



28-30 November 2025 **Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia** **Artificial Intelligence Conference**

The Role of Parliament in Shaping
the Future of Responsible AI

#ResponsibleAI



Session Summary

Lawmaking and Oversight on Artificial Intelligence

29 November 2025

Session Overview

This session examined the urgent need for parliamentary action on AI. Following the morning's discussion of societal transformation, parliamentarians and international experts explored practical approaches to regulating AI and overseeing its impact. A central theme emerged across all discussions: the importance of knowledge, structures, and expertise within parliament to govern AI effectively. The session identified foundational steps that must precede advanced regulation - building parliamentary capacity, establishing dedicated oversight structures, understanding existing legal frameworks, and engaging citizens in defining shared ethical boundaries for AI deployment.

Participants highlighted that the trajectory of AI is not technologically predetermined. It is shaped by political and societal choices. Parliaments have the mandate, tools, and responsibility to steer AI toward supporting human development and democratic accountability rather than exacerbating inequality and undermining human agency.

Format

After an opening presentation, the panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Mahdi Alshowaikh of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain. It featured six experts: Sacha Alanoca (Stanford) on distinguishing AI regulation from policy; Joe Hironaka (UNESCO) on comparative global regulatory approaches; Wathshlah Naidu (Center for Independent Journalism, Malaysia) on rights-based governance; Maha Balakrishnan (democratic governance expert) on elements of rights-based legislation; Haziq Norhisham (Google) on balancing regulation with innovation; and Claudio Cajado (Brazil's Chamber of Deputies) on Brazil's comprehensive AI legislation experience.

The discussion and group work showed up a variety of areas where parliaments can intervene. South African parliamentarians proposed evidence-based oversight using existing parliamentary tools before legislating; Australian and Malaysian representatives emphasized transparency and citizen appeal mechanisms; Libyan delegates stressed the need for international cooperation; and Nigerian and Jordanian legislators highlighted the urgent need for parliamentary capacity building on AI. Across all interventions, a clear consensus emerged: most parliaments currently lack technical expertise and dedicated oversight structures, making capacity building and institutional structures to address AI foundational priorities.

Part A: Panel Discussion: Core Insights

1. Distinguish Regulation from Policy

AI policy - including voluntary standards, international cooperation mechanisms, national strategies, and soft law - differs fundamentally from AI regulation, which consists of legally binding mechanisms with penalties and sanctions for non-compliance. Parliaments must ensure that legislation truly includes 'regulation' in substance. Otherwise, parliaments risk promising citizens protection without delivering meaningful enforcement. This is foundational to maintaining public confidence in parliamentary action.

2. Democratic Participation is Essential, Not Optional

Effective AI governance frameworks must be anchored in concrete participatory mechanisms with genuine public input. This is not merely advisable but essential for three reasons: (a) parliaments face unprecedented political and technological changes that demand robust democratic legitimacy; (b) AI is a polarizing technology where understanding public acceptance thresholds is critical; and (c) risk categorizations (determining what constitutes 'high-risk' versus 'low-risk' AI) must be informed by community values and lived experiences, not expert assumptions alone. Mechanisms such as citizen assemblies, deliberative polling, and multi-stakeholder consultations should be embedded from the outset. Public education campaigns on AI and emerging technologies are equally vital to ensure informed civic engagement.

3. Multiple Regulatory Pathways Exist

The panel identified diverse regulatory approaches globally: principles-based frameworks anchored in AI ethics and human rights; risk-based systems with differential obligations tailored to risk levels; sectoral regulation where specialized ministries oversee AI in their domains; and hybrid approaches combining elements of multiple models. No single approach is universally applicable. Parliaments should learn from international examples, understand the trade-offs of different approaches, and adapt frameworks to their own legal traditions, institutional capacities, and social priorities.

4. Criticality of Regulation Anchored in a Rights-Based Approach

Any AI governance framework must be anchored in human rights and address concrete harms to individuals and society, such as discrimination and bias, surveillance and loss of privacy, violations of data protection, threats to freedom of expression, and undermining of democratic processes. Mandatory human rights due diligence should establish the baseline. This requires understanding what legislative gaps currently exist in foundational areas - data protection, privacy law, anti-discrimination protections, and cybersecurity - and where existing legislation may be strengthened to address AI-enabled harms.

5. Parliaments Have Immediate Tools Available

Parliaments don't need to wait for comprehensive AI legislation to take action. Existing oversight tools are immediately available: parliamentary questions to interrogate government on AI systems in use; committee inquiries to investigate impacts; budget scrutiny to examine government spending on AI; public hearings to gather evidence from experts, civil society, and affected communities. This evidence-based oversight work helps shine a light on the impact of AI in society and generates a factual foundation for subsequent legislative amendments. All parliaments have these powers to some degree and can take immediate action in their oversight role.

6. The Critical Capacity Gap

A common refrain emerged across all sessions: most parliaments currently lack technical expertise on different aspects of AI and awareness of the diverse governance options available internationally. There is the need for foundational work - building internal parliamentary expertise, establishing

dedicated oversight structures, engaging citizens, and understanding where existing legal frameworks cover issues around AI. Participants recognized that expertise is available through international networks, civil society organizations, and academic institutions, but parliaments must actively seek and institutionalize access to this support.

