violations that could be addressed in upstream design and development, along with funding independent oversight and justice-sector capacity building in the markets where systems are deployed.
- Put people-centered justice at the center of internal AI governance practices, including procurement and AI oversight mechanisms:
    - Design procurement contracts that include accessible remedy pathways for affected people, not just institutional audit rights, with end-to-end traceability accessible to advocates.
    - Accept independent review mechanisms that provide credible processes when decisions are contested.
    - Design systems with built-in contestability and human oversight from the start, not retrofitted after deployment.

Civil Society and Academia

- Build a cross-sector coalition for a people-centered justice approach to AI governance implementation and develop an action agenda.
- Facilitate and participate in cross-sector discourse between AI governance and justice experts.
- Collect data, evidence, and research on justice problems caused by AI and mistargeted governance. Share findings and recommendations with governments and the private sector.
- Monitor government and corporate AI governance implementation and publish accountability scorecards; amplify frontline justice actors' early warning signals to policymakers and media.
- Use strategic litigation to establish precedent and enforce accountability when AI systems violate rights.
- Support technical subject matter expertise and fill knowledge gaps for policymakers and the general public through information campaigns and briefings, in order to ensure oversight of AI governance decisions.

1. Introduction: People-Centered Justice as the Next Frontier of AI Governance

In fewer than three years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has reached over one billion users.[7] This is the fastest adoption of any technology in history.[8] Tools once confined to research labs are now powering breakthroughs across industries, consuming the focus of the private sector,[9] drawing mixtures of hope and fear from the general public (depending on where one lives),[10] and presenting regulatory challenges for governments around the world. AI has created a systemic shock to economies, societies, and political institutions. Now, proposed governance will shape the direction of human progress.

AI places humanity on the precipice of a changing world. On one side, this moment carries with it promises to expand access to services and rights, and to make the world more equitable, inclusive, and prosperous. On the other side, it threatens to algorithmically and economically entrench many of the injustices and inequalities that have held back universal progress over the past two decades, while revealing new harms and risks. Ultimately, the AI revolution will not be defined by technological innovation itself, but rather where innovation meets adoption. It is at this intersection that inclusive, equitable, and rights-based AI governance can ensure positive outcomes. The world is still trying to figure out how to design this governance.

Global efforts to govern AI have expanded rapidly over the past few years. Since 2023 we have witnessed the development of industry-led frameworks like the Hiroshima Process[11] and the Bletchley Declaration,[12] legally binding instruments like the Council of Europe (CoE) Framework Convention on AI, Human Rights, Democracy & Rule of Law,[13] and now multilateral normative frameworks and commitments like the Global Digital Compact,[14] and the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact.[15] At the national level, mentions of AI in legislation have grown ninefold between 2016 and 2024, rising to 1,889 in 2024.[16] While top-down AI governance policy regimes have proliferated, less attention has been paid to the operationalization of these regimes at the local level. It is time to ask what AI governance means for individuals navigating new economic, social, and political systems. This is the next frontier for regulators.

Ultimately, domestic legal systems operating at national and local levels will be the implementers of AI governance priorities. As the principles outlined in normative frameworks turn into local laws, people and businesses will seek enforcement through local justice systems, engaging a range of justice actors. Legal aid and community justice workers will supply people with the aptitude to understand those principles in terms of rights. Lawyers and paralegals will represent those

seeking remedy. The judiciary will decide if, how, and when to enforce those principles. Inclusive, equitable, and enforceable AI governance that matters in people's daily lives will require policymakers to include access to justice as a meaningful priority. Accordingly, justice actors need to be moved upstream in AI governance discussions and become meaningful participants in its design.

The justice sector is currently either missing or marginal in mainstream AI conversations on the implementation of AI governance frameworks. In the technology ecosystem, where power is concentrated in a small number of private companies and nations, justice actors can provide much needed expertise that centers the lived experience of people on the ground. Embedding justice actors in AI governance processes—from standard-setting, to procurement, to redress mechanisms—will ensure governance structures reflect not only what is technically feasible, but what is practically enforceable and genuinely accessible to people seeking remedy.

A people-centered approach to justice[17] can support equitable access to rights and help uphold livelihoods in this complex atmosphere of change. Prevailing critiques on the failure of modern governance to achieve its intended outcomes emphasize how an overfocus on procedures and institutions, without adequate attention to human implications, leads to mistargeted policies.[18] We must learn from these failings and take an outcome-oriented approach to AI governance. This means increasing our focus on the legal implementation of governance. People-centered justice, and its principles of using data and evidence to understand people's lived experience and delivering fair outcomes for all, is a logical tool for policymakers.

1.1 Roadmap

This paper amounts to a current state analysis of AI governance and how the justice sector can enhance its success. The authors coupled secondary research and primary analysis of key governance processes with input from an array of experts in the public and private sectors, multilateralism, civil society, and academia to explore two critical questions:

1. What are the key multilateral activities, platforms, and convening spaces on emerging technology, AI governance, and social impact where people-centered justice is not currently present?
2. In what ways can people-centered justice offer value to these spaces?

To answer these questions, the authors first review the current AI governance landscape, including the geopolitics of emerging technology regulations. Within this review, we argue that access to justice will be impacted by many of these conditions. Then, we turn toward implementation of AI governance in practice and identify ways in which the justice sector, with a particular focus on people-centered justice, can add value to administrative guidance, procurement, independent oversight, and meaningful access to remedy. We argue that this is not just good for

people and the public sector, but also private actors. Following this analysis, the paper concludes by underscoring the urgency of this moment to include access to justice in the AI governance agenda. This will require partnership between AI governance and justice experts examining the development, adoption, and promotion of responsible, rights-based, and ethical AI. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations for governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, and academia.

2. The AI Governance Ecosystem: Trending Toward Implementation

2.1 AI governance and people-centered justice

AI governance can take various forms. In general, it is understood to be the rules, regulations, frameworks, principles, and guidelines used for the development and deployment of artificial intelligence.[19] AI Governance can include:

- **Normative and value-based frameworks** focused on shared principles at the international, regional, or national levels
- **Regulatory frameworks** that provide laws and rules for specific industries or regions and which are sometimes enforceable through legal mechanisms
- **National legislation** that establishes comprehensive strategies or legally-binding, enforceable, federal or sub-national laws
- **AI Safety Institutes** that focus on providing research and guidance on technical safety elements of AI development, but lack regulatory power[20]
- **Corporate governance** that includes compliance, audit, ethics boards, and legally enforceable practices within private companies
- **Data privacy** and **commercial** exchange of goods and services
- **Voluntary frameworks** that are non-binding and industry-led

This analysis is primarily concerned with the translation of normative and value-based frameworks into enforceable regulation. It maintains a particular focus on the ways people are able to access their rights and maintain their livelihoods in the age of AI. It is therefore not focused on the technical governance of AI, but rather the governance of how AI is used by people, businesses, and the public sector.

To date, governance conversations remain weighted toward catastrophic risks, interpretability, data privacy, and technical safeguards. Typical domains for justice actors have been limited to international law, rule of law as a principle for AI governance, and including AI governance in regulatory systems. Emerging treaties and principles are rich in rights-based language and typically reference core functions of justice systems. However, justice actors—particularly those who will be delivering justice to people on the ground—remain largely absent in governance discussions. As a result, the practical machinery for accountability and redress is

underdeveloped. Questions of access to justice, remedy design, and implementation in resource-constrained contexts receive comparatively less attention.

Effective and inclusive AI governance can only exist in a world where everyone has equal access to its enforcement. Evidence suggests, however, that 5.1 billion people in the world currently lack meaningful access to justice.[21] AI governance accordingly needs a people-centered approach to justice focused on the intended beneficiaries of global principles, legal frameworks, and regulations.[22]

People-centered justice is premised on data collection to understand the ways in which people seek justice, their experience with justice systems, and their lived outcomes. It orients justice system reform around delivering fair outcomes, rather than optimizing institutional procedures. People-centered justice has been formalized in the principles of the Hague Declaration on Equal Access to Justice for All by 2030,[23] and also promoted through international coalitions of countries, civil society, and multilateral agencies (e.g., the Justice Action Coalition) since 2021.[24] It is one of the leading frameworks for reforming justice systems to deliver for people, wherever they are.

This approach helps translate rights into lived realities. Justice actors such as judges, lawyers, legal aid providers, community justice workers, court administrators, community paralegals, and ombudspersons know how to design grievance systems, ensure procedural fairness, enforce remedies, and support people to know, use, and shape law. Justice actor expertise can operationalize AI governance commitments, strengthen public trust in AI,[25] and steer technological innovations toward delivering tangible benefits.

2.2 AI governance at the United Nations (UN)

The current AI governance ecosystem is complicated. Regardless of whether countries support strong regulatory frameworks or promote limited AI regulations, the justice sector will be asked to enforce existing rules and provide remedy and accountability in the case of rights violations. At the same time, many countries in the Global South are calling to close the digital gap, emphasizing the need for resources for frontier technology,[26] access to compute, capacity building, and sovereign AI. These issues have implications for the types of justice problems that will arise from AI use.

