HIGHLIGHTS FROM SESSIONS

PANEL

The Innovation We Expect and How to Harness Data Responsibly

What are the latest innovations that will disrupt the transition into the new decade of the 2020s? What breakthroughs can we expect in Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, and other high-tech fields? What ethical considerations need to be taken into account as the pace of technological change is gaining momentum in the Arab region?

Date- Monday | October 14, 2019

Moderator- Fadi Ghandour, Executive Chairman of Wamda Group

Panelists:

- Samer Abu-Ltaif, President of Microsoft Middle East & Africa
- Malak Akiely, CEO of Golden Wheat Grain Trading Co.
- Sumit S. Jamuar, Chairman & CEO Global Gene Corp
- Cassandra Kelly, International Advisor and Speaker
- Andre Loesekrug Pietri, Speaker of the Joint European Disruptive Initiative, Founder of ACapital the Center Institute of World Economy and International Relations

Samer Abu-Ltaif, President of Microsoft Middle East & Africa:

What's going to happen is the way we saw this proliferation of devices and mobility, we are going to see AI and machine learning, not acquired by us, but the way you are using everything today will be infused with AI in every application, domain, tool. And the purpose of that is to complement what you do on these tools and applications, to let go of all these mundane things and focus as a human being on the insights and ingenuity you could bring. And you can imagine the elevations of us as humans if we have that complementary aspect through AI. But skilling and upskilling will be the most critical mandate that governments, educators and enterprises will have, and we can't wait until the curriculum is revamped. Everyone needs to get trained.

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We have very good stories from a number of countries in the region that are leading but we also have attempts at addressing this digital revolution of education. The reality is there is a cultural shift that needs to happen at the level of preparing our teachers. They need to become more interactive with the students and learning with them. We should continue to help educators. Some of the universities leading in the region and some of the organizations looking at this need to show the way.

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With a view on history, it's important to think that even the shift from the First Industrial Revolution was a shift of 50 percent of the labor force from agriculture to industry.

Cassandra Kelly, International Advisor and Speaker:

There needs to be a new form of collaboration to talk about such issues in terms of facial recognition, AI and technology for good. It's both exciting and terrifying and the very devices we use for our convenience can be used against us for extorsion or worse.

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The biggest thing I am afraid of are the humans. Technology is just something we are inventing and using, but it's us that are sitting behind it and deciding what ethics we are giving it. There is a whole range of complicated ethical issues. Just like the Cloud, what is technology? We can use it to propel communities forward. Very few people understand the terrifying implications.

It's a double-edged sword. We have created things to our detriment, but we can use the same tools to eradicate the bad actors.

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This takes the best of human capability and it says we are setting you free to help us create the better tomorrow.

Andre Loesekrug Pietri, Speaker of the Joint European Disruptive Initiative, Founder of ACapital the Center Institute of World Economy and International Relations:

A zettabyte is 10 factor 21. The data that was created since mankind exists until 2012 was two zettabytes – we are now at 20, and eventually we will have double that. Technology is becoming totally political. Cyber-security is affecting most of the electoral processes. Face recognition allows authoritarian States that individuals becomes an extension of the State. With social media, the political debate is the essence of democracy. All this is completely changed with technology.

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When you look at how the US is responding to the technology challenge, they are focusing on autonomous systems because beyond AI, we have all, since a few years, lost understanding of what is going on in the world. This is why AI is so important because when you think of the way political decisions are made, it is increasingly made on very uninformed decisions.

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We should see AI as a capability to enhance mankind. The way forward is we probably need to change the way we work and regulate, we need to be agile because the world is extremely unpredictable, we need to have foresight. We need to be able to experiment all the time.

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We are all amazed by Google Translate, for instance. I would be very worried for bank tellers – it's the next mining industry. I don't know the future of AI. But the future for those who aren't Chinese or American is to think about the next big thing. The future of AI is small data. We are living at a time where cards are reshuffled all the time and we need to think about that. This leapfrogging is something that democratic countries need to think about. Space is the next frontier and we are just at the beginning of it.

Sumit S. Jamuar, Chairman & CEO Global Gene Corp:

The DNA is like the book of life, with three billion words, spread across 20,000 genes, arranged in 23 sub-sections. What we are trying to do is to say if this is my cord, what does its manifestation look like? Imagine something which can tell you your personal story.

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We have the AI, machine learning, Cloud computing technology, which allows us to look through this enormous amount of data and see the pattern and it's extremely disruptive. What we are missing is the understanding of individuals. When we explore the richness of humanity, we end up solving diseases, which is exciting. What will impact all of us is non-communicable diseases, which is why it's so important.

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AI is a hugely powerful technology, but people adapt to that change and to how they use technology to benefit from it and we re-train ourselves. Children find it the easiest to pick up a mobile phone compared to older people, who find it the hardest.

Malak Akiely, CEO of Golden Wheat Grain Trading Co.:

It's striking to know that the data generated in two days is as much as the data collected in human history before 2003. There is no doubt that big data is the next frontier for innovation, productivity and competition. In the region, we are trying to remove the inefficiencies. We work with suppliers across the globe, from agriculture to energy and health.

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It's scary, my personal nightmare is when I go back to my clients, whether government or the private sector because we are far, far behind. My challenge is how to make it relevant in our business and our structure. The technology is there but from the buyer side.