

(Final Joint Statement)

We, the Ministers, State representatives responsible for Digital Economy in the Mediterranean region, convened in Malta to deliberate on the paramount subject of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its implications for our nations. Recognizing the transformative potential of AI in shaping our digital future, we hereby adopt this joint statement, committing to collective actions that will drive our region forward.

We recognize that AI will bring about considerable social and economic changes, from job displacement, concentration of economic power, changes in international value-chains, internal and external market disruptions, to changes in wealth distribution, social cohesion, and national resilience; and therefore, the need for collaboration on economic foresight to mitigate risks, leverage opportunities arising from such shifts and understand the dynamics that AI can bring within regional context.

We support the adoption of the European Artificial Intelligence Act to promote safe and lawful AI systems, while preserving innovation in Europe. To this end we will strive to safeguard a balanced approach, in respect of technological neutrality, in a way that avoids a disproportionate administrative burden, particularly on start-ups, micro, small and medium enterprises.

We believe that we stand to gain by collectively addressing the challenges and reap from the following opportunities that come with AI, amongst others:

- **AI for Sustainable Development:** We will explore AI applications to address the Mediterranean's unique challenges, from climate change mitigation to optimizing resource management and promoting sustainable practices in line with reaching the Sustainable Development Goals;
- **Ethical AI Framework:** Acknowledging the significance of ethical issues in AI, we will jointly promote responsible AI, safeguarding human rights, privacy, and transparency;
- **Promote Human-Centric AI:** We acknowledge the significance of AI in enhancing the well-being and quality of life for all citizens and are committed to advancing human-centred AI. We pledge to prioritise the development and deployment of AI technologies that are human-centred, ethically responsible, and in accordance with fundamental rights.

We recognize that regional collaboration, in line with European Union-led policies, initiatives and funding opportunities to this effect, is key to maximising the outcomes of AI and therefore, will work together to enhance:

- **AI in Infrastructure, Investment, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience:** We commit to investing in robust AI infrastructure and Research and Development centres within the Mediterranean region to foster innovation and create a conducive environment for AI-driven start-ups and enterprises. In addition, we commit to bolstering the resilience of our economies through the integration of AI technologies across sectors;
- **AI in Public Services:** We aim to leverage AI's potential to enhance our public services, optimizing efficiency, accessibility, and responsiveness to the needs of our citizens, with

- special attention to assuring human oversight, transparency and effective remedy wherever individual rights are at stake, to ensure more proactive and open governments;
- AI Talent Development: Recognizing the critical role of skilled professionals in AI development, deployment, and use, we shall collaborate on initiatives to train and upskill our workforce, ensuring a pool of talent equipped for the digital era, as well as to promote digital literacy to reduce divides;
 - Cybersecurity, Data Governance and Security: We recognize the growing significance of cybersecurity in a digitalized world and the need to protect our data and systems from cyberattacks. We are committed to strengthening our cybersecurity frameworks, disseminating best practices, and nurturing international cybersecurity cooperation. We strive to create a secure digital environment for our citizens, businesses, and governments by prioritising the protection of relevant critical infrastructure, personal data, and sensitive information in order to build mutual trust in utilizing AI technologies;
 - Research, Development, and use of Trustworthy AI: We commit to assure support for research, development, deployment, use and governance of AI that complies with internationally agreed ethical standards and principles that assure and enforce human rights, fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democratic principles;
 - Strengthen Regional Collaboration: We endeavour to share best practices, knowledge, and expertise on how AI can enable better handling of regional emergencies such as disasters, pandemics or otherwise, hence better safeguarding the lives of people in the region.

In order to achieve these goals, we recognize the need for the definition of collaboration and cooperation channels:

- Whilst respecting the confidentiality protocols of each Member State, we pledge to foster a collaborative ecosystem, encouraging the exchange of AI expertise, research, and best practices among our countries. This will be achieved through joint workshops, seminars, and research initiatives to capitalize on each other's strengths, which collaboration may lead to the setting up of a forum of AI Excellence in the Mediterranean region with the aim of establishing a hub of technological innovation, research, and collaboration in the field of AI within the region. We pledge to identify regional data sharing mechanisms which support such collaboration and development of regional-relevant AI systems;
- We will actively engage with global partners, international organizations, and multilateral fora to exchange knowledge and expertise, fostering international AI cooperation and enhancing the Mediterranean's standing in the global digital landscape.

We declare our commitment to this shared vision of a trustworthy AI-powered Mediterranean, driven by cooperation, innovation, human values, and sustainability. By embracing AI responsibly, we can create an inclusive digital future, harnessing its potential to uplift our economies, societies, and the lives of our people.

Adopted in Malta on [Date].