

# MANIFESTO ON ENGAGING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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## INTRODUCTION

Organizations across the United Nations system and beyond are operating in a period of accelerated technological change. Emerging technologies are reshaping how learning is designed, how services are delivered, and how institutions engage with the people they serve.

This technological shift coincides with major system-wide priorities. Initiatives such as UN 2.0, the Pact for the Future, and the Global Digital Compact emphasise the need to strengthen digital, data, and innovation capacities, while maintaining a clear commitment to inclusion, trust, and human-centred values. In parallel, the UN 80 reform process underscores the need for institutions to remain effective, relevant, and adaptive in contexts of constrained resources. Together, these developments highlight that the use of emerging technologies carries institutional and social implications that require deliberate and responsible approaches.

In this Manifesto, emerging technologies are understood not as a fixed list of tools, but as an evolving landscape. This understanding aligns with ITCILO's emerging technology taxonomy, as outlined in the report "[Quantum Technologies and the Future of Learning](#)." The taxonomy explains this landscape in practical terms: some developments affect how technology works at a fundamental level, for example how energy is produced and stored, how computing power advances, or how data is transmitted, while other developments build on these changes to create tools and applications, such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), quantum computing, or neurotechnologies. The taxonomy itself is not fixed, but gets updated as these domains develop and intersect, supporting a more coherent understanding of how technologies relate to one another.

The designation of 2025 as the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology further draws attention to the scale and pace of technological change. Taken together, these dynamics point to a shared challenge: to engage emerging technologies in ways that strengthen institutional mandates, expand learning and opportunity, and advance social justice.

This Manifesto articulates ITCILO's approach to emerging technologies in learning for social justice.

It was co-created by ITCILO staff across functions and areas of work, bringing together diverse perspectives and experiences. It provides a shared framework for engaging emerging technologies in learning for social justice, and will continue to evolve through experience, reflection, and continuous learning. Through this ongoing work, the Centre will support its constituents in navigating technological change and shaping the inclusive and responsible use of emerging technologies.

It is intended as a living document and will be reviewed over time to reflect technological developments, evidence from practice, and institutional learning.

## COMMITMENTS

### 1. Leverage emerging technologies in support of social justice

Emerging technologies are engaged as instruments in support of the Centre's mandate to strengthen learning, decent work, and social justice. Their use is guided by a social justice lens that prioritises fairness, inclusion, and access to learning and skills. Technologies are assessed in relation to who benefits, who may be excluded, and how learning systems and labour outcomes are affected across contexts. This approach recognises that technological change is not neutral and requires deliberate choices to reduce inequalities and expand opportunity.

### 2. Keep humans at the centre

Emerging technologies are engaged as tools that support human judgment, learning, and agency, rather than replacing decision-making or reducing people to metrics. Attention is given to how technologies shape autonomy, motivation, and well-being in learning contexts. At the same time, certain technologies, including wearable AI, VR, and neurotechnologies, interact directly with the human body and mind, making the distinction between human experience and technological systems less clear. Keeping humans at the centre therefore means approaching such technologies with heightened awareness of how they influence perception, decision-making, and learning, and ensuring that their use remains anchored in human agency and connection.

### 3. Ensure accessibility, transparency, and ethical use

Accessibility, transparency, and ethical use are core requirements of technology-enabled learning and training environments. True accessibility recognizes that users have different needs, and may require differentiated designs or complementary tools to ensure equal participation and learning. Transparency requires clear information about how technologies work and how automated outputs are produced. Ethical use demands careful consideration of how information is collected and used, the risks these systems may introduce, their environmental footprint, and their effects on learning processes. Appropriate safeguards are to be applied to protect rights, dignity, and well-being.

### 4. Make evidence the entry point

Decisions on emerging technologies are grounded in evidence rather than assumptions or hype. Evidence is built progressively through experimentation, application, and continuous feedback, allowing understanding to develop over time. Hands-on experimentation, sandbox environments, and exposure to real-world applications provide a concrete basis for assessment. This supports informed judgment about relevance, risks, potential and environmental implications value before technologies are adopted or scaled.

### 5. Strengthen institutional readiness across the organization

Institutional readiness refers to the ability of the organization to engage emerging technologies in a coherent and informed way, taking appropriate steps in the present in readiness for possible short, medium, and long term evolutions in emerging technologies. It includes shared understanding, aligned practices, and clear responsibilities across departments and roles. Strengthening readiness supports coordinated responses to change, rather than fragmented or isolated initiatives.

*"The ITCILO stands for emerging technologies as an enabler for social justice and decent work"*