Toward Harmonized AI Policies and Recommendations for the Caribbean

December 2025

The CARICOM CTU's Caribbean AI Taskforce (CAITF)

Interim Report: Toward Harmonized AI Policies and Recommendations for the Caribbean

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AI – Artificial Intelligence
- ASEAN – Associate of Southeast Asian Nations
- AU – African Union
- CAF – Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean
- CDB – Caribbean Development Bank
- CARICOM – Caribbean Community
- CARDTP – Caribbean Digital Transformation Project
- CSME – CARICOM Single Market and Economy
- CTU – Caribbean Telecommunications Union
- CXC – Caribbean Examinations Council
- ECLAC – UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- ECCB – Eastern Caribbean Central Bank
- ECTEL – Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority
- GDC – Global Digital Compact
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- HLAB-AI – UN High-level Advisory Body on AI
- ICT – Information and Communication Technology
- IDB – Inter-American Development Bank
- IMPACS – Implementation Agency for Crime and Security
- ITU – International Telecommunication Union
- MIGDIA – Inter-American Framework on Data & AI Governance (OAS)
- MSME – Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
- NDTS – National Digital Transformation Strategy
- NIST – U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology
- OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- OECS – Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
- SIDS – Small Island Developing States
- SoDTIC – School of Digital Transformation and Innovation in the Caribbean
- UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNCTAD – United Nations trade & development
- UNGA – United Nations General Assembly

Executive Summary

The Caribbean Artificial Intelligence Task Force (CAITF), convened by the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), presents this interim report as a strategic response to the rapidly evolving global AI landscape, aiming to operationalize and accelerate the CARICOM Single ICT Space in the AI domain. Drawing on the expertise of more than thirty-five members from governments, regional and multilateral institutions, the private sector, academia and civil society, it situates the Caribbean in a global AI market projected to reach trillions of dollars, of which the Caribbean in its current trajectory, will capture only a modest share. The report underscores that while Caribbean states have begun to move, the region still lags global peers and faces a stark choice: either remain a peripheral "standards-taker" and deepen existing vulnerabilities, or act collectively to shape AI in line with Caribbean priorities, values and development goals. The report identifies a critical "connectivity paradox" within the Caribbean, where high digital engagement is undermined by fragile infrastructure, high costs, and a fragmented regulatory landscape that threatens data sovereignty and exacerbates the region's vulnerability to external shocks and professional "brain drain".

In response, the report calls for a harmonised CARICOM-wide AI governance framework grounded in human-centric, rights-based, inclusive and equitable principles, with strong emphasis on data sovereignty, regional collaboration, and resilience to climate and economic shocks. It proposes five interlocking areas of action: (1) establishing a regional AI policy and governance architecture, including model laws, shared oversight mechanisms and procurement and audit standards; (2) strengthening data governance and digital infrastructure through modernised data protection regimes, a Caribbean Data Commons, resilient regional data centres and high-performance computing; (3) catalysing AI innovation and industry in priority sectors such as agriculture and food security, disaster risk reduction, tourism, financial services, health, and public administration via innovation funds, sandboxes, and Caribbean-trained language models; (4) building human capacity and AI literacy through curriculum reform, teacher training, innovation labs, a research hub, and lifelong learning pathways; and (5) institutionalising multi-stakeholder engagement via a Caribbean AI Forum and national advisory mechanisms that keep policy grounded in lived realities. Framed as a starting point rather than an endpoint, the report positions these principles and recommendations as the basis for broad regional consultation and a unified Caribbean voice in global AI governance processes leading up to a final Task Force report and Caribbean AI Forum in 2026.
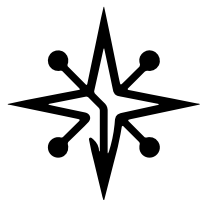
UNCTAD estimates the global AI market to approach USD 4.8 trillion by 2033[1], with the Latin American and Caribbean region projected to gain around USD 0.5 trillion by 2030[2] accounting for up to 5.4% of Latin America's GDP[3], a share of which will accrue to the Caribbean. Our region continues to lag global averages, with AI development concentrated among a limited number of entities and growth projected at slower rates than in other regions.

Globally, as the rest of the world is racing ahead, the United Nations convened the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence (HLAB-AI) in 2023 whose final recommendations on governing AI for humanity[4] directly influenced Objective 5 of the GDC[5] which commits to enhancing international governance of artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity through balanced, inclusive, and risk-based approaches. The Pact of the Future[6] of which the GDC is annexed, was adopted by world leaders at the Summit of the Future on September 22, 2024, during the 79th UNGA. Building on these foundations, on August 26, 2025, at the 80th UNGA, member states adopted the Resolution A/RES/79/325[7] which formalized the terms of reference and modalities for the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance. This AI dialogue facilitates open, transparent, and inclusive discussions on AI governance, focusing on safe and trustworthy AI, bridging capacity gaps, ethical and technical implications, human rights, transparency, and open-source development. The Dialogue aims to build consensus among governments, industry, and civil society, advancing common solutions and shared standards. Caribbean nations must be proactive, coordinated participants, tabling a unified CARICOM position, advancing SIDS-specific priorities such that emerging global norms reflect Caribbean realities and create investable pathways for the region.

