

Artificial Intelligence the Future of Law: Research and Education

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Zhongnan University of Economics and Law

The United Nations' normative logic in the digital age of legal education and training for countering cybercrime

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*Check against delivery***



INTRODUCTION

Ninety years ago, a prominent U.S. legal philosopher stated that “[the] common-law lawyer and [civil-law lawyer] each have assumed the modes of thought in which they were trained to be fundamental and universal...[leading to] horrible examples of legal provincialism”.¹

Eighty years ago, since the founding of the United Nations, its normative logic has demonstrated how fundamental and universal modes of legal thought should be. This has inspired me to speak on the topic “The United Nations’ normative logic in the digital age of legal education and training for countering cybercrime”. I chose it as a lawyer, criminologist and a former UN staff member of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (now in retirement). I will speak about three elements of that topic:

- the United Nations,
- its normative logic in the digital age, and about
- the related education and training to counter cybercrime.

THE UNITED NATIONS

First, the United Nations General Assembly, as the Organization’s most representative deliberative body, functions in accordance with the foundational ideals enshrined in the UN Charter. A recent illustration of its normative role is Resolution 78/286, adopted unanimously in 2024 at the initiative of China, which proclaimed 10 June as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations. This resolution may be viewed as a potential contribution to the United Nations’ evolving Culture of Lawfulness framework, particularly in relation to its flagship initiative, Education for Justice (Education4Justice). Pursuant to the Charter, the General Assembly is authorized to “discuss any questions or any matters” within the scope of the Organization and to issue recommendations to Member States accordingly.²

Its principle of one state, one vote, underscores the Assembly’s universalism and equality. Although basically, the Assembly’s resolutions are not binding, they often carry significant ideological potential and normative weight, shaping international expectations and influencing “soft law.” The Security Council, by contrast, is the organ where power

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¹ Roscoe Pound, The Place of Comparative Law in the American Law School Curriculum, 8 Tulane Law Review 161, 167 (Feb. 1934).

² United Nations Charter 1945, Art. 10.

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realities are formalized. Under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council can determine the existence of threats to peace and authorize coercive measures that are legally binding.³ The veto power of the five permanent members (P5)⁴,

highlights the primacy of geopolitical considerations. Thus, the General Assembly articulates the aspirational ought of the international community, while the Security Council enforces the constrained can of global governance.

NORMATIVE LOGIC IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Second, about the normative logic of the United Nations. This is a big picture that illustrates how the normative logic of such main UN intergovernmental bodies produces instrumental legal outcomes. Below these two bodies, there are numerous functional commissions, ad-hoc intergovernmental drafting committees, expert bodies, and panels, which, depending on their mandate, propose various draft legal instruments for eventual adoption by either the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, or the Human Rights Council.

The UN General Assembly is often described as the UN's 'moral compass.' Yet its needle, though drawn toward the magnetic pole of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war (see the preamble to the UN Charter), wavers at times with the crosscurrents of politics, power, and the "principles of justice," but to a lesser extent than in the Security Council. The Assembly's mandate, under Articles 10–13 of the Charter, is to debate and recommend — and in doing so, it codifies ideals. This is where the UN's normative logic truly begins: by transforming the ambitious aspirations of the international community into guiding principles, ultimately into treaties. According to AI research, this is well documented by the 1970 Declaration on Friendly Relations⁵, which captured the vision of peaceful coexistence, self-determination and sovereign equality, but has no exact reference in any UN treaty.

However, had artificial intelligence research guided me in this presentation, you would not know that there is a better example of the General Assembly's consequential impact on treaty-making. Namely, the 1984 "Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".⁶ In its preambular paragraphs, the convention not only refers to the "soft law" such as the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", but also to the General Assembly's other resolution "Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment". It originated at the 5th United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Geneva in 1975.⁷

In the digital age in which we now live, the UN's normative framework has caught up. In 2024, it produced the "United Nations Convention against Cybercrime; Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes."⁸ Its preamble broadly refers to combating crime, information, communications technologies, human rights, and cooperation as two UN normative values, but it does not invoke any specific UN legal instrument. It declares "the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation to prevent and combat cybercrime, in view of its negative economic and social implications and its ability to undermine sustainable development and the rule of law". The subsequent legally binding provisions of that convention explicitly stipulate that to counter cybercrime, also as per "[o]ffences established in accordance with other [emphasis added] United Nations conventions and

³ United Nations Charter 1945, Arts. 39–42.