The geopolitics of AI governance converge at the United Nations (UN), a uniquely inclusive platform where universal AI governance principles are in the process of being established. There are many efforts around the world seeking to establish guiding principles and shared values for AI governance (see Annex 1). However, with 193 member states, no other platform is as capable of inclusive AI governance. Nevertheless, while there are many entry points for engagement with the UN, justice is largely left out of the conversation.

In 2024, UN member states adopted the Global Digital Compact (GDC), which set forth principles and ambitions for equitable, inclusive, and rights-based global digital governance.[27] One year later, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 79/325, which established two key AI governance mechanisms as a follow-on to the GDC:

1. An Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence (IISP-AI), composed of 40 AI experts who will issue evidence-based reports that synthesize and analyze research on AI.[28] This panel was announced on February 3, 2026.[29]
2. The Global AI Dialogue, an annual multistakeholder platform "to discuss international cooperation, share best practices and lessons learned, and to facilitate open, transparent and inclusive discussions on artificial intelligence governance with a view to enabling artificial intelligence to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to closing the digital divides between and within countries."[30] The Global AI Dialogue, scheduled to take place in July 2026, promises to be a foundational moment for inclusive global AI governance and will set the stage for further AI governance through the United Nations.

In January 2025, the UN established the Office of Digital and Emerging Technologies with a mandate to oversee said technologies, including the implementation of the GDC.[31] This office is meant to oversee and integrate inclusive multistakeholder engagement with emerging technologies, including AI.

Meanwhile, the UN houses another specialized agency that also focuses on digital technologies, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).[32] Since 2005, ITU has overseen the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) which brings together governments, stakeholders, and UN agencies "to develop a shared vision for an inclusive, development oriented information society."[33] It was the first platform for digital cooperation for internet governance.[34] More recently, ITU has taken up AI governance as a feature of its mandate.[35]

Alongside these two primary agencies, there are a number of other UN entry points for AI governance. UNESCO has long been positioning itself as a standard setter for ethics in AI, including the development of guidelines for judiciaries.[36] Agencies with on-the-ground presence, meanwhile, are being asked to support local governments with guidance on AI adoption and use. Others are actively establishing AI programming in a bid to find resources amid the funding crisis.

Despite the numerous entry points to engage with AI governance at the United Nations, many experts find them difficult to navigate. In a competitive ecosystem, civil society and private sector voices are at risk of being left out (or drowned out), while member states are burdened with limited capacity to manage competing interests. Multistakeholder inclusion is a priority of AI governance at the UN, but the competitive ecosystem risks preventing such inclusion from being fully realized.

Entities like those from the justice sector, with relatively fewer resources than other public sectors[37] and less integration into the mandates of leading AI governance organizations, are being overlooked. With the exception of the work of UNESCO, the justice sector is largely absent from the AI governance debate. Neither the Global Digital Compact nor the UN's High-Level Advisory Board on AI address the link of AI with the justice system. As the competitive governance landscape settles, the IISP-AI is established, and priorities are set for Global Dialogue on AI, the justice sector will need to take a more prominent role within the UN's AI governance architecture or risk being left behind.

2.3 The private sector and AI governance

AI governance is being shaped not just by states and multilateral bodies, but also by the private sector. It is important to understand private interests in AI governance in order to create impactful public-private partnerships.

OpenAI, Google, Anthropic, Microsoft, and other frontier labs are at the governance table as technical experts, standard setters, and conveners. Some of these companies take part in voluntary frameworks like the Frontier Model Forum or establish internal AI ethics boards.[38] Others have been directly involved in the development of global governance standards and principles like the UNESCO Business Council for Ethics of AI. A number have participated in the UN's High-Level Advisory Board on AI.[39]

Still, there is the perception among some that private sector engagement with AI governance is insufficient, particularly through the UN. Experts argue that limited engagement could be due to a few different reasons.

One argument is that the concentration of private sector digital companies within the United States, undermines their incentives to engage with AI regulations. Digital companies make up seven of the world's 10 most valuable companies, with six of them being based in the United States.[40] US-based companies also dominate the generative AI market.[41]

Another view maintains that the fragmented AI governance landscape, particularly within the UN, makes it difficult for the private sector to know where to invest time and resources. As a result, we see surface-level efforts contained to one-off projects or high-level representation, with few attempts to get into the weeds of governance frameworks. This results in a governance system that lags behind the development of new technologies.

Among some experts there is a perception that private companies are against strong AI governance because it undermines their ambitions. Evidence, however, suggests this is a misconception that may be undermining meaningful private-public partnerships.

On the sidelines of the 2025 UN General Assembly High-Level Week, Foreign Policy held a panel on public-private partnerships for trust in technology.[42] On this panel, Nick Tzitzon, the Vice Chairman of ServiceNow, pointed out that the private industry cannot make value determinations about how AI should benefit society. This, he says, belongs in the public domain where governments have the responsibility to shape the deployment of AI. He argues that private companies are, in fact, relying on this balance of responsibility and counting on governments to oversee regulations.

Even beyond differentiated responsibility, there are a number of reasons that the private sector benefits from strong, effective, and enforceable AI governance: it creates standards for fair competition; it supports legal and financial risk mitigation; it bolsters consumer trust in products that can lead to their adoption; and it actually promotes innovation by removing internal bureaucracies and increasing investments. These concepts are further explored in Section 7, where the case is made for integration of people-centered justice into AI governance as a means of support for these private sector interests.

Ultimately, for AI governance to be an effective driver behind the direction of AI and not merely a reaction to it, the private sector must be included. People-centered justice is a positive point of leverage for drawing the private sector into mutually beneficial governance discussions because it provides practical tools to support common interests.

3. Emerging Priorities in AI Governance

It is within this broader geopolitical context that the focus of AI governance has quickly moved from theory to practice. Experts are becoming less concerned with the principles, standards, and values that make up governance at an institutional level, and more concerned with their implementation at the local level. This section reviews the current state of AI governance priorities.

There is an urgency to operationalize governance that prevents harm and provides remedy without stymying innovation. Research for this paper reveals that **experts are particularly concerned about the digital divide and sovereign AI, procurement, data, multistakeholder inclusion, coherence across sectors, and trust.** All of these categories reflect the next stage of AI governance: **localization**.

Digital Divide

The "digital divide"—the gap between those with access to technology and those without—has been a feature of the AI governance debate for years,[43] and it continues to be a problem.[44] The digital divide includes access to and development of frontier technology, the capacity to use and implement that technology, and the infrastructure that enables the local development of technology (i.e., data centers). There is a growing focus by governments, philanthropy, and the private sector on increasing digital connectivity, investing in skills training and talent networks, and supporting underlying infrastructure like data centers in Global South countries. This is closely related to a growing movement for "sovereign AI" which includes efforts to ensure local homes for data and compute; sovereign operational oversight of data and compute, ownership of technology stack; intellectual property rights; and jurisdictional oversight.[45]

Procurement

Challenges around the digital divide and sovereign AI provoke questions about procurement. In many contexts, public officials are facing hard decisions about whether to build or buy AI systems. Responsible purchase and deployment of an AI tool from private sector developers requires public officials to have technological knowledge and understanding of how AI systems work. Otherwise, they risk procuring AI systems that are not locally relevant, ineffective, or even harmful. Many officials lack the capacity to make decisions about procurement. Institutions that support public officials (e.g., UN agencies or civil society) are therefore being asked to provide guidance and support on AI procurement practices. At the same time, many within these institutions are also facing knowledge gaps amid this

quick-changing landscape. Procurement regulations and capacity are likely to draw widespread attention in 2026.

Data

Related to procurement questions are those regarding data: the collection and regulation of local data, and the development of data centers. AI systems rely on access to accurate and comprehensive data that reflects local realities, laws, and experiences in order to produce non-biased and accurate outputs. Participation of local stakeholders in the collection of data is essential. On one side of this topic is a focus on resilient, inter-operable, locally coherent, and AI-enabled data. On the other side is a focus on legislating data privacy regulations that ensure protections.

Inclusion

No matter the governance topic, multistakeholder inclusion and participation will be required for effective implementation. This includes both the participation of countries often left out of governance debates, and the participation of local voices in the design of AI systems. Without inclusion, global divisions in goods and services distribution will grow between the countries using AI and those that don't. Including local voices in AI system development moreover ensures that AI systems are trained with local language and perspectives. This supports accurate outputs and mitigates bias and discrimination. Multistakeholder and local inclusion in AI governance is thus an upstream intervention to prevent downstream harms.

Coordination

Experts also highlight multistakeholder coordination as a key priority. There are many domains in which AI is being deployed, but their governance approaches are not cohesive. In tandem, there is also a need for greater coordination redress and accountability infrastructure—i.e., incident reporting, monitoring, and response to governance violations.

Trust and Transparency

Finally, trust and transparency are on the mind of many in the AI governance ecosystem. At a moment when the world is experiencing a global trust deficit, the rapid use of AI risks deepening mistrust between people and governments.[46] Many people around the world are more concerned than excited about the use of AI, and they have varying degrees of faith in their governments to govern it.[47] Governments need trust to strengthen the enforcement of AI governance schemes and maintain strong relationships between people and the state. The private sector, meanwhile, wants customers to trust AI in order to drive adoption of their products. For this to happen, they see reliable recourse and access to justice for AI harms as essential.