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[1] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development*. Geneva : UNCTAD, 2025. ISBN 978-92-1-003283-4. Available at: https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-innovation-report-2025

[2] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). "The AI Revolution is Here: How Will Latin America and the Caribbean Respond?", 1 March 2024. Available at: https://www.undp.org/latin-america/blog/ai-revolution-here-how-will-latin-america-and-caribbean-respond

[3] Institute of International Finance. (2025). *AI and financial services: current state and direction of travel in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, D.C.: Institute of International Finance. Available at: https://www.iif.com/portals/0/Files/content/Research/32370132_iif_ai_and_financial_services_current_state_and_direction_of_travel_in_lac_final_clean.pdf

[4] United Nations. "Governing AI for Humanity: Final Report" (High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence). September 19, 2024. Available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/governing_ai_for_humanity_final_report_en.pdf

[5] United Nations. "Global Digital Compact – English." Sept. 2024. Available at: https://www.un.org/global-digital-compact/sites/default/files/2024-09/Global%20Digital%20Compact%20-%20English_0.pdf

[6] United Nations. "Pact for the Future (SOTF) — Adopted Text." 22 September 2024. Available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf

[7] United Nations General Assembly. Resolution A/RES/79/325, "Modalities for the establishment of an independent international scientific panel on artificial intelligence and the holding of a global dialogue on artificial intelligence governance." New York: UNGA, 2025. Available at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/79/325

Caribbean governments and regional institutions have been aiming to close the AI gap with the rest of the world by advancing AI and related digital reforms. In Jamaica, their National AI Task Force released policy recommendations in early 2025, outlining a strategic roadmap to drive innovation, talent development and ethical AI deployment[8]. At the regional level, ECLAC undertook an exploratory review of AI-readiness across Caribbean countries[9] and is also driving the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean[10] (eLAC2026). In the normative and guidance space, UNESCO released the Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap[11], grounded in the global recommendation on the Ethics of AI, and member countries are in the process of completing the Readiness Assessment Methodology. The OAS has launched their Framework on Data Governance and Artificial Intelligence (MIGDIA), providing 12 guideline areas[12].

Regional multilaterals operating in specific sectors have also contributed to the development of regional per sector AI policies. The CXC has formulated a responsible generative-AI policy[13] for assessment and academic-integrity contexts, and CARICOM IMPACS has established a Security Strategy Steering Committee that includes examining AI and autonomous systems in the regional security domain.

Development financiers such as the World Bank are supporting regional initiatives such as the Caribbean Digital Transformation Project[14] (CARDTP) which aims to build regional platforms and boost digital skills across member nations. The IDB has a regional technical programme to support the advancement of AI[15]. CAF has partnered with NTT DATA to drive digital transformation across the region, focusing on artificial intelligence, digital inclusion and state digital modernisation[16].

While these initiatives represent meaningful progress, the region has yet to establish a coherent framework that connects AI policy, capacity building, education, data

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[8] Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica. *National Artificial Intelligence Task Force: Policy Recommendations (Final Draft v3.0)*. Kingston, Jamaica: Office of the Prime Minister, February 2025. PDF available at: https://opm.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/National-Artificial-Intelligence-Task-Force-Policy-Recommendations-Final-1.pdf.

[9] United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). *Artificial Intelligence Readiness in the Caribbean: An Exploratory Review.* Port of Spain: Sub-regional Headquarters for the Caribbean, 23 January 2025. UN document LC/TS.2024/146. Available at: https://caribbean.un.org/en/295561-artificial-intelligence-readiness-caribbean-exploratory-review.

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[14] Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). *Caribbean Digital Transformation Project (CARDTP).* (Project overview). Available at: https://oecs.int/en/our-work/knowledge/library/projects/caribbean-digital-transformation-project-cardtp

[15] Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). *"Supporting the Advancement of AI in Latin America and the Caribbean" (Project No. RG-T4762).* Approved July 21 2025. Available at: https://www.iadb.org/en/project/RG-T4762

[16] CAF – Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean. *"CAF, NTT DATA and the NTT DATA Foundation will drive digital transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean."* October 02, 2025. Available at: https://www.caf.com/en/currently/news/caf-ntt-data-and-the-ntt-data-foundation-will-drive-digital-transformation-and-the-sustainable-development-agenda-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean

governance, digital infrastructure, innovation and industry across all CARICOM member states. **What is needed is a comprehensive approach to attract direct foreign investment, achieve economies of scale, ensure interoperability, protect collective interests and build a unified Caribbean voice and vision in global AI dialogues.**

The Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU), as the region's lead ICT institution, and lead agency within the CARICOM ICT Cluster of agencies, was formally mandated by CARICOM Heads of Government to elaborate and advance the CARICOM Single ICT Space, first directed in 2014 and approved with a Vision and Roadmap in 2017. That Space is intended as an "ICT-enabled borderless space that fosters economic, social and cultural integration for the betterment of Caribbean citizens". The CTU Caribbean AI Task Force (CAITF) exists to operationalize and accelerate the CARICOM Single ICT Space in the AI domain.

This report synthesizes our initial findings and preliminary recommendations for a harmonized regional AI framework. It is intended to serve as the foundation for regional consultations and the subsequent development of a comprehensive implementation roadmap.

Our Data & Infrastructure

The Caribbean has demonstrated a strong appetite for digital engagement. In 2023, 75% of the population in Caribbean SIDS were online, a figure that has grown at a rate faster than the global average since 2014[17]. This high level of user adoption signals a population ready to embrace new digital technologies and services. However, this progress is built upon a fragile and incomplete foundation, creating a "connectivity paradox" where user demand consistently outstrips the capacity of the underlying infrastructure. This paradox is compounded by the high cost of connectivity both for end users and for businesses who face some of the highest broadband and data service prices relative to income globally[18]. The cost burden further constrains access, innovation, and the digital competitiveness of local enterprises, limiting the full realization of the region's digital potential.

The Caribbean exists in a state of hyper-vulnerability, facing a dual threat from extreme climate events and a deep-seated dependence on external digital infrastructure. The region is one of the most susceptible in the world to natural disasters, which can devastate the critical infrastructure upon which the digital economy depends including power grids and submarine fibre-optic cables.

