REPORT: The New Race for Progress – AI, Power and Human Potential

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming a transformative force across all sectors of human activity—from healthcare and education to governance and the global economy. *The New Race for Progress* report explores how AI, as a general-purpose technology, is reshaping the trajectory of human development. At a time when global progress has stalled and inequalities are widening, the report argues that AI can be either a catalyst for inclusive growth or a driver of deeper divides. The path forward depends on collective choices – around governance, ethics, innovation, and equity – that will determine whether AI empowers the many or entrenches power among the few.

Key Highlights

- AI as a General-Purpose Technology: AI is now ubiquitous, influencing cognitive and creative domains once thought uniquely human. Its scale and speed of deployment are historically unprecedented.
- Global Inequality and Asymmetry: High-income countries and tech corporations dominate AI development and benefit disproportionately, while low- and middle-income nations face limited access and influence.
- Human Development Stalling: After decades of progress, the Human Development Index (HDI) has stalled or regressed in many nations, revealing vulnerabilities in education, health, and income systems.
- AI's Dual Potential: AI can augment human capability and promote inclusion—but also risks automating jobs, reinforcing biases, and eroding agency if poorly governed.
- Inclusion and Equity Gaps: Access to AI is uneven across gender, geography, age, and

ability. Women, rural communities, and people with disabilities face heightened risks of exclusion.

- Governance Imperatives: Transparent, accountable, and inclusive AI governance is essential to avoid algorithmic discrimination and ensure ethical use of AI.
- Strategic Policy Pathways:
  - *Complementarity Economy*: Focus on AI augmenting human labor, not replacing it.
  - *Intentional Innovation*: Align AI with social goals such as equity, health, and sustainability.
  - *Skills and Capability Building*: Invest in digital literacy, lifelong learning, and human-centered design.
- International Cooperation: Initiatives like the UN's proposed Global Digital Compact aim to promote shared AI standards, equitable access, and cross-border collaboration.
- Central Message: The future of AI—and of human development—is a matter of deliberate, collective choice. The report calls for reclaiming human agency to ensure AI serves as a tool for freedom, dignity, and shared progress.