VELJA GOVORJENA BESEDA/CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Pozdravni nagovor državnega sekretarja Gregorja Strojina na stranskem dogodku »*Umetna inteligenca: tehnologija v službi človeštva; vzpostavljanje pravnih standardov*« v okviru 74. zasedanja Generalne skupščine Združenih narodov, 28. oktober 2019, New York

Opening speech of State Secretary Gregor Strojin at 74th United Nations General Assembly side event "*Artificial Intelligence: Technology to Serve Humankind; Setting Legal Standards*", 28 October 2019, New York

Ladies and Gentlemen, honorable guests

It is my pleasure to open the side event on Artificial Intelligence: technology to serve humankind; setting legal standards. The event is organised by the Republic of Slovenia, in co-sponsorship with Council of Europe and UNESCO.

I grew up reading Douglas Adams' Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy - multiple times. In it, the computer Deep Thought was asked the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything. It took 7,5 million years and provided the seemingly nonsensical answer 42.

Recent advances and promises of quantum computing put the duration of 7,5 million under intense scrutiny. However, when it comes to requesting results from AI, this example is illustrative of a more important issue – "be careful what you wish for, you just might get it". **Striving to achieve a particular goal** can soon lead to **unintended consequences**. Some may be harmless, such as number 42, others less so.

AI holds the **potential to serve humankind and to bring benefits** to individuals and societies. The use of increasing **processing capabilities**, **big data**, and **advances in mathematics and programming** significantly enhances processing of data and information at levels that in many ways already surpass human capabilities. They allow us to find **novel answers and solutions** in fields ranging from medicine, transportation, engineering, finance, insurance, communication and entertainment, to law enforcement and even warfare.

As such, AI can **contribute to the efforts of the global** community and the United Nations to **attain sustainable development goals** through **smart and effective public policies**. Technological advancements can enhance human development and contribute to **creating optimal conditions** for the **exercise of human rights** and **sustainable improvement of living standards**.

However, use of new technologies is **not without risks**, and examples from recent past indicate increasing concern about the **technology's disruptive impact** on some of the basic notions of human condition.

While fears about the **imminent development of superhuman general-purpose AI** do not seem prudent, even current developments, limited to solving **specific issues,** already provide numerous concerns and require regulatory interventions. Some have **social, economic and legal implications** and in many ways **echo the experiences of previous technological revolutions**. If we automate too much, we might increase productivity, but will there be enough subsistence for humans? Or, can a computer replace a judge? Some provide **a mirror to our own imperfections** and address questions of fairness, risks of perpetuating bias and stereotypes, of discriminatory decision-making patterns, and allow us, in fact, to reflect on our own everyday decisions. Some, on the other hand, are relatively new, and relate, among others, to issues such as **interpretability and accountability** of the deep algorithmic decision-making processes.

As **technologies develop incrementally**, current systems likely represent building blocks of future systems. Current development mainly relies on **self-regulation**, and use of such systems relies on **trust**.

However, **concerns without adequate and timely responses** might create **mistrust**, and lead to reluctance of public sector to **invest** or even to react in ways that **unreasonably stifle development.** This in turn might lead to even **more opacity**, and to a likelihood that idealistically envisioned **mutually beneficial goals would not be achieved**. Incremental nature of developments also holds within the **danger of complacency to increasing violations**, and may lead to **indefinite postponement of effective actions.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to address this adequately, **work on new binding legal instruments and mechanisms needs to start now**. While standards and soft instruments are being adopted with increasing tempo, how do we implement them?

Tasks may seem **daunting, and exceed capabilities of individual nations**, as well as of various corporations engaged in the development of systems. However, the nature of technology itself requires as **broad cooperation of humanity** as possible, even though **attempts to achieve short term individual strategic superiority might seem appealing**.

Council of Europe has, to this effect, **established an ad hoc committee on AI** with a **mandate to explore the feasibility and elements of such a legal framework**, which

will begin work next month. It is based on a premise that **design, development and implementation of AI** tools **must be compliant with human rights, democracy and the rule of law**.

Slovenia has been active in the field of AI since 1970s, and has one of the **highest numbers of AI researchers per capita** in the world. We actively **support** such approaches and wish to **encourage** others to **cooperate in mutual efforts.**