This physical vulnerability is exacerbated by a geopolitical one. Most intra-Caribbean internet traffic is routed externally, creating points of failure and placing regional data flows under foreign jurisdiction. The data residency landscape is a fragmented mix of on-premises systems for sensitive government and financial data, and a heavy reliance on global cloud providers for other sectors, particularly tourism. This raises significant concerns about data sovereignty. At the same time the low uptake in open-data or creation of regional open-data standards is of particular concern as this stifle's interoperability across nations.

Our Innovation & Industry

The Caribbean's economic landscape is characterized by a reliance on a few key sectors, structural inefficiencies that drive up costs, and a critical outflow of human capital [see Our Capacity & Education section]. Sectors such as tourism, agriculture, financial services, and logistics are vital across CARICOM and present numerous opportunities for AI-driven improvements. A key sector, the creative industries span music, media, design and the arts represent one of the Caribbean's strongest comparative advantages and

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[17] International Telecommunication Union. "BDT Member Communiqué – Study Groups 2025" (ITU-D/BDT). May 9, 2025. Available at: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Study-Groups/2022-2025/Documents/BDT-Member-Communique-Study-Groups-2025.pdf

[18] (International Telecommunication Union. "BDT Member Communiqué – Study Groups 2025" (ITU-D/BDT). May 9, 2025. Available at: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Study-Groups/2022-2025/Documents/BDT-Member-Communique-Study-Groups-2025.pdf;

cultural exports. Yet they are also among the sectors most vulnerable to disruption by generative AI.

Current AI adoption in Caribbean industries remain modest. Many Caribbean businesses are still in the early stages of digital transformation, and face hurdles when integrating advanced technologies. A recent analysis by the UN ECLAC Digital Observatory found that in 2023, Caribbean AI companies made up less than 2% of all AI firms in Latin America & the Caribbean, with only five startups in the CARICOM area whose core business models are based on AI[19]. More commonly, the region's tech companies working with AI are in sectors like FinTech (financial technology) is relatively developed across about 9 Caribbean jurisdictions. Other domains (EdTech, AgroTech, healthtech) see much sparser activity. This points to a significant implementation gap where awareness of AI's importance is high, but practical uptake is lagging.

While much of the regional economy is dominated by tourism, the sector itself faces significant competitiveness challenges, including high operating costs for energy and transport, inconsistent service quality, and increasing environmental pressures. These challenges are not confined to tourism. Across all sectors, the region is hampered by a high cost of doing business, driven by small markets, a dependence on imports, and cumbersome regulatory environments. According to the World Bank, the cost to start a business in Latin America and the Caribbean is, on average, more than ten times higher as a percentage of per capita income than in OECD high-income economies[20]. An environment so challenged stifles entrepreneurship and deters investment.

Our Capacity & Education

The Caribbean comprises mostly middle- and small-income countries with limited resources to invest in AI at scale. There are stark economic disparities even within CARICOM which translate into uneven digital readiness. The UN ECLAC assessment of digital skills in Latin America and the Caribbean estimated that only about 5% of adults in the region can write computer code, and under 20% can perform moderately complex tasks like using spreadsheets formulas.

Perhaps the most critical economic challenge is the severe and sustained "brain drain." Over the past decades, between 10% and 40% of many countries' labour force has emigrated to OECD nations, including more than 70% of highly educated professionals in

[19] United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). *Artificial intelligence readiness in the Caribbean: An exploratory review.* January 23, 2025. Available at: https://www.caribbean.un.org/en/295561-artificial-intelligence-readiness-caribbean-exploratory-review

[20] World Bank Group. "Doing Business 2020: OECD high-income economies remain global benchmarks on most Doing Business indicators." October 24, 2019. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/10/24/doing-business-2020-oecd-high-income-economies-remain-global-benchmarks-on-most-doing-business-indicators

some states, among the highest skill-loss rates in the world[21]. This persistent outflow of talent makes it harder to build indigenous AI expertise and maintain complex systems. A recent survey of 2,500 Caribbean businesses found 60% struggle to implement new digital technologies, with the lack of skilled IT workers cited as the number one barrier (35% of firms)[22]. However, it must be noted that the current global immigration trends create an opportunity for brain circulation. Engaging the displaced diaspora and connecting them to local innovation ecosystems, while simultaneously training new cohorts in high-demand skills for global remote work, the Caribbean can transform migration from a challenge into a strategic advantage.

While specific Caribbean-only data is limited, these figures highlight the urgent need for upskilling and education reform to meet the demands of AI. We foresee a greater discussion around Digital, Media and Information literacy beyond advocating for technical skills in an AI-saturated world. These include critical thinking, ethical reasoning, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills. They are not only harder to automate but also foundational to human flourishing, decision-making, and societal resilience in the face of rapid technological change.