Governance has the potential to support trust in AI, but only if it is people-centered, equitable, and transparent. This will require creating new mechanisms for trust and transparency, which will be a focus of AI deployment in nearly every sector in the coming years.

As governance discussions move from principles to practice, questions around who will be given a seat at the decision-making table are pervasive and determinant of success. As one expert shared with us, almost 10 years ago when discussions about AI governance were nascent, there was even then a recognition that it could not just be technologists who decided how to regulate this technology. Rather, the world needed humanists, sociologists, lawyers, and others who could understand the impacts of technology on people and societies. As governance moves toward implementation, this sentiment remains true. We need experts at the table who understand how people will be impacted by AI, how governance connects to local justice systems, and how people can be empowered to uphold their rights.

The opportunity exists to embed people-centered justice into the DNA of AI governance. Effective global governance could make AI a powerful tool for building more transparent, accountable, and accessible institutions that put people's needs at the center of their design. Poorly implemented governance, by contrast, could lock in opacity, bias, and exclusion for generations. In an ecosystem where power is tilting toward frontier labs, justice actors provide much needed expertise that can strengthen emerging governance frameworks. Embedding people-centered justice into AI governance implementation will ensure governance structures reflect pragmatic and enforceable regulations that are outcome-oriented and in touch with people's lived experiences.

4. Where Does Justice Fit into This Ecosystem Today?

The AI governance ecosystem is rapidly expanding, spanning multilateral treaties, voluntary corporate initiatives, and emerging regional frameworks. Most governance efforts prioritize technical robustness and catastrophic risk, and many now reference human rights, rule of law, fairness, and remedy. Yet when justice is discussed, it is usually in one direction: how AI will affect justice systems, not how justice systems and people-centered justice principles should shape AI. This leaves a persistent gap: frameworks invoke rights and accountability but rarely include justice actors in their design, leaving the practical machinery for oversight and redress underdeveloped.

The table in Annex 1 maps major international AI governance initiatives and their engagement with justice. A consistent pattern emerges: justice is treated as a downstream concern, something to address after technical standards are set, catastrophic risks are managed, and innovation pathways are secured. Justice actors are brought in only once harm materializes. Courts will adjudicate, attorneys general litigate, regulators enforce compliance, and lawyers challenge and review. This reactive posture is costly, ineffective, and neglects an understanding of how people experience the law. Early involvement of justice actors in governance design would prevent many failures and reduce the need for adversarial intervention.

Viewed collectively, these efforts reveal recurring blind spots. Industry-led frameworks focus on safety and technical benchmarks, offering no binding commitments on remedy or oversight. Legally binding instruments acknowledge procedural safeguards but implementation details are deferred, creating rights without clear enforcement or consideration for people-centered justice. Multilateral and regional frameworks link AI to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 (peaceful, just and inclusive societies) and human rights, but stop short of defining how accountability or redress should function in practice. Nor do these frameworks acknowledge the global justice gap that might undermine equitable redress. Meanwhile, justice-specific initiatives run on parallel tracks, largely addressing how AI affects justice institutions rather than how justice expertise could strengthen AI governance itself.

The consequences are real. In California, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic the state rapidly expanded automated unemployment fraud screening systems in response to unprecedented claim volumes. A 2022 audit found that these systems relied on flawed and biased data, incorrectly flagged around 600,000 eligible claimants as fraudulent, and were accurate only about 46 percent of the time, leaving many people wrongly denied support with limited avenues for appeal.[48]

When AI makes errors and there is no accessible way to challenge those errors, no independent review of system design, and no remedy mechanism capable of operating at scale to address the needs of large numbers of affected people, this reflects a failure of administrative justice. We see similar patterns in welfare systems, immigration screening, credit and employment decisions, and predictive policing. These issues, including bias, discrimination, opaque decision making, and lack of recourse, are fundamentally justice problems. Yet justice solutions are rarely embedded in system design.

Why the justice approach is underdeveloped

Several factors may explain justice's marginal position:

1. **Incentives are misaligned**. The speed of frontier AI development stands in tension with the deliberation required for due process, and accountability mechanisms introduce friction.
2. **Many justice actors see their role as reactive, which reinforces perceptions that justice involvement will slow innovation**. As a result, companies and policymakers often avoid involving justice actors early, anticipating procedural obstacles rather than collaborative problem solving.
3. **Some entities undervalue the potential of the justice sector**. They recognize the utility of justice actors to ensure AI governance aligns with international law, or they see the value of legal expertise to align practice and regulation. However, **access to justice is overlooked**.
4. **There are logistical realities**. Justice systems face resource constraints and urgent service demands, leaving little capacity for proactive governance engagement.
5. **AI governance and justice sector communities operate in silos**. Tech summits and safety forums rarely intersect with legal empowerment or SDG16 networks. When AI governance is discussed in tech summits, access to the enforcement of governance is not a feature. When AI is discussed in justice forums, it focuses only on integrating AI into justice systems.

The foundations for the justice sector to support the implementation of AI governance already exist. Every major framework explored in Annex 1 references rights, remedy, accountability, and rule of law. What's missing is operational clarity: what justice informed governance looks like, and how to build it. People-centered justice provides that reframing. It positions justice expertise as essential governance infrastructure, translating principles into enforceable protections, voluntary commitments into accessible remedy, and rights language into lived reality.

5. Making the Case: Why People-Centered Justice is Critical for AI Governance

Section 4 showed that justice actors remain largely absent from AI governance even as frameworks increasingly reference rights, remedy, fairness, and accountability. This section makes the case for why justice is essential as core governance infrastructure rather than a downstream safeguard, and why a people-centered justice approach provides the clearest path to building AI governance that works in practice.

5.1 Justice actors bring unique capabilities

AI governance rarely specifies how people will understand algorithmic decisions, navigate systems when something goes wrong, or access remedy when harmed. Justice actors possess the precise expertise needed to translate abstract principles and commitments into functioning institutions.

People-centered justice systems are designed to create independent, trusted, accessible pathways for challenge and redress. They know how to interpret complex decisions, structure oversight, and ensure that procedural safeguards apply to everyone, including those most vulnerable to algorithmic error: people with low digital literacy; migrants navigating unfamiliar systems; individuals who cannot afford legal assistance; and communities with limited access to technology.

Justice actors also see AI failures earliest and most directly, offering a unique lens to provide early warning functions for AI. They are the first to encounter the person whose benefits were wrongly cut; who was misidentified by a surveillance system; who was rejected by an opaque risk-scoring tool; or who is dealing with the public health and environmental harms created by data-center development in their community. Justice actors gather data that reveals patterns of harm, and they can support early intervention to change course long before issues become scandals or crises of public trust. There is already evidence of this unique ability in other policy arenas, e.g., the health sector. In Mozambique, community paralegals' case data surfaced systemic healthcare failures, enabling reforms that reduced rights violations by 43 percent between 2015-2017.[49]

A further advantage is justice's capacity to manage uncertainty, not just risk, thereby limiting the need of changing technology to require constant governance reform. AI behaves unpredictably, edge cases proliferate, and contexts shift. Justice institutions are built to govern this indeterminacy through interpretation, deliberation, and procedural safeguards. These capabilities cannot be substituted by purely technical or risk-based approaches. Centering individual experiences

with AI and understanding the potential harms it can create allows justice actors to create more adaptive governance mechanisms that foster an enabling environment to uphold rights—regardless of changes in technology.

5.2 Justice actors will implement AI governance and should help design it

Regardless of how AI governance frameworks are drafted, justice actors will ultimately be the ones who make them real. Beyond voluntary incident logs, there are no internationally coordinated redress avenues for AI harms today.[50] This means complaint and remedy pathways will be embedded in domestic justice institutions. Courts, ombud institutions, regulators, tribunals, legal aid providers, and community paralegals will handle disputes, interpret rules, and ensure individuals can exercise their rights. Excluding them from governance design leads to frameworks that overlook the interconnected nature of people's justice problems, and how flawed AI systems can amplify problems.

The consequences of this exclusion are already visible across social protection, policing, financial services, and migration management. Automated decisions in welfare systems, for example, have cut incomes without explanation or meaningful opportunity to challenge.[51] The result can go far beyond one justice problem and trigger cascading harms such as debt, loss of housing, food insecurity, mental health deterioration, even petty crime. Each of these successive harms then generate additional justice needs that frontline institutions must absorb.