⁴ granted under Article 27.

⁵ GA Res. 2625 [XXV], The Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States, (Oct. 24, 1970).

⁶ The UN Convention Against Torture (CAT), also known as the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1035 UNTS 167.

⁷ GA Res. 3452 [XXX], Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, (Dec. 9, 1975).

⁸ GA Res. 79/243, United Nations Convention against Cybercrime; Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes (Dec. 24, 2024).

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protocols” to take account of “the age, gender and the particular circumstances and needs of victims, including the particular circumstances and needs of children” (Art. 34).

Finally, in Art. 53 on “Preventive measures” the Convention stipulates:

“(b) Promoting public awareness regarding the existence, causes and gravity of the threat posed by the offences established in accordance with this Convention through public information activities, public education, media and information literacy programmes and curricula [emphasis added] that promote public participation in preventing and combating such offences;

(h) Developing strategies and policies, in accordance with domestic law, to prevent and eradicate gender-based violence that occurs through the use of an information and communications technology system [emphasis added], as well as taking into consideration the special circumstances and needs of persons in vulnerable situations in developing preventive measures”;

(i) Undertaking specific and tailored efforts to keep children safe online, including through education and training on and raising public awareness of child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation online [emphasis added] and through revising domestic legal frameworks and enhancing international cooperation aimed at its prevention, as well as making efforts to ensure the swift removal of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation material”.

Read together, the four convention paragraphs illustrate two strands of UN normative logic: the use of analogy in applying obligations (as reflected in the reference to Art. 34) and the heightened protection owed to women and children as “succeeding generations.” In parallel, the General Assembly’s resolution establishing the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations elevates civilizational dialogue, cultural pluralism, and inclusive participation as enablers of cooperation and shared standards, reinforcing these protective aims. In sum, this illustrates convergence on people-to-people exchanges and international governance to address national gaps, alongside child-centred, risk-aware AI use under strong privacy safeguards. The result is a complementary agenda: inclusive legal education and trust-building on one side, and strict protection of sensitive child data, equitable access, and responsible design to reduce digital harms on the other.

The UN cybercrime convention includes several additional normative elements. Some are implicit, such as the idea of “larger freedom” highlighted in the United Nations Charter. However, they are addressed in this convention through the regulation of the right to privacy within the context of security. Other normative elements are explicitly specified, such as the requirement that “States Parties shall take measures conducive to the optimal implementation of this Convention to the extent possible, through international cooperation, taking into account the negative effects of the offences covered by this Convention on society in general and, in particular, on sustainable development” [emphasis added].⁹

LEGAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Third, about legal education and training. Worldwide, there are very different intellectual traditions as to what cooperation entails. On the one hand, in the original Western tradition of public international law, cooperation or peaceful coexistence depended on respecting the rights of others. “Don’t take away what isn’t yours” was Hugo Grotius’ (the 17th-century father of public international law) a priori principle: no stealing land through aggression, no stealing trust through corruption, no stealing shared resources through exploitation. And if such “theft” happens, justice requires both punishment and repair. For him, the basis of cooperation or coexistence meant keeping order by prohibiting and

⁹ See further: Sienho Yee, Sustainable Development, International Law and China, in: Towards an International Law of Co-progressiveness, Part II; Membership, leadership and responsibility. BRILL (2014).

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punishing for injustice.¹⁰ He also argued that human beings are naturally inclined to live in society, what he called “social appetite” (*apetitus socialis*).¹¹

In Confucian thought, such an inner, natural appetite entails more than just reacting by prohibition and punishment. It means harmony (*he*) in a longer-term, more ethical sense. It’s rooted in *ren* — humaneness — and *li* — proper conduct. Here, harmony isn’t just about preventing harm. It is about building relationships of trust and moral cultivation over time. It is less about strict legal rules. It is more about fostering a shared culture of responsibility that is passed down through generations.

