FROM ALIGNMENT TO AGENCY:

South–South Digital Diplomacy & Collective Leverage

DATASPHERE INITIATIVE | HSRC Human Sciences Research Council | UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Wednesday, November 4, 2026 · Online (Zoom)

South–South cooperation on AI and data governance has produced shared declarations but little negotiating leverage. This webinar starts from the proposition that the constraint is not political will but capacity: the standing technical, legal and institutional machinery needed to hold a position once it is taken. It asks what forms of leverage have actually materialised since the Global South was placed at the centre of AI governance discussions, and what role sandboxes and other standing capacity could play in coordinating before and during negotiations.

PROGRAM

TIME	SESSION
15:00–15:08	**Setting the scene** Odilile Ayodele | Chair Opening remarks introducing the webinar's central question and the two negotiation processes in focus: the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance.
15:08–15:15	**First intervention** Lorrayne Porciuncula | Speaker Are sandboxes leverage or pilot activity?
15:15–15:20	**Second intervention** Vinay Narayan | Speaker What leverage materialised at and after the India AI Impact Summit, and for whom?
15:20–16:00	**Moderated exchange** Prof. Arthur G.O. Mutambara | Speaker Robyn Ehryn Williams | Moderator Prof. Mutambara reacts to both interventions, and the Moderator puts the points of disagreement to all the speakers.
16:00–16:24	**Audience discussion** Robyn Ehryn Williams | Moderator The speakers answer audience questions submitted via chat.
16:24–16:30	**Close** Odilile Ayodele | Chair Closing remarks on where the panel agreed and where it disagreed.

All times are South Africa Standard Time (SAST, UTC+2).
15:00 SAST is 13:00 UTC · 14:00 CET (Geneva) · 16:00 EAT (Nairobi) · 18:30 IST (New Delhi) · 10:00 BRT (Brasília)