Part B: Group Work: Priority Use Cases and Sequenced Actions

The group work session took participants through four steps. (1) identifying priority AI use cases needing parliamentary action in their countries; (2) selecting two priority areas for urgent attention in the next year; (3) mapping available parliamentary mechanisms to address the priorities (legislative action; existing oversight tools and new structures needed); and (4) committing to one concrete action to propose upon return to their parliament. The group work was supported by a handout with examples of actions parliaments have taken in their lawmaking and oversight roles.

Priority Use Cases Requiring Parliamentary Action

Participants highlighted the following:

- **Public service delivery:** Government AI systems making binding decisions on citizens' access to services such as welfare benefits, housing assistance, and healthcare without transparency or meaningful appeal mechanisms.
- **Healthcare:** Citizens increasingly using AI-powered chatbots and search engines for self-diagnosis instead of consulting medical professionals.
- **Data governance and privacy:** Private companies collecting and using citizen data without sufficient transparency or individual control, particularly when contracted by government. Broader concerns about data colonization and regulatory capture by large technology companies.
- **Harmful AI-generated content:** Deepfakes, non-consensual intimate imagery, and AI-enabled fraud represent both legal gaps (existing laws often don't clearly address AI-generated versions of harmful content) and technical challenges (detection and labeling of AI-generated content at scale).
- **AI misuse by state and non-state actors:** Governments and criminal organizations weaponizing AI for surveillance, election interference, and other abuses. This transcends national borders and points to needs for international cooperation.

Parliamentary Actions Identified

- **Build Parliamentary Knowledge and Capacity:** Provide targeted training for MPs and parliamentary staff on AI fundamentals and governance options. Identify internal 'AI champions' among parliamentarians and staff who can develop deeper expertise and lead internal capacity building. Establish formal advisory relationships with national and international expertise sources - universities, civil society organizations, international bodies - to provide ongoing briefings, policy analysis, and updated information on emerging AI developments and emerging risks and harms.
- **Engage Citizens in Defining Shared Values:** Conduct inclusive national dialogues on shared ethical values and boundaries for AI deployment. Support public education campaigns on AI literacy and emerging technologies. Public understanding and input on what governance should look like in practice is essential—it cannot be determined by experts and legislators alone.
- **Audit Existing Legislative Frameworks:** Assess current laws in foundational areas - data protection, privacy, anti-discrimination, cybersecurity. Identify which existing legal protections apply to AI-related harms and where significant gaps exist. This audit answers the question: 'Before writing new AI laws, what do we already have and what is missing?'
- **Create Dedicated Oversight Mechanisms:** Establish a parliamentary committee or cross-party working group with explicit mandate to scrutinize AI development, deployment, and impacts

across all economic sectors and government functions. This committee becomes a hub coordinating AI work across other parliamentary committees, ensuring systematic oversight rather than ad hoc responses.

- **Use Existing Tools to Gather Evidence:** Deploy parliamentary questions, committee inquiries, public hearings, and budget scrutiny to illuminate harms that are occurring and what safeguards exist.
- **Baseline mapping of AI use cases:** Before designing comprehensive regulatory frameworks, parliaments need to understand which AI systems currently exist, where they're deployed, what decisions they inform, and what safeguards (if any) are in place. This mapping becomes the factual foundation for oversight and legislation.

Recommended Parliamentary Actions

Immediate on return

- Identify and support AI champions among MPs and parliamentary staff.
- Provide initial technical briefings on AI fundamentals and governance approaches used internationally.
- Organize the first public dialogue session on shared ethical values and boundaries for AI deployment.

Medium-term – within 9 months

- Establish a cross-party parliamentary committee on AI governance with explicit mandate to scrutinize AI across all sectors and coordinate with other committees.
- Identify and formally establish advisory relationships with national universities, research institutions, civil society organizations, and international bodies that can provide ongoing expertise, policy briefs, and updated information on AI developments and emerging harms.
- Launch a comprehensive public education campaign on AI and emerging technology literacy.
- Conduct an initial assessment of existing legislative frameworks in data protection, privacy, anti-discrimination, and cybersecurity, documenting areas where law appears robust and where gaps may be exposed by AI.

Key Takeaways

1. **Capacity-building is foundational.** Before legislating comprehensively on AI, parliaments must build internal expertise on AI, amongst members and staff.
2. **Evidence should guide legislation.** Parliaments have immediate tools to gather evidence on current AI impacts and public concerns.
3. **Context determines appropriate governance.** While learning from international examples is valuable, effective AI governance must be tailored to each nation's legal traditions and social values.
4. **Public voice shapes governance.** Inclusive national dialogues and public education campaigns ensure that AI governance reflects shared ethical boundaries and community values.
5. **Expertise is available and accessible.** International networks, civil society organizations, and academic institutions are a resource to support parliamentary capacity building, provide policy analysis, and help track emerging AI developments and harms.
6. **The future of AI is not predetermined.** Whether artificial intelligence exacerbates inequality or expands opportunity, whether it strengthens or weakens democracy, depends on choices parliaments make now.