These two visions partly overlap. While the original Western interpretation originally meant a legal restraint, the Eastern interpretation emphasises ethical growth. Nowadays, the Western interpretation is far more advanced. Anyhow, both interpretations are blended into the UN Culture of Lawfulness. It translates both traditions into a shared common language of international norms of justice and prevention, like those from the UN cybercrime convention, which on the 24th and the 25th October, that is in two days from now, will be opened for signing in Hanoi (Vietnam). Subsequently, between the 25th and 30th of April, 2026, in Abu Dhabi (UAE), the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice will take place.

Based on this core treaty instrument, which will be signed soon, the sectoral and global recommendations of the United Nations entities (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCHR, UNODC, General Assembly), below is a table on the four -level set of AI legal education and training priorities that focus on cybersecurity and cybercrime prevention, and on the 15th Crime Congress agenda - a policy vehicle for Member State uptake and eventual adoption by the United Nations other policy-making bodies, including the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the General Assembly.

The recommended counter-cybercrime actions listed in the Table are limited only to two UN Sustainable Development Goals: “Quality of education” (SDG 4) and “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” (SDG 16). The listed actions across the entire learning and justice pipeline emphasize balancing in the digital age the right to privacy with a unified focus on cybersecurity, crime prevention and a Culture of Lawfulness, per the 14th UN Crime Congress Kyoto Declaration (2021)¹² - legal instrument, which, since the 13th UN Crime Congress (2010) and the forthcoming 15th Congress, carries a consensual message. These recommendations apply to actions at all levels, from pre-school to post-graduate, as well as to public awareness and international cooperation in general.

To sum them up:

- Start early, clarify roles: Begin privacy-by-design and integrity education early, then at university split responsibilities between secure learning under SDG 4 and resilient justice capabilities under SDG 16, supported by national awareness and international cooperation for trustworthy information and electoral systems.
- Protect learning system-wide: Implement age-appropriate design, caregiver consent, encryption, and minimization from pre-school onward, embed cyber literacy, secure-by-design platforms, proportionate monitoring, and accessible redress, and model integrity via privacy-respecting secure assessments.
- Legal education that works: Pair secure online learning and privacy-preserving analytics with clinics on chain-of-custody and digital evidence, AI procurement oversight, and robust anti-corruption content, and implement the UNODC E4J Cybercrime Modules with participatory, assessment-aligned, and localized teaching to build practice-ready graduates. In parallel, scale public awareness and international cooperation through national campaigns on cyber hygiene and provenance literacy, and strengthen governance and electoral

¹⁰ This rule can be deduced a priori, independently of its a posteriori occurrence in empirical positive law (Hugo Grotius, THE RIGHTS OF WAR AND PEACE bk. II, ch. 1 (Richard Tuck ed., Liberty Fund 2006) (1625));

¹¹ Hendrik van Eikema Hommes, Grotius on Natural and International Law, 30 NETHERLANDS INTERNATIONAL LAW REVIEW 1, 68 (1983).

¹² G.A. Res. 76/181, Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Annex (Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para. 8 (Dec. 16, 2021).

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processes with resilient infrastructure, coordinated incident management, and transparent communication, with structured links to the UN Global Dialogue and the Independent International Scientific Panel.

Art. 5 of the UN cybercrime convention emphasizes the principle of sovereign equality and of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other States. The virtual nature of cybercrime makes this stipulation hard to implement, if not elusive. The illusions and challenges of the digital realm, along with the vulnerability of institutions, should unite around a single imperative: legal education and training in the digital age must foster the principle of positive responsibility supported by responsive and forward-looking institutions that locally and internationally strengthen trusted information environments and build consensus around cooperative cyber norms. While SDG 4 outlines the path by which learners internalise the moral order, SDG 16 guarantees that this order is integrated into institutional practice.

This is just an academic representation of a very complex United Nations mechanism involved in the operationalization of the two SDGs. Since 2016, the Organization has operated the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI Forum), linked to the entire 2030 SDG Agenda. The 2025 gathering was the 10th STI Forum.

In 2024 the General Assembly mandated a comprehensive global framework for dialogue on digital cooperation and AI governance (the Global Digital Compact). The Dialogue convenes annually for up to two days in the margins of existing UN conferences and meetings, alternating between Geneva and New York. It features thematic discussions and the presentation of the Scientific Panel's annual report.

