

Youth & AI Summit 2026: International Youth Day, United Nations HQ, New York USA

Intervention: From Fear of AI to Responsible Use

I still remember when a friend in my lab first told me about ChatGPT. I tried it, and my first reaction was simply, “Wow, this is amazing.”

But almost immediately, another conversation started: Can we actually use this? Would using it be considered plagiarism? As students and researchers, many of us were more concerned about whether we should use AI than about how deeply it would eventually become part of the way we work.

At that time, much of the conversation was about avoiding AI. There were questions about whether students should be allowed to use it, whether researchers should disclose its use, and whether institutions should restrict it altogether. Those were legitimate concerns, and many of them are still relevant today.

But a few years later, that conversation has completely changed.

In Nigeria, about 63 percent of our population is under the age of 25. That represents an enormous generation of young people who could potentially learn, innovate, build businesses, conduct research, and contribute to the future of AI.

AI is no longer just a tool that generates text. It is increasingly being integrated into research, education, healthcare, businesses, engineering, public services, and everyday workflows. People are using AI to analyze information, write computer code, translate languages, support scientific research, improve productivity, and solve problems.

So the question is no longer simply, “Should people use AI?” Increasingly, the more important question is, “How do we make sure people know how to use it responsibly?”

For me, this raises an important issue for AI policy: governance cannot be built only around restricting the use of AI. We also have to teach people how to use it responsibly.

And I think this is especially important for young people. We cannot prepare a generation for an AI-driven world simply by giving them access to AI tools. We have to give them the knowledge to understand those tools.

I would like to see the Declaration emphasize AI literacy: understanding what AI can do, where it can fail, when its outputs should be questioned, how to verify the information it provides, how to acknowledge its use appropriately, how to protect personal and sensitive information, and when human judgment must take over.

AI literacy should also include understanding that a confident answer from an AI system is not necessarily a correct answer. Young people should be empowered to question these systems rather than simply trust them.

And importantly, this responsibility should not fall entirely on individuals. Schools, universities, governments, technology companies, and other institutions all have a role in creating clear guidance and providing the education people need to use AI safely and effectively.

Because as these tools become part of everyday life, responsible use will depend not only on better AI, but also on better-informed users.

If we want responsible AI, we must also invest in responsible AI users.

Thank you.