[21] International Monetary Fund. *Emigration and Brain Drain: Evidence From the Caribbean.* January 2006. Available at: https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2016/12/31/Emigration-and-Brain-Drain-Evidence-From-the-Caribbean-18662#:~:text=This%20paper%20quantifies%20the%20magnitude,skill

[22] Digicel Business & Symptai Consulting Limited. *Navigating Digital Transformation: 2024 Caribbean Research Report & Maturity Guide.* 2024. Available at: https://www.digicelbusiness.com/api/assets/digicel-business/0bac29a8-11c2-4d7a-9d8d-819ec7a37bd3/2024-digital-transformation-group-report-1-.pdf?version=0

A Note on External Investment & Financing

External investments in Caribbean AI initiatives remain markedly subdued relative to global benchmarks, underscoring the region's marginal position in the international funding landscape. The broader LAC region receives only 1.12% of global AI investments despite contributing 6.6% to worldwide GDP (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe [CEPAL], 2025). This shortfall is exacerbated for SIDS (which dominates the Caribbean) who face unique barriers to concessional finance due to their middle-income classifications, rendering them ineligible for aid reserved for the poorest nations. This "Catch-22" (United Nations Office of the High Representative, n.d.) profoundly influences AI development in the region, as limited access to affordable capital hampers investments in essential digital infrastructure, data centers, talent cultivation requisite for AI proliferation. Multilateral institutions do channel resources toward a digital agenda and separately remittances constituting up to 26% of GDP in select Caribbean states, indirectly bolster digital initiatives (Institute of International Finance [IIF], 2025), yet data localization mandates and credit rating penalties stemming from climate risks further deter external private sector engagements.

In the context of investment, the taskforce advocates for blended financing mechanisms, innovation bonds, and public-private synergies to address foundational constraints such as AI research and development, broadband reliability and energy provisioning, which are the minimum for AI deployment in vulnerable SIDS contexts. In parallel, exporting Caribbean-made AI solutions to larger external markets is imperative for the region's economic resilience and for building investor confidence among foreign direct investors.

However, this necessitates a regional approach toward governance and the development of supply and value chains, balanced data policies which shape digital ecosystems, talent creation and innovation. Such an approach should prioritize the harmonization of regulatory frameworks across CARICOM member states, thereby creating an attractive environment for foreign direct investment (FDI) in AI sectors.

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2. United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. (n.d.). Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI). https://www.un.org/ohrlls/mvi
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The Need for Regional Governance

Regional approaches to AI governance are essential because modern data flows, supply chains and services cross borders. Common frameworks reduce duplication, lower compliance costs for firms that operate in multiple markets and improve the quality of oversight through pooled expertise and shared infrastructure. Many regions have already moved in this direction by establishing common principles, guidance, and binding instruments that guide national action while supporting interoperability across borders, see Table 1.

Table 1: External Regional Governance

Initiative	Region/Members	Normative Basis
OAS Declaration & Plan of Action on AI Governance	The Americas	Non-binding
Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization Charter on AI Ethics	The League of Arab States	Non-binding
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) AI Principles	OECD Members	Non-binding
Declaración de Santiago – to Promote Ethical Artificial Intelligence in Latin America and the Caribbean	Latin America & Caribbean	Non-binding
European Union (EU) Artificial Intelligence Act	Europe	Binding (legal regulation)
Council of Europe Framework Convention on AI and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law	Europe & global partners	Binding (Treaty based)
Continental AI Strategy of the African Union	Africa	Non-binding (voluntary guide)
ASEAN AI Governance & Ethics Guide	Southeast Asia	Non-binding
Group of Twenty (G20) AI Principles	G20 Member States	Non-binding
Hiroshima Process Guiding Principles for Organizations Developing Advanced AI Systems	G7 Member States	Non-binding

In contrast the CARICOM lacks a region-wide framework. This leaves member states exposed to regulatory divergence, uneven safeguards for fundamental rights, higher cross-border compliance costs, weaker bargaining power with global vendors, and risks of procurement lock-in and loss of data sovereignty.

Our Caribbean cannot resolve these systemic constraints through a fragmented approach and will most likely suffer from loss of competitiveness, public trust in AI systems and interoperability. We require a coherent regional framework to secure collective sustainable prosperity in the age of artificial intelligence.
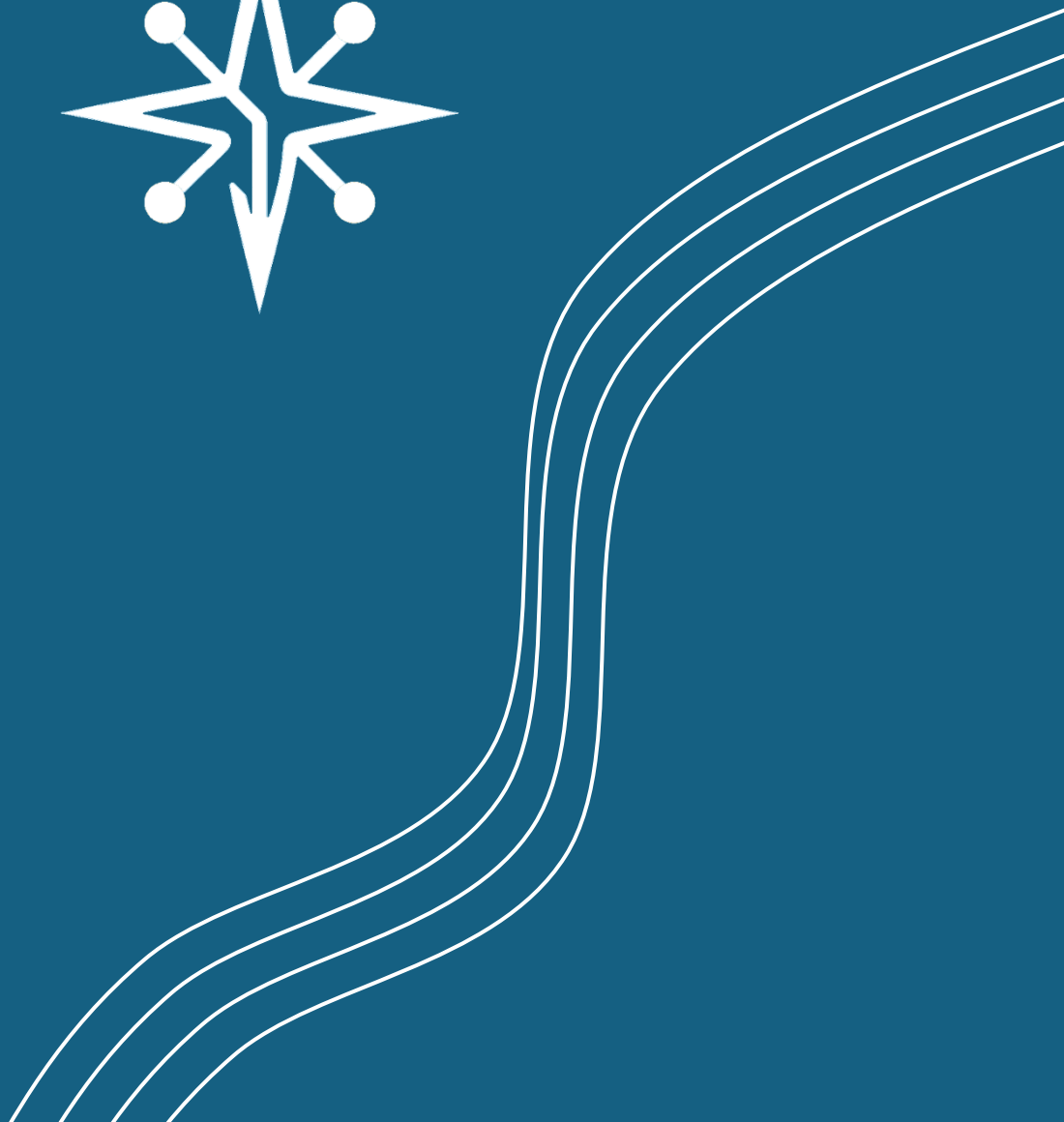
We anchor a Caribbean AI strategy in a set of core principles. These principles will serve as the foundation for subsequent policy regulation and investment decisions.