A high-level multi-stakeholder informal meeting launched the Dialogue in September 2025 during the General Assembly's high-level week. The first formal Dialogue is scheduled back-to-back with the International Telecommunication Union „AI for Good Global Summit” in Geneva in 2026, and the second is aligned with the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs in New York in 2027.¹³

In the same year 2024, the General Assembly established the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance to deliver annual, evidence-based, non-prescriptive assessments for non-military AI and convene inclusive policy discussions aligned with the Global Digital Compact,¹⁴ which will soon start operating.

Legal education and training to combat cybercrime must, therefore, serve as the bridge between principle and institution, between the shadows of the digital age and the light of justice, which is a global call.¹⁵ The 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, with its upcoming Abu Dhabi Declaration, will serve as a platform to document how this bridge might look in the future. The ongoing negotiations among Member States on the draft declaration indicate that human rights are understood in terms of sovereignty, development, and social stability. Support for privacy and data regulations may be implemented according to national circumstances rather than a one-size-fits-all universal approach in cyber and data policy.¹⁶

Nonetheless, succeeding generations will continue to face universal “Article 5”-type challenges, demands, and responses—perhaps more than ever—due to the unprecedented globalisation of crime. This trend has already yielded results such as the UN cybercrime convention. Yet, this development remains only a minor step—a mere tick on the 24-hour clock—at the very dawn of the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations, and at the very start of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance.

When the General Assembly ultimately endorses the Abu Dhabi Declaration, the shift “from the universal to the particular” will signify more than just a policy adjustment; it will contribute to a new normative direction for the UN, alongside the cybercrime convention when it enters into force, and other UN initiatives already underway. This will demonstrate a new logic within the international legal order.

¹³ GA Res. 79/1, The Pact for the Future, Annex I (Sep. 22, 2024).

¹⁴ GA Res. 79/325, Terms of reference and modalities for the establishment and functioning of the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance (Aug. 26, 2024).

¹⁵ UNODC, Cybercrime Teaching Guide, United Nations, Vienna, 2019.

¹⁶ See further: Slawomir Redo, Using developmental aid for preventing undocumented migration: the post-2030 UN rule of law redux. Written statement submitted to the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice [in press].

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AI UN legal education and training priorities for cybersecurity and cybercrime prevention¹⁷

LEVEL	KEY PRINCIPLE	QUALITY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING (SDG 4)	PEACE, JUSTICE, STRONG INSTITUTIONS (SDG 16)
<i>Pre-school/kindergarten</i>	Human-centred, privacy-first AI with age-appropriate design and transparent caregiver control (build norms early; rights-respecting defaults). ^{1,2,8,9}	Build early social norms, fairness, empathy and help-seeking through play; require age-appropriate design, meaningful caregiver consent, data minimization and encryption for any tool used in early years. ^{1,2,8,9}	Establish child-sensitive oversight and redress; engage families and local institutions to promote a Culture of Lawfulness and prevent violence/exploitation; maintain proportionate, non-intrusive monitoring norms. ^{6,7,8}
<i>Primary & secondary</i>	Whole-school AI and cybersecurity literacy with secure-by-design data systems and teacher capacity. ^{1,2,3,8}	Integrate digital/media literacy and UN-aligned civics (ethics, honesty, privacy); deploy secure-by-design platforms; ensure proportionate monitoring, transparent notices, and accessible redress to protect learning. ^{1,2,8}	Institutionalize restorative, proportionate responses and school-to-justice diversion; standardize incident reporting, legal-aid referral, and victim-support protocols for children and women; maintain continuity of education in crises. ^{6,7}

¹⁷ This AI-assisted table focuses on system-wide and branch UN legal instruments, components, mechanisms, outcomes, including the UNODC manual and selected academic works, where cybercrime-related questions are addressed, analysed or recommended. This is not a comprehensive review of the relevant recommendations.

