# Remarks on Artificial Intelligence and Robotics

**(Kipchumba Foundation UG Open Discussion at Uganda Martyrs University, Thursday 17 August 2023, 2-4 p.m.)**

**Yakobo Kakembo Mugalaasi**

**Country Manager, Uganda**

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is the science and technology of creating machines and systems that can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning, decision making, and perception. Robotics is the branch of engineering and computer science that deals with the design, construction, operation, and application of robots, which are machines that can perform physical tasks autonomously or under human control.

AI and robotics are among the most transformative emerging technologies of our time. They have the potential to revolutionize various sectors of society and economy, such as agriculture, industry, and services, by enhancing productivity, efficiency, quality, and innovation. They can also contribute to social welfare and environmental sustainability by improving healthcare, education, security, and conservation.

However, AI and robotics also pose significant challenges and risks that need to be addressed carefully and responsibly. One of the main challenges is the impact of automation on employment and social structures. Automation can displace workers from their jobs, especially those who perform routine and low-skill tasks. This can lead to unemployment, inequality, poverty, and social unrest. Therefore, it is essential to provide adequate education, training, and social protection for workers to adapt to the changing labor market and to create new opportunities for decent work.

Another challenge is the ethical and legal implications of AI and robotics. AI and robotics can raise questions about human dignity, rights, responsibilities, and values. For example, who is accountable for the actions and outcomes of AI systems and robots? How can we ensure that they are fair, transparent, explainable, and trustworthy? How can we protect human privacy and security from malicious use or abuse of AI and robotics? How can we balance the benefits and risks of AI and robotics for different stakeholders and groups? These are some of the questions that require careful deliberation and regulation.

In the context of Uganda, AI and robotics offer both opportunities and challenges for socio-ecological development. Uganda is a country with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, a young and growing population, a vibrant economy, and a beautiful natural environment. Uganda also faces various challenges such as poverty, inequality, corruption, conflict, disease, climate change, and biodiversity loss.

AI and robotics can help Uganda address some of these challenges by providing solutions that are tailored to its local needs, resources, and culture. For example,

- AI and robotics can help improve agricultural productivity and food security by enabling precision farming, pest control, irrigation management, crop monitoring, harvesting, processing, storage, distribution.

- AI and robotics can help enhance industrial development by enabling smart manufacturing, quality control, logistics, maintenance.

- AI can help improve service delivery by enabling e-government, e-commerce, e-learning, e-health.

- AI can help improve environmental conservation by enabling wildlife monitoring, poaching prevention, habitat restoration, climate change mitigation.

However, AI and robotics also pose challenges for Uganda's socio-ecological development.

One of the main challenges is the digital divide between those who have access to and benefit from AI and robotics and those who do not.

Therefore, it is important to invest in digital infrastructure and digital literacy to ensure that all Ugandans can access and use AI and robotics effectively and equitably.

Another challenge is the social and cultural implications of AI and robotics.

AI and robotics can affect the way people think, feel, behave, interact, and relate to each other and their environment.

For example, AI and robotics can affect human identity, autonomy, creativity, empathy, trust, values.

Therefore, it is important to engage in dialogue and consultation with various stakeholders and groups, such as civil society, academia, media, religion, to ensure that AI and robotics are aligned with Uganda's social and cultural norms and values.

In conclusion, AI and robotics are emerging technologies that have the potential to transform Uganda's socio-ecological development for better or for worse. It is up to us to decide how we want to use them and for what purpose. We need to adopt a responsible and sustainable approach that maximizes the opportunities and minimizes the risks of AI and robotics for Uganda's present and future generations.