Similarly, corporate use of algorithmic scoring or workplace monitoring creates adverse decisions that individuals cannot meaningfully contest, while internal compliance teams lack the independence or mandate to provide meaningful remedy. For example, Amazon discontinued an experimental AI recruiting tool after it was found to systematically disadvantage women applicants, illustrating how bias and discrimination in automated decision making went unaddressed until the system was withdrawn.[52] In law enforcement, automated surveillance and predictive tools raise concerns about proportionality, due process, and evidentiary standards. Tools such as the COMPAS recidivism algorithm generated biased risk scores and limited opportunities for challenge, prompting legal scrutiny and calls for procedural safeguards only after harms became visible at scale.[53] These intertwined harms are predictable to justice actors, yet safeguards are often retrofitted only after deployment. In New York, proposed AI legislation reflects justice sector concerns that emerged from real world harms after unregulated AI systems produced discriminatory outcomes.[54] Civil rights advocates, regulators, and legal practitioners subsequently pressed for audits, transparency, and avenues for redress.[55]

In many contexts, AI is rolling out faster than institutions can manage risk or ensure transparency. Even where governance structures do exist, they often lean

on ethics frameworks grounded in Western philosophical assumptions, such as prioritizing individual autonomy over communal decision making, which can sideline local norms and values. This makes contextual accountability—ensuring AI systems answer to the communities they affect—significantly more challenging, especially in legally plural systems where customary, religious, and state courts apply inconsistent standards. Justice institutions then become the de facto venues for remedy without having shaped model design, data governance, or oversight upstream. **With multiple forums pulling in different directions and lacking coordination, the gap between deployment speed, governance capacity, and legal pluralism deepens, heightening the risk of systemic harm that no single institution is equipped to address.**

5.3 People-centered justice provides the right approach

People-centered justice reframes AI governance as an implementation challenge, not just a technical or ethical one. It also focuses on fair outcomes for all, not just procedural design and reform. People-centered justice actors develop deep knowledge of how people actually interact with institutions, along with insight into vulnerabilities and real-world impacts. They have experience designing accessible mechanisms for remedy, and credibility as independent accountability bodies. A people-centered approach puts people at the center of justice systems; focuses on fair outcomes for all; understands that effective justice is a tool for preventing harms; and supports people to access promised remedies and rights.[56] People-centered justice begins with people's lived experience, asking:

- What is the desired outcome?
- Who is most affected at each stage of AI development and how do they have equal access to rights and remedy?
- What rights and interests are at stake?
- What mechanisms allow people to understand, challenge, and correct decisions? Are they equally accessible to all?
- What mechanisms exist for accountability and civic participation in legal design such as monitoring AI systems deployment and potential harms?

People-centered justice reframes justice not as a barrier to innovation but rather as a co-designer of trustworthy systems, ensuring that AI delivers expected benefits while safeguarding rights. This approach rejects the assumption that accessibility is automatic, that remedy mechanisms will follow once principles are set, or that institutions have the capacity to enforce rules. Instead, people-centered justice insists that rights are only as strong as the systems that enforce them. It recognizes that those systems must also be designed with the same rigor as the technologies they govern, and designed with people's needs in mind.

Doing so will also allow people-centered justice to play a crucial role in leveling power imbalances around AI. In a time of highly concentrated resources, technology, and capacity for AI development, diffusing access to rights and remedy has never presented more of a potential danger. People-centered approaches to justice are instead inclusive, and rely on design principles to bring justice to the user wherever they are, ensuring nobody is left behind.

Equal access to justice is central to the promotion, protection, and fulfillment of human rights. AI governance grounded in a people-centered justice approach can accordingly play a critical role in the implementation of human rights frameworks. By embedding transparency, accountability, and access to remedies into the governance of AI systems, governments can better ensure equality before the law and protect individuals from discriminatory or harmful uses of technology.

The siloes between domains of AI governance are more easily bridged by putting people at the center of justice, and justice at the center of AI governance. If we understand the responsibility of AI governance is to prevent and remedy harms caused by AI—and justice as the implementation of that responsibility—then justice is a uniquely consistent function across AI domains.

Ultimately, people-centered justice helps to correct a deeper problem in AI governance: individuals are often treated as data subjects, not rights holders. This approach ignores the lived realities and power asymmetries that justice actors confront daily. By restoring a rights holder frame, people-centered justice aligns AI governance with the requirements of dignity, agency, and fairness.

5.4 Justice across the AI lifecycle

Justice problems don't begin only with AI deployment. They're embedded throughout the AI lifecycle: in the norms that define "fairness;" the data that trains models; the compute infrastructure that determines who can build AI; the model architectures that encode bias; and finally the applications that affect people's lives. Effective governance requires justice inputs and mechanisms at every stage, from community paralegals who surface harms to strategic litigation that establishes precedent.

Karen Hao and Gabriel Geiger's AI Accountability Reporting Series for the Pulitzer Center traces how power, harm, and accountability flow through the AI supply chain.[57] It reveals a critical insight: **governance that waits until AI deployment has already missed most opportunities to prevent harm, ensure fairness, and build accountability into systems.**

The justice sector, utilizing people-centered justice approaches, can offer benefits across the AI lifecycle. Hao and Geiger identify five stages of AI development: Norms and values; data; compute; AI models; and then application.[58] Each stage presents distinct issues, involves different actors, and affects different

communities. Presented below are suggestions for the ways in which the justice sector can support each stage. These suggestions are not comprehensive, but rather demonstrate the potential for justice sector engagement across the lifecycle of AI.

- **Norms and Values.** At this stage of the AI Lifecycle, a people-centered justice approach can help define rights, ensure fairness, and center the lived realities of impacted communities in governance priorities. The justice sector can utilize mechanisms such as participatory norm-setting platforms, rights-based standards development, independent oversight bodies, or strategic litigation.
- **Data.** A people-centered justice approach that can help to ensure individual agency and consent is central to data collection. Adequate redress mechanisms also need to be in place. This includes prioritizing disaggregated data collection that helps to understand the lived realities of distinct communities—including those most at risk of being disadvantaged—and ensuring their needs are met. Tools like data rights helpdesks, privacy ombuds, independent audits, use of community paralegals, and grievance portals can help support fair and rights-based data collection and use.
- **Compute.** The justice sector can help ensure transparency, accountability, and equitability. Mechanisms like environmental justice reviews, procurement standards, fair lease agreements, transparency mandates, and community monitoring all support more equitable and rights-based compute.
- **AI Models.** AI models carry risks of embedded abuse, bias, and errors. The justice sector has a key role to play in embedding contestability and human oversight into model design. It can also support bias audits. Key mechanisms informed by people-centered justice approaches include algorithmic impact assessments, independent audit and oversight mechanisms, judicial reviews, appeals and corrections pathways, and human-in-the loop pathways.
- **Applications.** At the point of application, the justice sector has a responsibility to protect against discrimination, ensure accountability, and ensure remedy in the case of rights violations. Key tools might include complaint and remedy pathways, consumer protections, legal aid and AI harm navigators, anti-discrimination enforcement, community oversight panels, and whistleblower protections.

What emerges from a review of the AI lifecycle is a blueprint for embedding justice into AI governance infrastructure—not as a safeguard bolted on after the fact, but as a design principle that operates from the earliest normative decisions through to remedy mechanisms that restore rights when systems fail.

5.5 From principles to enforceable governance

The current state of AI development provides an ideal opportunity to center justice expertise in governance design. Doing so turns principles and voluntary standards into enforceable rights, and ethical aspirations into mechanisms people can use. It aligns AI development with societal values while strengthening institutional trust and reducing downstream harms.

People-centered justice ensures that governance is not only technically robust and rights-respecting, but also workable, accessible, and anchored in the realities of people's lives. This foundation is required for AI systems that are not only innovative but legitimate, fair, and trustworthy. The next section shows how these capabilities become enforceable governance before, during, and after deployment.

6. Using Justice to Operationalize AI Governance

AI governance needs practical, institutional machinery that makes commitments real in people's lives. Justice systems provide essential capabilities for operationalizing governance. This section shows how people-centered justice operationalizes governance across five domains: **foundational infrastructure; accountability-by-procurement; independent oversight; rights and remedy; and adaptive learning.**

6.1 Building foundational infrastructure

Administrative guidance should spell out where AI is appropriate, what disclosure is required, and when humans must remain in the loop—but it only works if people can use these safeguards. Justice actors see where opacity prevents challenges, where technical documentation fails accessibility standards, and where procedural safeguards break in practice. Some AI governance bodies now include representatives from legal aid, ombuds offices, and community justice organizations (alongside technologists and judges) because of their connection to people and their problems.[59] **Their inclusion promotes user-centric design and guidance that addresses structural barriers rather than just technical compliance.**

Data governance must center rights and remedy. Data practices determine whether people can prove harm. Documentation systems that track data sources enable reviewers to trace how biased training data produces discriminatory outcomes. Retention limits that restrict data to its original purpose prevent organizations from reusing information without consent. Community participation in access decisions prevents extractive practices, where data is harvested without reciprocal benefit. When affected communities are treated as stakeholders rather than subjects, accountability infrastructure follows. **Justice institutions can**

institutionalize this by mandating documentation on remedy decisions, preserving explanation pathways, and enabling independent audits when complaints arise.

Transparency builds trust only when it is usable and has consequences that amount to accountability. People must be told when AI assists decisions. They also need accessible complaint channels with clear timelines, and public reporting when systems are paused or corrected. **This visible accountability must be supported by ombuds investigations, tribunal orders, and legal aid and community justice organizations disclosing patterns of harm.** Building capacity through this lens means training procurement officers, legal teams, and oversight bodies not only in technical fundamentals, but in designing processes people can actually navigate, and then empowering them to do so. Legal systems can then enforce standards with real remedies when rights are violated.