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<p><i>University (tertiary)</i></p>	<p>Rights-anchored AI governance, access to justice, and rule-of-law competencies, using E4J Cybercrime Modules and localized pedagogy.^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,14}</p>	<p>Embed legal ethics, integrity and academic honesty across programmes; adopt E4J Cybercrime Modules with participatory, assessment-aligned, and localized teaching (focus Modules 3—legal frameworks & human rights; 10—privacy & data protection; 4–6—digital forensics & investigations); teach data-protection/privacy law, administrative/constitutional limits on automation, children’s rights and best-interests tests, equality/non-discrimination in AI contexts, and comparative AI governance; run legal-method/policy-design studios translating GA guidance into education/justice policy; require professional-responsibility for AI use (confidentiality, client consent, explainability, with proportionality analysis.^{1,2,3,5,8,10,14}</p>	<p>Operate rule-of-law/anti-corruption/access-to-justice clinics and UNODC-linked practicums; teach digital-evidence law (admissibility, authenticity, chain-of-custody, disclosure) and fair-trial safeguards when authorities use AI; require public-procurement and oversight law for public-sector AI (transparency, audit, refusal rules), and election-law modules on information integrity and verifiable procedures; connect research/clinics to the UN Global Dialogue and the Independent International Scientific Panel; integrate E4J Modules on international cooperation (7), interpersonal cybercrime (12), organized crime (13), and information operations (14) to reinforce lawful cross-border evidence handling and comparative practice.^{2,3,4,6,7,10,14}</p>
<p><i>Post-graduate / professional training</i></p>	<p>Advanced technical, investigative and governance capabilities that protect rights while preventing, detecting, investigating and remedying cybercrime.^{2,6,7,10}</p>	<p>Train educator-of-educators and sector leaders in privacy-preserving pedagogy, explainability, secure deployment and monitoring; develop open labs to operationalize minimization, encryption, purpose limitation and child-sensitive remedies across ed-tech.^{1,2,8}</p>	<p>Specialize in lawful cross-border e-evidence, provenance/integrity verification, digital forensics, trauma-informed victim support, joint exercises and regional centres of excellence via UNODC and partners.^{6,7,10}</p>
<p><i>Public awareness & international cooperation</i></p>	<p>Commons-based Culture of Lawfulness through interoperable safeguards, inclusion and global cooperation.^{2,3,4,7}</p>	<p>Run national campaigns on cyber hygiene and provenance literacy with simple reporting/remedy; publish plain-language privacy notices and age-appropriate guidance; promote digital inclusion to narrow divides.^{2,3}</p>	<p>Strengthen governance services and elections with baseline safeguards, resilient infrastructure, and transparent incident communication; align standards and capacity-building through the UN Global Dialogue and the Scientific Panel; expand formal/informal cooperation for digital evidence, asset recovery, and platform governance consistent with rights.^{2,3,4,6,7,10}</p>

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1. UNESCO, Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education (2019).
2. G.A. Res. 78/265, Seizing the Opportunities of Safe, Secure and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Systems for Sustainable Development (Apr. 1, 2024);
3. G.A. Res. 78/311, Enhancing International Cooperation on Capacity-Building of Artificial Intelligence (July 5, 2024);
4. G.A. Res. 79/325, Terms of Reference and Modalities for the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance (Aug. 27, 2025);
5. U.N. Secretary-General, Human Rights in the Administration of Justice, U.N. Doc. A/79/296 (Aug. 7, 2024);
6. G.A. Res. 76/181, Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Annex (Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Dec. 16, 2021);
7. U.N. Office on Drugs & Crime, Discussion Guide for the Fifteenth U.N. Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, U.N. Doc. E/CN.15/2024/CRP.1 (Feb. 15, 2024).
8. U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/51/17 (Aug. 4, 2022);
9. UNICEF, How Is Artificial Intelligence Reshaping Early Childhood Development? (2024);
10. UNODC, Education for Justice (E4J) University Module Series: Cybercrime — Teaching Guide (2019)..N. Office on Drugs & Crime, Innovating Justice: A Catalogue of Services for Technology & Innovation in Criminal Justice (2025);
12. Nur Nabila Mohamed & Bassam Hossam Hassan Abuobied, Cybersecurity Challenges Across Sustainable Development Goals: A Comprehensive Review, 6 Sustainable Engineering & Innovation 57 (2024);
13. Helmut Kury & Sławomir Redo (eds.), Women and Children as Victims and Offenders: Background, Prevention, Reintegration. Suggestions for Succeeding Generations (Vols. 1–2) (Springer International Publishing 2016);
14. Helmut Kury & Sławomir Redo (eds.), Crime Prevention and Justice in 2030: The UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Springer Nature 2021).