

**High Commissioner's Speech at the joint India-French Event on AI Building
Bridges for Inclusive and Sustainable AI in Africa, July 5, 2026**

Honourable Ministers,

Chief Guest

Ambassador of France to South Africa, David Martinon

**Officials from the South African Department of Communications and Digital
technologies and Department of Science, Technology and Innovation**

Captains of AI and IT industries from South Africa, France and India

Colleagues from the French Embassy and Indian High Commission

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namaste, Good Afternoon, Sanibonanani, Bon Jour

It is a great honour and privilege to address this distinguished gathering for this afternoon's joint India-France event - Building Bridges for Inclusive and Sustainable AI in Africa. This joint event is in wake of the AI Impact Summit hosted by India earlier this year and AI Action held by France last year. I am thankful to my colleague, Ambassador of France and our respective teams for organizing this event.

Every generation witnesses a technological revolution that changes the course of history. The internet connected the world. Today, Artificial Intelligence is ushering in a new era—one that promises to reshape economies, societies and the very nature of human endeavour.

The question before us is no longer whether AI will change the world—it already is. AI presents profound questions about ethics, trust, transparency, privacy, inclusion and security. The real question is whether we will shape this extraordinary technology with wisdom, responsibility and a commitment to the common good.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often reminded us that **"Technology exists to serve humanity, not replace it."** Those few words encapsulate India's philosophy towards Artificial Intelligence. AI must augment human capability, expand opportunities and improve lives. Technology should strengthen human potential, never diminish human dignity.

India enters the AI era with unique strengths. We have one of the world's youngest populations, a vibrant innovation ecosystem, globally respected technology professionals and one of the most advanced digital public infrastructures anywhere in the world.

The remarkable success of Aadhaar, UPI, Digital India and other Digital Public Infrastructure initiatives has demonstrated how technology, when designed inclusively, can transform the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Similarly, India wants to build 'AI for All' focusing on local, socially impactful AI applications and ensuring that tools are accessible in vernacular languages.

Artificial Intelligence is already reshaping every sector of our economy.

In healthcare, AI can assist doctors in early diagnosis, improve access to specialist care and accelerate medical research.

In agriculture, AI can help farmers predict weather patterns, optimise irrigation, detect crop diseases and improve productivity.

In education, AI can personalise learning, bridge language barriers and make quality education accessible to every child.

For industry, AI promises smarter manufacturing, resilient supply chains, enhanced cybersecurity and entirely new business models.

India is therefore investing in advanced computing infrastructure, semiconductor capabilities, AI research, startups, indigenous large language models and the skills needed for the workforce of tomorrow.

As Prime Minister Modi has observed, **"Technology is powerful, but direction must always be set by humans."**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

India's vision for Artificial Intelligence is also being shaped through meaningful international partnerships. Among these, the partnership between **India and France** has emerged as one of the most significant.

Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled to Paris to participate in the **AI Action Summit**, alongside French President Emmanuel Macron and other global leaders. The summit highlighted the need for Artificial Intelligence that is innovative, secure, trustworthy and inclusive. It reaffirmed that technological leadership must be accompanied by ethical responsibility and international cooperation.

Addressing the summit, Prime Minister Modi observed that **"AI is writing the code for humanity in this century."** He called upon nations to work together so that AI becomes a force for sustainable development, innovation and shared prosperity.

The momentum generated in Paris continued in India when President Emmanuel Macron joined Prime Minister Modi at the **India AI Impact Summit**. His participation reflected not only the deep strategic partnership between India and France but also our shared conviction that the future of Artificial Intelligence must be shaped through collaboration rather than competition.

The journey from Paris to New Delhi symbolises a new model of global cooperation—where advanced and emerging economies work together as equal partners to ensure that AI serves humanity, respects democratic values and benefits every nation. Today's event on building bridges for inclusive AI in Africa is a step in that direction. As with Digital Public Infrastructure in which India is collaborating with many countries of the African Continent, India and France are also ready to work with African countries on AI. Working with countries of the Global South is in consonance with the Indian philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, or the world is a family.

At the India AI Impact Summit, Prime Minister Modi presented India's distinctive vision through the concept of **MANAV**—a word that means "human." Humanity must remain at its centre of development of AI.

The **MANAV** framework provides five guiding principles for responsible AI.

M – Moral and Ethical Systems: AI must always be developed within a strong ethical framework that respects human dignity.

A – Accountable Governance: AI systems must be transparent, explainable and subject to effective oversight.

N – National Sovereignty: Every nation should have the ability to protect its data, strengthen its digital sovereignty and develop AI according to its own priorities while contributing to the global AI ecosystem.

A – Accessible and Inclusive: AI should be a multiplier of opportunity—not a monopoly for a privileged few. Its benefits must reach every citizen and every nation.

V – Valid and Legitimate: AI systems must be reliable, lawful, verifiable and worthy of public trust.

Prime Minister Modi said:

"AI should be a multiplier, not a monopoly."

Those words deserve to resonate far beyond India.

Artificial Intelligence should multiply opportunity—not inequality.

It should multiply knowledge—not misinformation.

It should multiply innovation—not exclusion.

Above all, it should multiply human potential.

At the same time, we must prepare our citizens for the future.

The jobs of tomorrow will increasingly require creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. Rather than fearing Artificial Intelligence, we must equip our people to work

alongside it. Every major technological revolution has ultimately created new industries, new professions and new opportunities. For this, we will have to invest in education, skills and human capital.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we look ahead, our success will be measured by whether AI helps eliminate poverty, improves healthcare, transforms education, protects our planet and expands opportunities for every individual.

From the **AI Action Summit in Paris** to the **India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi**, India has consistently advocated a vision of Artificial Intelligence that is innovative yet ethical, ambitious yet inclusive, national in capability yet global in outlook. It is with this vision we approach the African continent. In Africa, AI could be used in agriculture, healthcare, education and skills, financial inclusion and climate and sustainability, areas in which India is already working with countries in Africa. So let us embrace AI for our mutual development.

Before I conclude, I wish to thank all our panelists and participants in today's programme. I once again thank the French Embassy for hosting the event jointly with us carrying on the great friendship between our leaders. I am sure today's interaction would contribute to deepening our understanding and lead to future cooperation.

Thank you, Merci Beaucoup, Kea leboha, enkosi, Dankie