With governance infrastructure in place, procurement becomes the mechanism through which standards are operationalized before deployment.

6.2 Accountability by procurement

As outlined in section 3, procurement is a high impact governance area. Procurement often behaves like routine purchasing: governments and public buyers can lack the technical capacity to interrogate vendor claims, while private companies often treat AI as a feature and price decision. In that vacuum, implementation teams in public agencies alongside product and IT units in companies end up self-governing by default, making high-stakes design and deployment choices without adequate legal, ethical, or operational guardrails. This can result in decisions made by teams lacking human rights or justice expertise, with systems that shape livelihoods, services, and rights deployed without meaningful accountability to the people they affect. When issues arise, weak contracts constrain vendor responsibility and waste public resources through failed deployments.[60] The result harms both vendors' and buyers' reputations, while leaving affected individuals without remedy.

A people-centered approach reframes procurement to ensure there is public accountability. Instead of having decisions made between only buyers and vendors, people and communities subject to AI decisions are brought into the process. Contracts can create accessible remedies (not just institutional audit rights), clear grievance pathways, plain-language notices, and redress that people can actually use. Procurement agreements can choose to recognize community accountability mechanisms and customary forums, not only courts. This can be especially useful in overburdened court systems or legally plural settings.

A people-centered justice approach takes procurement discussions away from an overfocus on procedure, focusing instead on how such discussions will impact people and how those people's rights will be upheld. This approach becomes the basis for decision making. It also supports more locally grounded and inclusive AI

governance systems that reflect local needs and avoid harmful outcomes, key priorities for many countries in the coming years.

Potential practical ways to adopt people-centered justice procurement in advancing AI governance could include:

Stage	Procurement requirements
Before award (vendor)	Community-informed impact assessment beyond technical risk; documented input from affected groups; mitigation plans tied to identified harms.
Before award (buyer)	Learn from other agencies and governments that have negotiated community-informed contracts, accessing proven language on grievance mechanisms, explainability, and accountability clauses. Initiatives that help formalize this peer knowledge sharing can be especially helpful; e.g., GovAI AI Contract Hub.[61]
At award (buyer & vendor	Plain language explainability for users; bias/performance thresholds aligned to community priorities; named accountable owners; guaranteed human review by qualified decision makers (no automated appeals). Align with human rights-anchored instruments; e.g., UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.[62]
During operation (buyer & vendor)	Ongoing monitoring with public reporting; incident response and suspension ("kill-switch") triggers tied to measurable harm; user-facing grievance channels with service level timelines.
Agentic AI[63] & complex stack[64]	Explicit shared governance and differentiated responsibilities across providers;[65] end-to-end traceability (model/tool call logs) accessible to affected people or authorized advocates.

Where regulatory capacity is thin, the procurement contract is a key point of leverage for governments, people, and communities. Procurement should be seen as a mechanism for enforceable governance with binding consultation, independent evaluation, and consequences when systems fail people. Procurement accountability depends on independent oversight.

6.3 Establishing independent oversight

Neither government nor private companies have the trust needed to hold AI accountable. Corporate ethics teams answer to executives who may prioritize speed over rights; government agencies can be overwhelmed by technological specifications and wish to avoid missing out on the AI revolution.

Independent oversight provides what's missing: authority that answers to people, not to corporate boards or ministries. The responsibility of independent oversight is shared across multiple institutions:

- Courts apply existing law to algorithmic decisions and reverse outcomes.
- Ombuds investigate complaints and suspend systems without forcing litigation.
- Administrative tribunals hear appeals with technical expertise.
- Data protection authorities audit compliance, compel disclosure, and publish findings. Sector regulators (competition, financial, health, housing) share this role.
- In legally plural settings, community-based accountability mechanisms and customary forums often command greater trust than formal systems.[66]

Justice actors are uniquely equipped to design and operate oversight systems: they interpret contested claims; ensure accessibility for people navigating unfamiliar processes; balance fairness with efficiency; and aggregate complaints into patterns that drive reform. Scaling requires statutory powers to compel documentation, safeguard access to testing data, and authority to pause systems under investigation. Procedures must ensure accessible intake, service level timelines, and public reporting. Independence requires transparent appointments, secure funding, and conflict-of-interest protections.

In resource-constrained contexts, existing institutions such as human rights commissions or courts with expanded jurisdiction could serve as reviewers. In Kenya, for example, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights has challenged unlawful surveillance and data practices and exposed corporate abuses in agriculture and extractives, illustrating how independent bodies can scrutinize technically complex systems while retaining public trust. This same approach could be adapted for AI oversight.[67] Regional cooperation, pooling expertise across neighboring countries, can accelerate progress without requiring full infrastructure in every jurisdiction.

Independent oversight creates the institutional foundation for accountability—but institutions alone don't ensure remedy. The next section examines how to guarantee accessible rights and redress in practice.

6.4 Operationalizing rights and remedy

Across contexts, people experience AI failures not as algorithmic harms but as concrete injustices: a benefit cut without explanation, an eviction notice triggered by a flawed risk score, a misidentification that leads to arrest. People often don't know whether a human or an AI model made the call, appeals are opaque or absent, and accountability is dispersed across vendors, deployers, and oversight bodies. For most, there is no obvious place to go when things go wrong.

Ethics reviews can show intention, but rights frameworks create duties. Without binding constraints, product design and deployment teams can ship systems that violate fundamental rights—and face no immediate consequences.

Australia's Robodebt scheme effectively illustrates this point and serves as a warning for future AI adoption.[68] Between 2015–2019, the automated decision-making system unlawfully raised approximately AUS 1.76 billion in debts against roughly 443,000 people. Victoria Legal Aid spotted the crisis first: calls for assistance jumped 300 percent, and visits to their support page surged 500 percent. Working alongside those directly harmed, VLA identified the core flaw: the system had averaged annual income data to calculate fortnightly earnings, ignoring fluctuating work hours and generating inflated debts. People were told they owed money they'd never received, and the burden of proof fell on them to prove the algorithm wrong. The courts, and later a Royal Commission, forced accountability: a court-approved AUS 1.8 billion settlement in 2021,[69] an additional AUS 475 million class-action settlement in 2025, and systemic reforms including trauma-informed, user-centric welfare redesign.[70] Criminal referrals followed for officials involved.

People-centered justice creates the legal foundations that force remedy. When rights are embedded in enforceable frameworks, harmed individuals and advocacy groups can challenge systems in court, demand explanations, and compel corrections. **The lesson isn't that rights prevent all automated harms, but that without them, there's no pathway from injury to accountability.** People-centered justice moves AI governance from aspiration to obligation—ensuring that when systems fail, there are mechanisms to challenge, correct, and compensate.

The question is whether rights can be operationalized earlier, as friction in the system itself. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are an existing framework that require human rights due diligence and meaningful consultation with affected communities before deployment.[71] Applied to AI, this means:

- Transparent notice when AI assists decisions, with reasons in plain language
- Simple appeals to human reviewers with authority to reverse outcomes, with clear timelines
- Independent bodies empowered to investigate, suspend systems, and order redress
- Accessible forums in legally plural settings, including community mechanisms

A successful example of this can be found in the LA Superior Court, which uses AI to flag defects in debt collection cases before default judgments are entered.[72] The system catches problems in 16 percent of cases that human staff attorneys then review, preventing some 50,000 cases a year from going to court. This is rights operationalization: due process protections embedded in the workflow itself, not remedied after harm. The same principle scales through procurement contracts that require human rights impact assessments before deployment; independent oversight bodies empowered to suspend systems that violate standards; and non-prosecution policies that create safe guardrails for public-interest innovation. **Rights operationalized through accessible pathways create feedback loops that enable governance to adapt.**

6.5 Enabling adaptive governance for accountable and trustworthy AI deployment

AI systems labeled "low risk" at deployment can cause serious harm as they scale, or when contexts shift. Predictive tools in social care systems illustrate the problem: algorithms treat poverty as a warning sign of abuse and neglect, rather than identifying what families need to thrive.[73] The classification stays "low risk" even as harm accumulates to vulnerable families. Without feedback loops linking observed harms to policy changes, safeguards remain frozen while damage spreads. Accountability suffers, and so too does public trust.

Adaptive governance requires mechanisms to route signals from the frontlines to policymakers. Justice actors already see AI failures earliest. They field the complaints when benefits are wrongly cut, when risk scores generate flawed decisions, and when systems misidentify people. Their testimony should trigger review: Are classifications still accurate? Do controls match observed impact? Safeguards should tighten where harm accumulates—to tenants facing eviction, migrants navigating status, families in benefits systems—and relax where evidence shows low risk and high benefit. This is governance as a feedback loop, not a static rulebook.

