United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 10, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I write to urge you to ensure the United States takes a leading role in developing international standards and norms for new and emergent innovations shaping the next generation of information technologies, in particular Artificial Intelligence (AI). Other countries are already shaping this conversation in ways that may be detrimental to U.S. interests. For example, later this month China is convening and hosting a UNESCO Conference on AI, underscoring China's continued efforts to shape the debate and set the standards surrounding the future of AI. Even our allies are leading in this space, with the EU releasing guidelines for ethical AI development.

Emerging technologies such as AI represent the cutting edge of innovation and will facilitate critical advances in a wide range of fields, including health care, education, information processing, logistics, and security. At the same time, these technologies will present enormous challenges, whether in job displacement, algorithmic discrimination, privacy, or cybersecurity (as adversaries exploit these tools, too). The United States has long played a formative role in developing AI technologies. In recent years, however, China has made significant progress in developing AI, with a stated goal of superseding the United States in this field by 2030. China's efforts, according to a study conducted by the Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence, are ahead of schedule, with the Institute highlighting that China has "surpassed the United States in published papers on artificial intelligence" and is "poised to overtake" the United States in terms of cited papers on the subject over the next few years. Disturbingly, some of America's most prominent technology companies have opened major AI research centers in China, potentially giving China's military and intelligence arms access to cutting-edge technology. China's continued robust investment in the field of AI has the potential to provide a strategic rival a critical technological edge.

China's organization of the UNESCO conference on AI is yet another indication of its efforts to fundamentally shape global standards governing the future of AI and to drive the debate in the international community around an approach that uses AI tools to infringe on the rights of individuals throughout the globe and aid authoritarian regimes in suppressing its citizens. Technologies are shaped by the values and norms that undergird their development. While a generation of ICT technologies developed by the U.S. and its allies have been shaped by our shared values and norms of openness, pluralism, fair competition, rule of law, security, and free

expression, China's development of AI has been shaped by fundamentally different values and norms, in service of objectives such as surveillance, censorship, and social control.

As I know you appreciate, it is critically important that as China attempts to capture primacy in the field of AI the United States works with our partners and allies to assert a position of leadership within the international community on this issue. Without an engaged United States, and close coordination with our allies, we have limited ability to set global standards for AI development and use, with potentially disastrous consequences. China, as an authoritarian regime that uses AI tools to monitor its citizens and parse through vast troves a data, is a significant threat to the personal freedoms of individuals around the globe.

Due to the issues raised by China's efforts to set international standards in the field of AI that are not congruent with our interests and values, I am concerned the United States is not doing enough to promote United States leadership in establishing the norms and global governance for AI and other emerging technologies. Consequently, I ask that you please respond to the following questions regarding U.S. efforts in the AI field:

- What is the U.S. vision for global standards, norms, and mechanisms for the use of artificial intelligence, grounded in our values, including democracy, personal liberties, and the protection of human rights?

- What U.S. efforts are currently underway to promote this vision for the use of artificial intelligence?

- What should U.S. expectations be for leading U.S.-based firms and researchers when it comes to work in China on projects that violate human rights?

- Does the current export control regime adequately prevent the export of AI technology and technical assistance to human rights violators?

- Should Congress consider an update to the Alien Tort Claims Act, allowing foreign citizens (such as Uyghurs) to seek remedies in U.S. courts for human rights violations directly aided by the actions of U.S. firms or researchers?

- What standards for AI are you promoting in international fora?

- What is the current diplomatic engagement strategy by the Department of State to promote and promulgate those standards, including through participation in appropriate international fora and meetings?

- How is the United States working with allies and partners on the development of AI tools?

Moving forward, I hope to see the United States further strengthen its efforts in the AI field to ensure that we do not cede leadership on this issue to China. AI is rapidly becoming one of the most strategically important domains of the next generation, serving as an enabling technology to

a range of future innovations and across disparate fields; it is vital to the security of the United States and our allies that we play a primary role in shaping AI to serve in the best interests of liberty, prosperity, and the promotion of human rights. I ask that you please respond to my questions by May 20th. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator