

Week of July 27-31

AI FOR ALL GLOBAL BRIEF

GLOBAL SIGNALS

China Launches a Rival AI Governance Body Aimed at the Global South

On July 16, 29 countries signed the founding agreement for the World AI Cooperation Organization (WAICO) in Shanghai — a new intergovernmental body headquartered in China. Founding members include Indonesia, Brazil, Malaysia, South Africa, Senegal, Pakistan, and Kazakhstan; notably, no G7 economy or EU member signed on. UN Secretary-General António Guterres attended the ceremony.

The next day, at the opening of the World AI Conference, Xi Jinping pledged 5,000 AI training slots for developing nations and called for AI governance to be “a symphony of international cooperation” rather than a single country’s solo performance — a pointed contrast with Washington’s export-control-based approach.

Why it matters: For Global South governments, WAICO is the first concrete institutional alternative to G7/EU-dominated AI governance processes — a second table to sit at, with China, not Washington or Brussels, holding the gavel. Whether that expands genuine leverage or trades one form of dependency for another is the open question WAICO’s signatories will be answering with their own domestic policy choices over the next year.

Source: [Al Jazeera](#) | [Digital Watch Observatory](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- The G7’s June summit saw AI governance references “watered down” amid a widening rift between allies over sovereignty and industrial competitiveness — the same season WAICO shows what a unified Global South bloc looks like by contrast. [\[source\]](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE

SoftBank Commits €75 Billion to Build Europe’s Largest AI Power Play

SoftBank Group announced on May 30 a commitment of up to €75 billion to build and operate 5 GW of AI data center capacity in France — its largest AI infrastructure investment in Europe. The first phase, €45 billion for 3.1 GW across three sites in the Hauts-de-France region, was unveiled at President Macron’s Choose France summit.

State-owned nuclear operator EDF is partnering on one site; Schneider Electric is building a manufacturing cluster at the Port of Dunkirk to supply power modules for the buildout. SoftBank says the sites will be operational by 2031.

Why it matters: This is Europe's clearest bet yet that it can compete for AI infrastructure capital against the US and China rather than simply hosting American hyperscalers on American terms — but it also means a Japanese conglomerate now controls a meaningful share of what “European AI sovereignty” will actually run on.

Source: [SoftBank Group, official](#) | [Bloomberg](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- Chevron and Microsoft signed a 20-year, 2.67 GW power purchase agreement on June 22 for a Texas data center campus that will bypass the public grid entirely — hyperscalers increasingly building their own power rather than waiting for utilities. [\[source\]](#)

EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPACITY

US Institutions Are Documenting Their Own Inaction While Students Race Ahead

Stanford HAI's 2026 AI Index finds that only half of US middle and high schools have any AI policy, and just 6% of teachers say those policies are clear — even as over 80% of US high school and college students already use AI for schoolwork. China and the UAE, by contrast, both mandated formal AI education starting with the 2025-26 school year, with grade-level curricula running from literacy through system design and ethics.

The gap between rapid, self-directed student adoption and near-absent institutional response is not unique to the United States. It shows up across the Global South too, in different form: qualified talent exists, but without structured pathways, local compute access, or curricula aligned to local development priorities, that talent is either absorbed into foreign AI ecosystems or goes unrealized.

Why it matters: The institutions that know what is coming are not preparing the people in their care — in the US, and in different registers, across the Global South. For students entering the labor market now, that is not an abstract skills gap. It is the difference between participating in an AI-enabled economy and being employed by one without agency over the terms.

Source: [Stanford HAI, 2026 AI Index](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- UNESCO-UNEVOC published the first institution-wide practical guide to AI in technical and vocational education on July 3, launched in Bonn on July 6 — mapping AI adoption across eight areas of institutional practice rather than treating it as a classroom add-on. [\[source\]](#)

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Nigeria's Film Regulator Just Backed “Sovereignty in Storytelling” — With an AI Tool, Not a Policy Paper

The Nigeria Film Corporation, the country's official film regulator, partnered with AI storytelling platform Plotweaver to deploy AI production tools nationwide across all six geopolitical zones — free to filmmakers, students, and training institutions. NFC's managing director was explicit about the framing: “This is not just about software, it is about sovereignty in storytelling.”