Independent media and civil society amplify these signals. When journalists document failures and advocates mobilize pressure, governance improves faster than regulation alone can compel. For example, ProPublica's Machine Bias series in 2016 catalyzed public scrutiny and policy reviews on algorithmic fairness in criminal

justice, moving the issue onto legislative and judicial agendas far faster than prior efforts.[74] Visibility, however, requires infrastructure: open, standardized incident feeds; plain-language briefings accessible to nontechnical audiences; and timely disclosure of algorithmic changes affecting rights or services. Without strategies to engage external actors from the start, even well-designed policies pass by without impact. **Justice actors should make oversight work legible, publishing findings, explaining patterns, and naming harms so journalists and advocates can hold deployers accountable.** Visibility is how accountability and trust improves.

With governance infrastructure, procurement accountability, independent oversight, enforceable rights, and adaptive feedback loops in place, it's not just people and governments who benefit, but also the private sector.

7. Private Companies and the Benefits of Good AI Governance

7.1 Risk mitigation, innovation, consumer adoption, and strong markets

Companies that engage justice actors— e.g., ministries of justice, the judiciary, legal aid programs, ombuds offices, and frontline justice workers—early in public-private partnerships for AI governance can gain a competitive advantage. Those that don't risk accumulating hidden liabilities. People-centered justice can strengthen an AI governance infrastructure with benefits to the private sector including reducing risk, enabling innovation, building consumer trust, and strengthening markets.

AI governance is a risk-mitigation strategy for private companies protecting against financial, legal, and reputational liabilities. Shifts toward deregulation in some contexts, however, create a paradox: less government oversight means more corporate responsibility. Experts at the Harvard University Center for Ethics find that "national deregulation does not eliminate the risks that AI poses to businesses, including reputational, operational, financial, strategic, and data security risks that remain significant and that require ethical AI frameworks to mitigate them."[75] Without external governance frameworks, companies must develop internal accountability systems, a costly undertaking that requires additional capacity and risk-taking.

Justice mechanisms provide key tools for companies to strengthen risk mitigation strategies. Accessible remedy for AI harms is a preventative strategy for reputation risk. Appeals Centre Europe (ACE) demonstrates a model that could be adapted for AI-related harms. Certified under the EU's Digital Services Act, it provides independent review of content moderation decisions by Meta, TikTok, and YouTube outside court. Early evidence shows users value the process, with close to 75

percent of appeals succeeding.[76] Companies accept independent review because it increases legitimacy, clarifies grey areas, and provides defensible process when decisions are contested publicly. This prevents individual complaints from escalating into reputation crises.

The alternative is both harmful and expensive: reputational damage, executive accountability measures, and ongoing litigation costs can far exceed investment in justice-informed governance. Without accessible remedy pathways, companies accumulate hidden liabilities that can compound and explode into public scandals.

Access to remedy must also be accompanied by accountability, transparency, and upstream safeguards. Too little investment in the actualization of human rights standards increases risks of doing harm and being banned from entire jurisdictions. In early 2026, Malaysia and Indonesia banned X's Grok due to unmitigated harms caused by the development of sexually explicit deepfakes. The United Kingdom is considering similar measures.[77]

A company's ability to rely on external guidelines for responsible AI also frees resources and capacity for technological innovation. Those who oppose strong AI regulations argue that companies need flexibility to facilitate greater innovation. However, shifting responsibility for both design and governance onto individual companies forces them to consolidate guidelines and regulations internally. This creates additional bureaucracy that can undermine innovation by forcing each company to manage governance frameworks themselves.[78]

From a macroeconomic perspective, AI regulation can also support innovation by increasing predictability of markets, trust in products, and investments.[79] As experts from the InterAmerican Development Bank argue, regulation is "particularly important in regions where institutional credibility and investor confidence remain fragile."[80] AI regulation, however, is only as effective as it is enforceable—which requires strong, accessible, and people-centered justice systems.

Furthermore, consumer trust is built on meaningful accountability. Meaningful access to remedy and recourse supports consumer trust in products. This impacts people's ultimate decisions about whether or not to use a product. As noted earlier, the general public is more concerned about AI than excited by it, and citizens have varying degrees of trust in their governments to govern it.[81] If companies want widespread adoption of their AI products, then they need people to trust them. This requires ensuring oversight mechanisms meet people's needs and expectations.

Customers want to see how companies are putting AI principles into practice. Providing access to justice that upholds rights and allows for recourse shows consumers that the system works, errors can be corrected, and good behavior is rewarded. When companies face backlash over algorithmic decisions, those with pre-existing independent review mechanisms can respond credibly and quickly,

preserving customer relationships. Those without such mechanisms face prolonged reputational damage. Ultimately, the **enforceability of AI governance** principles through access to justice is what will enable greater trust and adoption of AI products.

Markets are strengthened by consistent standards. Universal standard setting facilitates competitive and fair markets. Private companies including Microsoft, Google and Meta have "publicly called for clearer rules, more harmonization, and common standards in the digital space."[82] Clear standards enable cross-border scalability and level the playing field. This is particularly important for small and medium enterprises competing against better-resourced firms that can afford legal teams in every jurisdiction. People-centered justice approaches to AI governance can provide consistent accountability across jurisdictions.

Clear AI governance informed by a people-centered justice approach can provide human-centered and outcome-oriented directives that support markets to work better for people and businesses. Such governance can identify where lack of regulatory clarity actually impedes innovations intended for public benefit. With fair outcomes as a guiding principle, it also contributes to the enablement of innovation for impact. For example, overly restrictive unauthorized practices of law rules in some US states prevent legal AI entrepreneurs from creating solutions to increase people's access to justice.[83] This harms both entrepreneurs and limits innovations that could increase access to justice on the ground. Meanwhile, non-prosecutorial safe harbors that protect consumer-centric innovation show how people-centered approaches can enable markets to work better. [84]

7.2 Path forward

Inclusive, equitable, and enforceable AI governance will ultimately benefit the private sector internally, within markets, and in its relationship to consumers—but governance is only as strong as its enforcement mechanisms. Incorporating people-centered justice into AI governance design can help ensure these benefits come to fruition while protecting rights and building public trust. Such an outcome requires concrete action. Companies should:

- Participate in shaping emerging standards through forums like the Global Dialogue on AI Governance
- Adopt procurement practices that embed accountability.
- Integrate access to justice experts into AI ethics boards and oversight mechanisms
- Fund independent oversight and justice-sector capacity building in the markets where systems are deployed

Those companies that build accountability infrastructure early in the design and development process gain competitive advantage by shaping governance standards and ensuring credible, independent oversight. Those that wait may

accumulate hidden liabilities that can surface as crises, and face rules designed without their input.

These recommendations require navigating real complexity. Building justice infrastructure means dedicating resources at a time when companies face pressure to move fast. The fragmented global governance landscape, with overlapping initiatives across the UN, regional bodies, and industry forums, makes it genuinely difficult to determine where to invest time and credibility. Procurement processes must be redesigned. Ethics boards must expand beyond technical experts. Some deployment decisions may slow.

Yet the alternative is far more costly. Without proactive engagement, companies face cascading risks: reputational crises that erase years of brand building; regulatory backlash that constrains future innovation; and litigation costs that dwarf prevention investments. Companies that engage justice actors early avoid these pitfalls, while gaining influence over the governance frameworks they'll ultimately operate within. **The question is not whether to invest in governance and accountability infrastructure—but whether to do so proactively or reactively.**

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Justice is undervalued in today's AI governance discussion. The geopolitics of AI governance are complex, but no matter how you look at it, AI governance will impact the justice sector. As AI governance moves from principles to implementation, it is also clear that the justice sector will help determine the success of AI governance in local contexts. The absence of access to justice expertise in AI governance has led to underdeveloped machinery for oversight and redress of AI harms. If the AI revolution is to be of positive benefit for society, it needs the right stakeholders to help design its governance.

Justice actors, using a people-centered approach, can help to create more inclusive, equitable, and enforceable AI governance. They can improve the foundational infrastructure of governance; support people-centered procurement practices; improve independent oversight; operationalize rights and remedies; and create more adaptive, accountable, and trustworthy AI deployment. Justice actors are uniquely positioned to detect AI-related harms early, tracking and aggregating cases, complaints, and legal-needs data that can inform timely course correction in AI governance.

Stronger, outcome-oriented, and people-centered governance will also benefit the private sector. It will help mitigate risks, promote innovation, build trust with

customers and promote consumer adoption, and maintain fair markets. It is a win-win for people and for companies.

Now is the time to bring the justice sector into the fold and adopt a people-centered approach to AI governance design. The establishment of the United Nations Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the impending Global Dialogue on AI Governance planned for July of 2026 offer a critical window to ensure justice is embedded in the design of AI governance before institutional paths and standards harden and repercussions are felt down the line.

The table below offers a list of recommendations for governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society to ensure that people-centered justice is made central to the implementation of inclusive, equitable, and effective AI governance. These recommendations orient around governance, multistakeholder inclusion, and systems design as a way to address siloes between the justice sector and the AI governance sector.