1. Human-Centric, Rights-Based, and Ethical AI

In a region where economic vulnerabilities already undermine human dignity AI development must prioritize fundamental rights, cultural integrity, and ethical safeguards to prevent further marginalization. There are often inaccurate preconceptions emanating from AI platforms trained on information exclusively created by institutions outside the Caribbean region. Such a polarized/biased approach demands alignment with international human rights norms, enforcing transparency and accountability to counter biases in sparse datasets, which could otherwise perpetuate discrimination in high-cost, inefficient systems.

2. Inclusivity, Equity, and Sustainable Development

The Caribbean's fragmented markets and high business costs amplify digital divides, leaving rural and marginalized groups sidelined in an economy sensitive to shocks. AI must ensure broad access to its benefits, bridging connectivity gaps and skill shortages that fuel youth unemployment and brain drain. This focused direction mandates inclusive initiatives for underserved populations in the Caribbean, involving diverse stakeholders to shape outcomes, while emphasizing education and adaptive training to retain talent and dismantle the vicious cycle of talent loss.

3. Data Sovereignty, Governance and Security

Amid dependence on imports and cumbersome regulations that inflate operational costs, data emerges as a critical yet vulnerable asset in the Caribbean's inefficient economic structure. Governance must secure data lifecycles with robust privacy

protections and ethical use, retaining sovereignty to prevent exploitation in cross-border flows that could worsen vulnerabilities. Regional standards should balance "data commons" for innovation with defences against misuse, addressing the misallocation of resources that hampers scalability in small-scale economies.

4. Regional Collaboration, Harmonization, and Integration

Structural inefficiencies, including labour market rigidities and export concentration on tourism demand a unified approach to avoid policy silos that deter investment and perpetuate slow growth. Nations must pool resources for shared infrastructure and harmonized standards, fostering multistakeholder networks to build capacity, stem brain drain, and create a consistent regulatory environment that attracts talent and capital.

5. Sustainable Development, Resilience, and Resilient Innovation

Caribbean's economic landscape is characterized by a reliance on a few key sectors and faces environmental degradation, climate risks and economic shocks. The region can benefit from AI to bolster resilience rather than short-term gains. Anchored in UN SDGs, AI applications must prioritize energy-efficient solutions for disaster response, resource management, and economic diversification, countering vulnerabilities like hurricanes and brain drain to ensure long-term empowerment in high-cost, inefficient systems.

Box 1: AI for Agriculture and Food Security

Agriculture contributes on average between 3–5% of GDP across most CARICOM states but employs up to 20% of the workforce (Addom & Bheenick, 2024), reflecting its social and economic importance. Yet in 2022 the Caribbean imported USD 6 billion in food annually (Chambers & Rigal, 2023), this figure is projected to rise if current trends persist. Major productivity gaps are due to fragmented smallholder systems, unpredictable weather, pests, and post-harvest losses.

Global experience shows that AI can close such gaps when integrated into agricultural ecosystems. Across Africa and Asia, AI-driven agriculture has shown transformative results:

- Kenya's Disruptive Agricultural Technology backed by the World Bank and implemented with MoALD/KALRO has linked 1.1 million farmers to a national big-data/observatory platform delivering high-resolution agro-weather and market advisories (World Bank, 2023).
- In India, AI-driven advisory services under the AI4AI "Saagu Baagu" pilot helped chilli farmers in Telangana achieve a 21% yield increase per acre, helping double their income (Aguilar & Callegari, 2024).
- The Department of Science and Technology's "Smart Agri" R&D program is part of a broader push that helped raise the Philippines' AI Readiness Index ranking from 65th in 2023 to 56th in 2024 (DOST, 2025).

