

UN-Habitat dialogue on the role of Artificial Intelligence and big data in combating COVID-19

12 June 2020 – A UN-Habitat webinar on ‘How Artificial Intelligence and big data are playing a critical role in combating COVID-19’ brought together experts and professionals to discuss innovative ways of using new technology.

Participants discussed how big data can help comprehend and forecast the impact that Coronavirus will have. They also looked at Artificial Intelligence (AI) which is seen as a powerful tool capable of processing massive amounts of data to enable health workers, scientists, epidemiologists, and policy makers to make more informed decisions in fighting COVID-19.

Professor Ayanna Howard, Chair of the School for Interactive Computing at Georgia Institute of Technology, pointed out that COVID-19 patients and people with disabilities could be better served by robots and automation as many new applications are being tried out. She said this is the best timing for deployment of robots as public acceptance is high and governments are listening to all innovative ideas.

Small and medium enterprises are vulnerable to the threat of bankruptcy due to disrupted cash flow caused by COVID-19. Professor Qiang Yang, Chief of Artificial Intelligence Officer of WeBank said WeBank, as a digital bank, used AI and big data to better serve small and medium enterprises and make inclusive financial services more accessible to all with better efficiency, reduced cost, and lower risks.

Marco Kamiya, Senior Economist from UN-Habitat’s Knowledge and Innovation Branch, shared how UN-Habitat and other UN Agencies have used AI and technologies to identify and support vulnerable populations during the pandemic. “Technologies can help to integrate markets, the state and communities to achieve more prosperous societies,” he said

Dr. Haishan Wu, vice general manager of AI Department at WeBank, presented an in-depth analysis of the effect of COVID-19 on China’s economy. He illustrated the deployment of the China Economic Recovery Index derived from satellite images and other data.

Lei Guo, Project Lead of Innovation Initiative at UN-Habitat emphasized COVID-19 that the pandemic is undermining prospects for achieving the development goals by 2030.

The webinar is available at <https://youtu.be/LsABhvXdd24>