Governments	International Organizations
Make justice part of AI governance from the onset. Include access to justice and remedy as a central component of AI governance strategies, frameworks, principles, and regulations across the lifecycle of AI. This acknowledges that it is not sufficient to establish rights without simultaneously ensuring equal access to the enjoyment of those rights, as well as accountability and redress in the event of their violation. Give due consideration to existing justice gaps and how these may need to be addressed to ensure AI governance is inclusive, effective, and enforceable. **Consult justice sector experts when designing AI governance priorities, strategies, and principles.** Consult ministries of justice, judiciaries, and other justice-facing line ministries, as well as civil society justice actors, in the design of national AI governance to ensure it is inclusive, equitable, rights-based, and enforceable. A people-centered justice approach can be used to inform administrative AI governance guidance, procurement regulations, independent oversight mechanisms, and adaptable governance frameworks. This will strengthen the practical machinery of accountability, redress mechanisms, and ensure no one is excluded from the benefits of the law. **Institute early-warning mechanisms through the justice sector for AI-related rights violations, in particular human rights.** AI-related rights violations will appear first in the justice sector. Judges, lawyers, ombud institutions, regulators, tribunals, legal aid providers, community paralegals, and other frontline justice workers will be best equipped to identify and understand trends in AI-related rights violations that need to be addressed in the machinery of AI governance. Developing mechanisms and feedback loops between justice actors and AI governance experts can inform effective, outcome-oriented governance that responds to people's lived realities. **Include AI-related harms in legal needs surveys and take into account findings when designing AI governance regulations.**	**Include access to justice as a central component of inclusive, enforceable, and rights-based AI governance by prioritizing it as a thematic focus in multilateral and regional platforms.** Include people-centered justice as a principled approach to the implementation of AI governance, in accordance with the priority topic of "respect for and protection and promotion of human rights in the field of artificial intelligence" as put forth in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 79/325. This will move the conversation from principles to practice, offering a lens through which to discuss implementation. **Ensure people-centered justice experts are key constituencies as part of multistakeholder inclusion in AI governance.** Provide designated consultations with justice experts in the development of the IISP-AI reports and the design of Global AI Dialogue substantive agenda. Provide space for access to justice discussions in AI governance fora that include a people-centered justice approach. **Bring AI governance as a thematic focus of rule of law and access to justice fora, promoting interdisciplinary engagement on AI governance.** Siloes will impede meaningful engagement between rule of law and justice mandates and those related to AI governance, even though implementation of AI governance is an overlapping concern. While providing space for rule of law and justice actors in AI governance platforms is essential, it is equally important for rule of law and justice platforms to engage with topics related to the implementation of AI governance. This includes providing space for AI governance experts to participate in such fora. **Develop model frameworks for procurement, independent oversight, and transparency that resource-constrained countries can adapt to local contexts.** Many jurisdictions lack capacity to draft and negotiate AI procurement and oversight regimes from scratch. International

Legal needs surveys provide foundational data to understand people's justice problems and design policy interventions to address them. Include subsets of questions on AI-related harms, ensuant justice problems, and efforts to resolve those problems. Legal needs surveys should help inform AI governance design that accounts for people's justice problems. **Require community-informed impact assessments before procuring AI systems, with contracts mandating plain-language explainability, human review authority, and user-facing grievance channels.** Move accountability upstream by making community-informed impact assessment a precondition of procurement for high-stakes systems. Procurement contracts should require plain-language notice and explainability for users, guaranteed human review with authority to reverse outcomes, and accessible grievance channels with clear timelines, ensuring that safeguards exist before deployment harms occur. **Establish independent oversight bodies with powers to compel documentation, pause systems under investigation, and publish findings publicly.** Independent oversight is essential when neither vendors nor deploying agencies have sufficient trust or incentives to self-police. Oversight bodies should have statutory powers to compel documentation and testing access, pause systems where measurable harm is occurring, and publish findings to enable public accountability. **Prohibit fully automated decision making for high-stakes decisions affecting rights; require qualified human reviewers with authority to reverse AI outputs.** For high-stakes decisions (e.g., access to benefits, immigration status, housing, employment, or criminal justice), governments should prohibit fully automated decision making. Human review must be meaningful: reviewers must be trained, independent from performance incentives that rubber stamp, and empowered to overturn AI outputs.	organizations can provide adaptable model clauses, minimum standards, and implementation toolkits (procurement; auditability; transparency and notice; grievance and remedy; or suspension triggers) that governments can localize. **Support regional cooperation and pooling of expertise to build collective capacity without requiring full infrastructure in every jurisdiction.** Regional models can reduce costs and accelerate learning by pooling technical and justice expertise across countries. Shared review capacity, joint training, and regional rosters of experts can help implement governance and oversight even where domestic institutions are under-resourced.

Private Sector	Civil Society and Academia
Support a people-centered justice approach to AI governance, including access to justice and remedy as a priority for implementation. People-centered justice can support more effective AI governance. In turn, this governance can help mitigate financial, legal, and reputational risks; facilitate fair competition; increase consumer trust and product adoption; and ensure AI development and deployment is rights-based and in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. **Promote access to justice and remedy as a thematic priority for AI governance platforms like the Global Dialogue on AI Governance.** Private actors are key counterparts in designing the priorities of AI governance. Using this political capital to promote access to justice and remedy can benefit more accountability and redress machinery that not only supports human rights compliance but also private sector financial interests. **Establish open channels with justice actors to understand AI impacts, potential harms, and rights violations that could be addressed in upstream design and development, and fund independent oversight and justice sector capacity building in markets where systems are deployed.** Collaborating with justice actors such as judges, lawyers, ombud institutions, regulators, tribunals, legal aid providers, community paralegals, and other frontline justice workers can support a feedback loop for private companies in the design, development, and deployment of new AI tools. Refining those tools based on their implications for people's lives can prevent future harms and mitigate risks. Strengthening these mechanisms in contexts where AI systems are deployed can have mutual benefit.	**Build a cross-sector coalition for a people-centered justice approach to AI governance implementation and develop an action agenda.** Siloes between AI governance discussions and justice conversations are prevalent. Making access to justice and remedy a central component of AI governance discourse will require coalitional advocacy and engagement. Civil society is well positioned to bridge disciplinary siloes and facilitate a collective action agenda. Momentum from civil society can transition into AI governance processes. **Facilitate—and participate in—cross-sector discourse between AI governance and justice experts.** Civil society organizations and academia are well positioned to identify experts and facilitate dialogues and workshops between AI governance experts and justice experts outside of traditional governance processes. The exchange of ideas and lessons from the ground can subsequently inform recommendations for best practices in adopting a people-centered justice approach to implementation. **Collect data, evidence, and research on justice problems caused by AI, as well as incidents of mistargeted governance. Share findings and recommendations with governments and the private sector.** Data and evidence on people's lived realities when seeking justice in response to AI-related impacts, harms, or rights violations will be the strongest mechanism for change. AI governance practitioners striving to adopt a people-centered justice approach will need to understand how their work interacts with people's justice problems. Civil society and academia are well positioned to provide an unbiased evidence base for public and private officials.

Put people-centered justice at the center of internal AI governance practices, including procurement and AI oversight mechanisms.

Adopt procurement practices that embed accountability; integrate access to justice experts into AI ethics boards and oversight mechanisms.

- **Design procurement contracts that include accessible remedy pathways for affected people, not just institutional audit rights, with end-to-end traceability accessible by advocates.** Procurement and vendor contracts should include user-facing remedy pathways (clear notice, simple appeals, service-level timelines, and escalation), not only buyer audit rights. Contracts should also require end-to-end traceability (e.g., logs and documentation) that can be accessed by affected people or authorized advocates to enable contestation.

- **Accept independent review mechanisms (e.g., the Appeals Centre Europe model) that provide credible process when decisions are contested.** Independent review can reduce reputational and legal risk while increasing legitimacy when harms occur. Companies should participate in credible, independent dispute-resolution mechanisms that provide neutral review and transparent outcomes.

- **Design systems with built-in contestability and human oversight from the start, not retrofitted after deployment.** Contestability must be engineered into workflows: humans in the loop for high-stakes contexts, clear explanation pathways, and user-accessible challenge routes. Retrofitting remedy after harm is costlier and less credible than building accountability into system design.

Monitor government and corporate AI governance implementation and publish people-centered justice accountability scorecards; amplify frontline justice actors' early-warning signals to policymakers and media.

Civil society and academia can strengthen enforcement by tracking whether commitments are implemented in practice. Public scorecards and periodic monitoring can translate frontline justice signals into concrete governance and accountability demands that reach decision makers and the public.

Use strategic litigation to establish precedent and enforce accountability when AI systems violate rights.

Where regulatory systems fail or lag behind deployment, strategic litigation can clarify legal duties, compel disclosure, and set enforceable precedent. This creates downstream incentives for better upstream design and compliance.

Support technical subject matter expertise and fill knowledge gaps for policymakers and the general public through information campaigns and briefings in order to ensure public oversight of AI governance decisions.

As technology and its governance continues to evolve, there is an ongoing need to maintain technical subject matter understanding among policymakers and the general public. Civil society organizations can support this empowerment to increase transparency, accountability, and informed decision making.