The Caribbean's compact geography, strong agricultural research base (UWI, CARDI, CARIRI), and regional connectivity projects (CARDTP, CSME) make it ideal for rapid scaling of AI-enabled agri-data ecosystems. Islands like Jamaica and Barbados already use satellite-based crop monitoring and blockchain for traceability, providing a foundation for expansion. Additionally, linking farms to hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, and eco-attractions is a long-standing regional strategy. AI now acts as the connective tissue that can offer demand forecasting for hotels and cruise calls; provenance and traceability for farm to table branding; route optimization for island cold chains; and destination insights that blend farm outputs with visitor experiences.

The Caribbean can possibly:

- Establish a shared open-data hub combining satellite imagery, IoT sensors, local weather data for pest/disease prediction and hospitality demand feeds.
- Deploy multilingual voice assistants (English, Creole, Spanish) to deliver localized agronomic advice and climate alerts.
- Use AI to optimize logistics and cold-chain routing to enable cutting spoilage, reduce post-harvest losses and synchronize deliveries to resorts, restaurants and cruise calls.
- Create low-cost demo farms (such as in the Cocoa Industry) for testing computer vision-based yield estimation and soil health analytics that field traceability and farm-to-table marketing.

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A fragmented, nation-by-nation approach to AI governance is untenable for the Caribbean. The Taskforce have reached a clear consensus that regional disparities in regulation and capacity could stifle innovation, create trade barriers, and expose critical vulnerabilities. The Taskforce puts forward the following initial detailed recommendations that are in alignment with the CARICOM Regional Strategic and Digital Development Plans.

1. Establish a Harmonized Regional AI Policy Framework and Governance Mechanism

The Caribbean should aim to be a standards-maker and not a standards-taker. The region should strengthen trust, accountability, and sovereignty in the emerging global AI landscape. We propose to develop and adopt a Caribbean AI Governance Framework that provides a unified foundation for responsible AI across all member states. This framework should define the regulatory architecture for AI model development, deployment, and accountability, ensuring consistency in how AI is designed, procured, and used throughout the region.

Key components include:

1. Enact model laws and harmonized regulations covering areas such as algorithmic transparency, explainability, risk classification, and liability for AI-driven decisions.
2. Align with existing CARICOM human rights norms to protect citizens from bias, discrimination, or misuse of AI systems, while embedding Caribbean cultural and ethical values into governance principles.
3. Establish minimum regional standards and codes of practice for AI service providers to govern data stewardship, privacy and security safeguards, documentation and transparency expectations, incident reporting, auditability requirements, evaluation, risk and impact assessments.
4. Introduce procurement and audit standards that require AI vendors to meet regional ethical and transparency criteria, ensuring that government use of AI reflects fairness, accountability, and trust.
5. Create a regional AI Oversight Network or Coordinating Body to set certification standards, maintain a registry of approved AI systems, and facilitate knowledge exchange across countries. This network could host a shared compliance and enforcement unit to assist smaller states with technical monitoring and risk assessment. This can already be incorporated into existing regional bodies such as CROSQ.

6. Ensure that all member states adhere to a common set of principles to prevent regulatory fragmentation, lower compliance costs, and enhance the region's collective bargaining power with global AI developers and service providers.

2. Strengthen Data Governance and Digital Infrastructure for AI

We propose to create an "enabling environment" that empowers innovators, governments, and citizens to build and deploy AI systems that serve Caribbean needs while maintaining control over data, infrastructure, and technological sovereignty. This effort should treat data as shared public infrastructure, integrate policy modernization, cross-border interoperability, and resilient technical infrastructure.

Key priorities include:

1. Modernize and harmonize data protection laws while creating regional data stewardship institutions that govern access, privacy, provenance, and interoperability.
2. Launch a Caribbean Data Commons focused on priority domains such as health, agriculture, climate, and public administration, with standardized open licenses and privacy-preserving access controls. Adopt open metadata and interoperability profiles to enable cross-border integration.
3. Establish a regional data-centre and high-performance compute facility accessible to universities, governments, and private organizations. These should include resilience measures such as backup systems and climate-hardened designs to mitigate natural-disaster risks and offer targeted incentives to attract cloud and data-service providers to the Caribbean market, so capacity is available for model training, evaluation, and audit and would aid to stimulate investment in AI-enabling infrastructure.
4. Invest jointly in connectivity and computational power. Governments and development partners should co-finance affordable broadband expansion to underserved areas.
5. At the same time, prioritize open-source AI models that lower costs, enhance transparency, and build sovereign AI capacity across the region.
6. Ensure all investments adhere to sustainability and inclusion goals, supporting universal connectivity, gender equality, and accessibility for small states and rural communities.

3. Facilitate AI Innovation and Industry Development in Key Sectors

Implement policies and programs to stimulate the adoption of AI by Caribbean businesses and the growth of a local AI industry. As a first step, identify high-impact AI use cases in priority sectors, such as tourism, cultural heritage, entertainment, financial services, agriculture, healthcare, and climate resilience through multi-stakeholder workshops or pilot projects. Create creating merged-sector AI sandboxes or innovation challenge funds: for example, a Tourism-Cultural-Climate AI Challenge could fund projects that use AI to enhance visitor experiences, preserve and market Caribbean cultural heritage, and develop climate-resilient tourism models that sustain both local livelihoods and environmental integrity.

Key components include:

1. To nurture startups and SMEs in the AI space, governments should provide incentives and reduce barriers. This could include seed funding schemes, tax incentives for R&D, and streamlined regulatory approval for testing new AI-driven services without favouring specific sectors.
2. A regional AI Innovation Fund could be established in partnership with international donors to back innovative AI projects from universities and research institutions to ensure such that the region stays at the cutting edge of the AI curve, and fund promising Caribbean startups, helping them scale. This can be operationalized via blended financing mechanisms, grants, innovation bonds, and public-private synergies.
3. Strengthen linkages between academia, industry, and government and encourage joint research and commercialization projects.
4. Develop regional AI assets that benefit all industries, such as a Caribbean-specific open-source language model. This model, trained on local dialects, languages, and context, could power chatbots, translation services, and other applications across sectors, lowering the cost of AI adoption for businesses.
5. Build trust in AI by promoting awareness of successful use cases and creating forums for companies to share experiences, this links to recommendation 4.6.
6. Develop an annual Caribbean AI in Innovation and Business Symposium as part of the forum in recommendation 5.1. This could showcase research from universities, local innovations, private and public sector implementations and connect researchers and entrepreneurs with potential investors and customers.
7. Finally, ensure that regulatory frameworks remain innovation-friendly, for instance, adopt a risk-based approach that imposes strict requirements on high-risk AI uses (like in finance or healthcare) but allows lighter-touch regulation for experimental or low-risk applications.

Box 2: AI for Early Warning and Risk Mitigation

The Caribbean is among the most disaster-vulnerable regions globally. Between 2000 and 2019, Caribbean nations ranked disproportionately high in global disaster impact indices, five were among the world's top twenty countries for climate-related deaths per capita, and eight appeared in the top twenty for economic losses relative to GDP (Hallegatte et al., 2019). Four of these also rank in the global top ten for fatalities per 100,000 (Eckstein, Künzel, & Schäfer, 2021) Caribbean countries experience climate-related damages that are ten times higher in monetary terms and face twenty times more climate events than the global average (European Investment Bank, 2023).

Many other regions have used AI for climate-based solutions:

- The Pacific's Climate Risk Early Warning System (CREWS) integrates ML models with satellite data to forecast extreme rainfall up to five days in advance. It supports early-warning improvements for 2.3 million people inhabiting the Pacific's Small Island Developing States (World Meteorological Organization, 2024).
- Bangladesh's flood forecasting system, powered by Google's Flood Hub, integrates machine learning models with weather forecasts, river gauges, satellite imagery, and hydrological data to predict riverine floods up to seven days in advance (Google, 2020).
- Mexico's SeismicAI Early Warning System integrates AI algorithms with a network of accelerometer sensors to process seismic data and provide real-time alerts for regional, local, and offshore earthquakes (SeismicAI, 2024).

The Caribbean's archipelago structure mirrors Pacific SIDS, allowing for tailored AI models using shared geospatial data across islands. Additionally, the region has existing assets such as CDEMA's regional coordination, CARICOM Climate Smart Accelerator, and partnerships with NOAA and ECLAC. Integrating these with AI-driven forecasting can localize and automate risk management, while the region's compactness facilitates networked resilience across islands. The Caribbean can:

- AI-Integrated Early Warning Dashboard: Combine satellite data, social media analysis, and IoT sensors to detect and broadcast real-time alerts.
- Disaster Logistics Optimizer: Apply ML to pre-position relief supplies based on vulnerability mapping and population data.
- AI Damage Assessment Drones: Post-storm drone imaging analyzed with computer vision to fast-track insurance and recovery.
- Regional AI Resilience Hub: Coordinate AI disaster datasets, simulations, and training in collaboration with UWI and CDEMA.

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4. Build Human Capacity, Skills and Awareness for the AI Age

Roll out a comprehensive capacity-building agenda to equip Caribbean citizens with the skills needed to thrive alongside AI, aiming for AI fluency for public life. At the core of this effort is education reform. Guided by a proposed Regional AI in Education Council, governments should integrate AI and digital literacy into curricula at all levels.

Key priorities include:

1. Concretely, this means updating curricula to include coding and data skills, and civic competencies that help people question, interpret, and guide algorithmic decisions in schools, workplaces, and public services.
2. Teacher training programs must parallel the curriculum changes. Launch regional workshops and certification programs to train educators in AI concepts and the use of educational AI tools.
3. Conduct skills gap assessments in the AI economy and implement targeted training programs, such as professional courses in data analytics or vocational options in AI maintenance, leveraging online platforms and global partnerships.
4. Developing policies for workers' protection and employment stability to ensure that employees are not abruptly displaced by AI.
5. We also recommend establishing Innovation Labs for AI at existing Caribbean universities or centres connected to recommendation 2's proposed regional institution. These labs would offer advanced training and drive research relevant to Caribbean challenges. They can be connected to create a Caribbean AI Research Hub (potentially as a virtual network connecting research institutions and Universities in different countries) focusing on priority research topics such as AI for climate resilience, language processing, and ethical AI in multicultural societies. The hub could attract global researchers, diaspora talent, and funding, positioning the Caribbean as a contributor to AI knowledge.
6. Additionally, public awareness campaigns are important to foster an informed society. Governments and civil society should collaborate on outreach to demystify AI, for instance, producing radio/TV segments on "AI in daily life" in local dialects, or hosting community seminars on AI's opportunities and risks. This will help build public trust and acceptance of AI-driven initiatives.
7. Finally, to institutionalize learning, create mechanisms for continuous curriculum updates and lifelong learning. A regional AI education council can periodically review school/university AI curricula to keep content up to date with technological advances. Encourage private sector involvement in curriculum design to match skills with market needs.

Box 3: AI for Public Services and Governance

Public administration in the CARICOM region is grappling with persistent challenges that hinder efficient service delivery and economic productivity. Manual workflows, isolated data systems, and limited digital interfaces remain prevalent, contributing to suboptimal governance outcomes. According to the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI) for 2024, the global average stands at approximately 0.6382, yet many CARICOM states score below this benchmark, with an average regional performance reflecting disparities (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2024).

To address these issues, drawing on successful international precedents offers a pathway forward.

