# PRETORIA DECLARATION ON TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Meeting at the University of Pretoria, we, the Association of Human Rights Institutes (AHRI) acknowledge the dynamic relationship between technology and human rights. The meeting provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the impact of technology on human rights and how a human rights framework can be used to guide the development, design, and implementation of new technologies.

Technological progress can be a formidable force for good, especially in times of climate change and other global challenges. But technological progress is also a source of great harm to people around the world. AHRI notes with concern, for example, that the capacity to deploy autonomous weapons, without sufficient safeguards, is growing at an unprecedented rate. The application of technology can replicate and exacerbate existing inequalities and injustices against vulnerable groups.  And while information and communication technologies enable social connections and widespread human rights advocacy, they are also being used to spread misinformation and violent content more widely than ever before. At the same time, we must protect freedom of expression and ensure that accusations of misinformation are not used to suppress dissent and that deletion of violent content does not lead to impunity by removing evidence of human rights atrocities.

AHRI recognises the efforts of the United Nations and regional human rights systems to provide normative guidance for states and non-state actors to enable rights-based development and use of technologies. This guidance provides that principles and approaches such as due diligence, meaningful participation, transparency, and accountability should be at the forefront of the development and use of technologies. We commend this direction on how to protect human rights from harmful application of technologies and how to protect, foster and fulfil human rights in the design, implementation, and use of technology.

The future of human rights that the authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments envisaged could not have been one where technology violates or undermines human rights. Rather, technology must be developed and operationalised in a way that enhances and protects human rights and international humanitarian law. AHRI therefore calls on stakeholders such as policymakers, businesses (including tech companies), academics and expert practitioners to devote more attention to securing a future where human rights form the foundations upon which technology is built. AHRI calls for more study of the benefits and harms to the realisation of human rights of all forms of technology and the implementation of a human rights approach in the research, development, implementation, and dissemination of new and existing technologies.

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