Annex 1. Major AI Governance Processes and Frameworks

Initiative	Focus	Where Justice Fits In
Industry-Led Frameworks		
G7 Hiroshima Process (2023)[85]	Voluntary commitments on safety, transparency, and risk management. The process is tracked by the OECD through the voluntary Hiroshima AI Process Reporting Framework.[86] No public list of specific organizational signatories is available, but companies including Amazon, Anthropic, Google, Microsoft, NTT, OpenAI, Salesforce, and Fujitsu have engaged in reporting.	References to rule of law, human rights, due process, diversity, fairness, nondiscrimination, democracy, and human-centricity are present, but primarily focuses on technical benchmarks. Minimal attention is given to justice or Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.3 (equal access to justice for all). SDGs are mentioned in Article 9.
The Bletchley Declaration (2023) and AI Safety Summits (Bletchley, Seoul, Paris).[87]	Designed in partnership with major frontier labs and signed by 32 states. Focuses on catastrophic risk and safety testing, while recognizing issues that need to be addressed: protection of human rights; transparency and explainability; fairness; accountability; regulation; safety; appropriate human oversight; ethics; bias mitigation; privacy; and data protection.	Links AI and the SDGs. Justice appears on lists of "sensitive domains" but gets no focused attention or sector-specific commitments.
World Economic Forum AI Governance Alliance (2023)[88]	Comprises 644 members from 500 organizations across technology, government, academia, and civil society. Focuses on responsible AI adoption through safe systems, responsible applications, and resilient governance.	Emphasizes digital equity and regulatory cooperation. Remains business oriented.
The Frontier Model Forum (2023)[89]	Flagship industry governance initiative led by six major AI labs, focuses on safety research and catastrophic risks. Lacks binding commitments or broad participation.	Demonstrates limitations of voluntary self-governance.
Legally Binding Instruments		
Council of Europe (CoE) Framework Convention on AI, Human Rights, Democracy & Rule of Law (2024)	First legally binding instrument with procedural rights and remedy mechanisms. 17 signatories. Requires five signatories, including at least three CoE member states, to ratify it before it comes into effect. Defines a baseline for rights-respecting AI activities by governments, affirms existing human rights obligations to AI activities.	Recognizes safeguarding rule of law, access to justice, and judicial independence as vital to protecting democracy. Contains provisions related to procedural safeguards, public consultation, digital literacy efforts, and remedies for violations of human rights.

	Codifies accountability, nondiscrimination, privacy, and reliability.	
Global Multilateral Frameworks		
UN Global Digital Compact (2024)[90]	The **Global Digital Compact** (GDC) is a flagship AI governance document passed by the UN in 2024. It establishes priorities to ensure AI benefits humanity, safeguards human rights, and is equitable.[91] It coalesces the nearly 30 UN-related fora for AI governance. One year after the GDC, resolution A/RES/79/325 was adopted which established the Global Dialogue on AI governance and the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI to operationalize the GDC. **Global Dialogue on AI Governance**: a multilateral effort bridging states, frontier labs, industry, and civil society to create safe, trustworthy AI. Grounded in international law human rights; promotes interoperability; and encourages accessible open innovation. Explicitly ties AI governance to SDGs.[92] **Independent International Scientific Panel on AI** will comprise 40 experts serving as an early warning system, bridging research and policymaking by providing impartial assessment of AI opportunities, risks, and impacts.[93]	Explicitly links AI to peace, justice, and strong institutions. It encourages rule of law and remedy mechanisms but leaves them undefined.
OECD AI Principles (2019, 2024)[94]	Nonbinding but globally influential framework for trustworthy and human-centric AI. Mandates that AI respects the rule of law, human rights, and democratic values, with safeguards for equity and oversight. People affected by AI must access clear information about decisions and be able to challenge outcomes. 2024 update sharpened requirements for generative AI, reinforcing lifecycle risk management and information integrity.	Justice actors possess deep expertise in these areas, positioning them as essential governance partners who can design remedy mechanisms based on fair outcomes for all people; monitor harms; and ensure fairness and accountability in practice.
OECD Governing with Artificial Intelligence (2025)[95]	Examines how governments are using AI to improve public services, law enforcement, and justice administration. Includes a section on justice systems exploring AI's potential to expand access to justice, focusing on efficiency, fairness, and public trust.	Highlights the operational dimension of AI use in governance, including the justice sector. Does not address how justice actors can help shape broader AI governance frameworks.

UNESCO Recommendation on Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021)[96]	Adopted by 194 member states, sets human rights-based norms on transparency, accountability, and sustainability. Requires states to create ethical frameworks and national monitoring mechanisms anchored in human rights and the rule of law.	Calls for redress mechanisms and judicial safeguards to protect against AI-related harms.
AI for Good (2017–present)[97]	Global platform convened by ITU and over 50 UN agencies, connecting 37,000-plus contributors across 180-plus countries to advance safe, inclusive, and trustworthy AI for sustainable development. In 2025, launched its inaugural Law Track Conference[98] with Stanford Law School's CodeX.	Law Track marks growing recognition that legal and justice frameworks are central to effective AI governance. Access to justice is featured as a use case.
World Bank AI Governance	Promotes ethical, transparent, and inclusive AI frameworks outlined in Global Trends in AI Governance.[99] 2024 Justice & Rule of Law Global Forum spotlighted technology in justice systems. Supported the World Justice Project and Korea on ICT and AI tools enhancing family justice.[100]	Provides an entry point for justice actors to integrate AI governance into development strategies, ensuring that AI for development aligns with people-centered justice principles.
Justice-Specific Initiatives		
Council of Europe, European Ethical Charter on the Use of AI in Judicial Systems (2018)[101]	Voluntary guiding principles for policymakers, legislators, and justice professionals to ensure AI upholds fundamental rights and fairness in judicial processes.	Emphasizes nondiscrimination, transparency, quality, security, fairness, and user control, ensuring that AI remains accountable, rights-compatible, and human-centered in justice systems.
UNESCO Guidelines for the Use of AI Systems in Courts and Tribunals (2025)[102]	Voluntary guidelines for judicial organizations and members of the judiciary to ensure AI strengthens human-led justice. Fifteen Principles for developing, acquiring, and using AI systems ethically and in full respect of human rights including information security, auditability, and human oversight and decision-making throughout the lifecycle of an AI system. Serves as a benchmark for national and subnational guidelines.	Establishes that AI in judicial contexts must reinforce—not replace—judicial independence, human judgement, and due process. Emphasizes transparency, explainability, equality before the law, and strict limits on ADM, requiring human oversight and documentation. Provides justice actors a shared reference point for procurement, evaluation, and safe deployment of courtroom AI tools.
OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice (2023)[103]	Encourages people-centered justice reform emphasizing accessibility, equity, and accountability. While not explicitly focused on AI, it creates clear openings by	Positions justice actors as key for shaping how AI is introduced, ensuring it strengthens rights, safeguards fairness, and enhances public trust in the rule of law. Runs

	highlighting digital innovation's role in improving justice services.	on somewhat parallel tracks with the AI Principles.
UNODC Toolkit Responsible AI Innovation in Law Enforcement (2024)[104]	Provides law enforcement agencies with a human rights-based framework and practical tools for responsible AI adoption at every stage of implementation. Grounds AI innovation in human rights law, ethics, and policing principles, with risk assessments and readiness metrics.	Encourages multi-stakeholder participation including judiciary and civil society.
Regional Governance Initiatives (*frontier AI labs remain largely absent from regional governance processes across Africa, ASEAN, and Latin America)		
European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act) (2024)[105]	The EU AI Act uses a risk-based approach to governing AI, which means stronger regulations are applied to high-risk AI, and weaker regulations are applied to low-risk AI.[106] It also establishes "red lines" for prohibited AI systems. The onus of meeting AI requirements falls on the developers of high-risk AI systems.	While there is a designated "high risk" use case for the administration of justice (see EU AI Act Annex III), many of the high-risk use cases included in the Act require engagement from the justice sector. For example, access to critical infrastructure, public services, education, workers' rights, and use of AI in criminal justice all constitute legal issues when regulations are violated.
African Union Continental AI Strategy (2024)[107]	Rights-based and human-centric approach emphasizing ethics, inclusion, accountability, rule of law, and democratic governance. Calls for lawful and transparent frameworks aligned with the Malabo Convention.[108]	Positions AI as a tool for inclusive governance and responsible public service delivery. Justice actors could be involved in shaping Phase 1 implementation (2025–2026) by embedding legal safeguards, remedy processes, and access-to-justice standards in national strategies.
ASEAN AI Governance and Ethics Generative AI Supplement (2025)[109]	Coordinated by Singapore and the ASEAN Digital Ministers, with input from local industry actors. Promotes accountability, transparency, and adherence to national laws through a voluntary adaptable framework.	Strengthens legal interoperability and offers a platform to pilot accountability mechanisms.
LAC Santiago Declaration (2023)[110]	Regional AI governance framework prioritizing social justice, ethical accountability, and democratic legitimacy. Positions LAC as a "third way" in global AI regulation, balancing innovation with rights-based protections—offering an alternative heavy regulation and industry self-governance.	Embeds commitments to protect vulnerable groups (indigenous peoples, migrants, women), and promotes regional policy coherence that respects the legal, cultural, and institutional diversity of its states.

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