- In Estonia, more than 99% of state services are online, with 50+ AI solutions already used across government, under the KrattAI framework (International Telecommunication Union, 2020; e-Estonia, 2021).
- Singapore GovTech deployments have achieved large time savings in specific public-service processes, e.g. licensing journeys like GoBusiness also cut form fields from 845 to 90 (GovTech Singapore, 2019; GovTech Singapore, 2025).

With small public sectors, shared culture, and existing ICT regional coordination (CTU, CARDTP), the Caribbean is ideal for regional-scale AI governance frameworks. Data from civil registries, customs, and social protection can be securely integrated into an AI-ready Caribbean Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

- AI Chat Assistants for Public Queries where we can deploy multilingual chatbots for tax, customs, and licensing in partnership with CTU and national ICT units.
- Predictive Analytics for Service Delivery Using AI to forecast bottlenecks and automate document verification.
- Fraud Detection Systems that can implement machine learning in procurement and benefits management to detect anomalies.
- Shared "GovAI Sandbox" as a regional testing space for ethical, transparent AI applications before rollout.

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5. Promote Multi-Stakeholder Engagement and Collaborative Governance

Embed inclusive, collaborative processes in the formulation and oversight of AI initiatives. Building on the principle of regional and multi-stakeholder cooperation, we recommend formalizing channels for ongoing dialogue on AI policy.

Key elements include:

1. This could take the form of a Caribbean AI Multi-Stakeholder Forum convened annually (or biannually) by the CTU, where policymakers, industry leaders, academia, and civil society representatives review progress, share insights, and update recommendations.
2. Within countries, governments should establish national AI advisory committees or "sandbox" regimes that involve private sector and academia in pilot projects, thereby ensuring policies remain well-informed and practical and linked to innovation labs from recommendation 4.5, and coordination from bodies in recommendations 1.1 and 4.7.
3. Additionally, the Taskforce supports actively engaging with international forums to voice Caribbean perspectives and learn from global best practices, while always contextualizing them to our regional realities.

These initial recommendations are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Together, they provide a roadmap for the Caribbean to move from planning to action in creating a regional AI ecosystem that is innovative, inclusive, and well-governed. As next steps, the Taskforce will refine these recommendations through stakeholder consultations and develop a detailed action plan, including timelines and responsibilities, for consideration by the CARICOM ICT Ministers.

Conclusion

The Caribbean is at a crossroads in the digital age. This interim report has laid out guiding principles and initial recommendations to steer us toward a future where AI is a force for good in our societies. The report highlights both substantial challenges with gaps in policy, infrastructure, skills, and innovation and significant opportunities for collective action. Caribbean states can leverage shared strengths and mitigate individual weaknesses. A harmonized approach to AI governance will help protect our citizens' rights and security, maintain cultural and ethical norms, and avoid the pitfalls of fragmentation. At the same time, collaboration can reduce costs and build critical mass. Whether it's pooling data resources, jointly developing expertise, or presenting a united front in international AI dialogue, unity is our strength.

The guiding principles articulated from human-centric values to sustainability to ensure that our AI trajectory remains aligned with democratic ideals, inclusive development, and respect for sovereignty. These principles will serve as touchstones as we refine policies and undertake projects. Likewise, the initial recommendations offer a concrete starting point for building capacity and governance structures. Implementing them will require decisive leadership.

Encouragingly, the momentum for AI coordination in the Caribbean is growing. The Taskforce itself is a testament to the recognition at high levels that we must prepare proactively for the AI era. This interim report will be used to gain feedback, rally support and inform the design of comprehensive regional strategies. The Taskforce will continue to engage with stakeholders, including government agencies, ICT regulators, the private sector, educational institutions, and international partners to incorporate feedback and expertise. Our end goal is a fully fleshed-out policy framework and implementation roadmap, to be presented in the final Taskforce report in 2026, that will guide the Caribbean's AI development for the next decade.

The Caribbean can position itself as a leader among small states in responsible AI adoption. AI, if governed wisely, can be an engine of economic growth and a tool to address social challenges in education, healthcare, and climate resilience. The journey will not be without obstacles, but with solidarity and vision, the Caribbean can ensure that AI technologies are deployed for our people and by our people, reflecting our unique Caribbean context and values.

The Taskforce looks forward to the continued support of regional leaders and the wider CARICOM community as we advance this important work. Together, we can chart a course where the Caribbean's digital future is bright, inclusive, and secure truly a future "AI for All" in the Caribbean.

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About the CTU Caribbean AI Task Force

Under the mandate of the CARICOM Single ICT Space as an ICT-enabled borderless space that fosters economic, social and cultural integration for the betterment of Caribbean citizens. The CTU formalized the Caribbean AI Taskforce to address the need for coherent and regionally harmonized policies that govern the responsible adoption and use of AI.

The Task Force on Regional Harmonization of AI Policy will operate for a period of one year. Its primary objective is to assess the current landscape of AI implementation, identify challenges, and formulate recommendations for the development of regionally harmonized AI policies within the Caribbean. The taskforce will consist of members from academia, government, civil society and private sector.

Upon writing the preliminary recommendations, the Task Force will engage with a diverse set of stakeholders, including but not limited to: Government representatives from relevant ministries and regulatory bodies, Industry leaders, technology companies, and AI solution providers operating in the Caribbean, Academia and research institutions involved in AI-related studies, Civil society organizations, advocacy groups, and legal experts, International organizations and bodies involved in AI policy development.

Based on feedback to the interim report, the Taskforce will submit a second report, which will provide detailed recommendations for regionally harmonized AI policies, a strategic roadmap for policy implementation and guidelines for continued collaboration and evaluation. This final report will be presented in a Caribbean AI Forum in 2026.