Separately, the Nigeria AI Film Festival's second edition keeps submissions open through July 31, building on a debut that drew over 400 entries and an AI Academy that gave creatives hands-on production tools.

Why it matters: This is the alternative to the extraction risk most Western AI-and-film coverage misses entirely: rather than waiting for foreign platforms to train models on African creative work, Nigeria's own film regulator is trying to build the sovereign tooling first. Whether it can scale fast enough to matter is the real test.

Source: [Leadership.ng](#) | [Nigerian Communication Week](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- A report commissioned by the BPI found that rightsholders across creative industries globally had entered nearly 300 commercial AI licensing agreements by early 2026 — a landscape-level counterpoint to Nigeria's sovereignty-first approach. [\[source\]](#)

REGIONAL LENS

Africa's Infrastructure Wave Is Real — the Compute Access Gap Isn't Closing With It

Three fresh signals converge this week: Egypt's \$280 million data center near Alexandria, a 100 MW hyperscale facility in Nigeria, and South Africa's \$720 million AI factory investment. Yet the UNDP's persistent figure holds steady against all of it: only 5% of Africa's AI talent has access to the computational power needed for complex tasks.

USDC Morocco and Raisecom Technology's new MoU adds the connectivity layer to the story, positioning Morocco as a continental interconnection hub linking African compute capacity to European and Middle Eastern corridors — without which new data centers remain isolated assets rather than networked capacity.

Why it matters: The gap between investment announcements and that 5% figure is not simply a funding gap. It is a governance question about who the new infrastructure is actually designed to serve.

Source: [Data Centre News, July 24](#) | [UNDP Digital Blog](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- USDC Morocco and Raisecom Technology's MoU to develop AI-ready digital infrastructure positions Morocco as a continental hub connecting African compute to European and Middle Eastern corridors. [\[source\]](#)

OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS

Three Engagement Windows Are Open Now — and One of Them Just Opened This Month

WAICO's implementation phase is now open: with 29 founding countries signed and a Shanghai headquarters established, the practical question for development organizations and civil society groups is whether to engage with its working structures as they form, or watch from outside while China sets the operating norms.

Alongside it, the AfDB's AI 10 Billion Initiative remains in its 10-month continental roadshow — the most structured near-term entry point for foundations and governments seeking to shape how Africa's AI infrastructure investment is governed. And the Gates Foundation's EVAH initiative is expected to open Q3 2026 applications for locally-led AI health research across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Why it matters: Early engagement with a forming institution shapes its rules. Late engagement just means living by rules that someone else already set.

Source: [AI Jazeera \(WAICO\)](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- The AfDB's AI 10 Billion Initiative, launched at the February 2026 Nairobi AI Forum, is running a 10-month roadshow through roughly December 2026 to engage governments and private-sector partners across the continent. [\[source\]](#)
- The Gates Foundation, Novo Nordisk Foundation, and Wellcome jointly committed \$60 million to the EVAH initiative in February 2026, funding locally-led evaluations of AI health tools in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia; the first funding round has already closed, with a second cycle expected. [\[source\]](#)

ONE SIGNAL WE ARE WATCHING

WAICO's founding and Africa's persistent 5% compute-access gap are the same question asked at two different scales: who writes the rules, and who gets left out while the rules are being written. China has just built an institutional answer to the first question that pointedly excludes the G7. No comparable institutional answer yet exists for the second. The organizations, governments, and foundations that engage with WAICO's implementation phase now — rather than waiting to see how it settles — will have disproportionate influence over whether that gap closes or simply moves to a new set of hands.

AI for All Global Brief is a publication of Tomorrow Foundation.