

Dr. Radha Plumb, CDAO
Partnership for Defense (PfD) Remarks - October 28, 2024

- Thank you, Stephanie. It brings me great joy to see so much enthusiasm so early on a Monday!
- And this really is an exciting moment for those of us focused on delivering on the promise of AI Adoption.
- Just last week, we rolled out our National Security Memorandum (or NSM) on Artificial Intelligence.
 - It provides a blueprint for how the U.S. will accelerate the use of cutting-edge AI tools alongside our allies and partners in a manner consistent with our values.
 - It is an ambitious document and it will take continuous work to build that blueprint into reality.
- Let me also be transparent about an issue I know hangs over this event – the upcoming ‘political event.’ I know we are all interested in the outcome of the election and no doubt our next leaders will need to continue the work we begin today – but that is always true.
- We are in a moment of shared focus on AI and shared desire to ensure we deliver on its promise.
 - It is across party, between Congress and the Executive Branch here in the U.S., and across Capitols around the world.
 - It is based on technology innovation that our allies and adversaries alike recognize has the potential to fundamentally change how we do core missions, like warfighting to logistics to personnel management and more.
 - And the need to do this responsibly is based on a set of values that transcend any country or company – as we have seen through a range of actions from the political declaration with over 50 countries signing on to the voluntary commitments from leading companies.
- With that important backdrop, it’s my pleasure to open the tenth meeting of the AI Partnership for Defense and fitting that this marks our very first in-person meeting.
 - There is no substitute for the chance to meet face-to-face and strengthen the connections that you have built among each other and no time like today to level up the ambition of our efforts.
- So let me thank you for your commitment—in time and effort—to really build this critical ‘startup’ – PfD. Like the NSM, it was established on the dual vision that we need to accelerate our adoption of AI across defense communities. But we must do this in a way that is ethical and responsible.

- And let me also thank you in advance for what I am going to challenge you to do today: leverage this moment of broad international attention to expand our ambitions on what we can do!
 - This Conference, over the next three days, is bringing together government, industry, and academic experts on the cutting edge of turning Responsible AI from theory into practice.
 - We have the people with the vision, the expertise, and most critically the appetite to drive the kind of generational change we need to seize this moment of technology innovation.
 - My sincere hope is that you will leave DC having shared best practices and return to your capitals with concrete ideas, willingness to expand partnerships, and motivation to do what needs to be done in the next weeks, months, and years to come to shepherd the transformation we know is coming.

So to help motivate the next few days, let me lay out a little what we have done, what we should do, and where I think this community can fit in.

I'll start with what we have been doing - I've had the opportunity to meet some but not all of you since becoming the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer just six months ago.

- Over that time (which I'll admit – feels like it's been a lot longer!) - I have been focused on enabling, scaling, and speeding the adoption of AI tools.
- When I think about this from where I sit, it means:
 - Finding ways to ensure we have high-quality data and that we can share that data to better link our military capabilities.
 - It means using analytics to inform our combined decision making.
 - It means developing and deploying AI-enabled capabilities in a manner that supports our shared objectives.
- I am really proud of the progress we've made to rapidly experiment and incorporate new digital technologies and then scale the resulting technology to deliver capabilities in the hands of our warfighters in a matter of months.
 - Undergirding this is the policies and processes to ensure this adoption meets the full range of requirements and balances critical concerns like ethical use, privacy, reliability, and other core attributes.
 - I am particularly proud of CDAO's work to build a Responsible AI toolkit which translates these principles into reality and ensures our tools are responsible by design.
 - This type of risk management framework fits directly into the blueprint laid out in the National Security Memorandum – not coincidentally given the collaborative approach we

use inside the U.S. Government – and helps ensure we have the testing and tools to meaningfully ensure our tools are consistent with our operational needs AND our values.

- As easy as it is to focus internally on our own organizations, I know that we can have exponentially more impact when we work together.
 - It goes without saying that cooperation on AI has the potential to strengthen our alliances and partnerships in countless ways. You all have tackled many in this forum.
 - And that Responsible AI work has been the backbone of the PfD’s work – with shared lessons on data readiness, AI partnerships, command and control, human capital, and acquisition all through the shared lens of responsible adoption.
 - Engagement with international allies and partners is the North Star of our National Defense Strategy. And so the progress in partnership with you all has been critical in fulfilling our role in CDAO in the National Defense Strategy.

Ok so before I hurt myself patting myself on the back – let’s talk about what we need to do – because there is plenty of work ahead. Let me give you two areas I hope we can make progress on in the coming days:

First – build the processes we need to make rapid, responsible adoption a reality.

- Over the next few days – we will talk as a community of like-minded nations about foundational issues in the responsible use of AI.
 - Many of us have heard the concern that rapid innovation is inherently at odds with responsible innovation.
 - In other words, that pathway of responsible AI is a slow and cumbersome journey, particularly in the context of national defense.
 - And perhaps, the realization of those principles risks missing opportunities or failing to adopt critical tools that might deliver advantage.
- Our view is that the choice between responsible and rapid is a false one. You will hear tomorrow from Deputy Secretary Hicks, who puts this simply as “we will win, not in spite of our values, but because of them.”
- That mindset—that Responsible AI is key to our success—has defined our AI journey. It is reflected in our high-level AI Ethical Principles and is built into the practical tools that we are using and creating on a daily basis.
- But that is all easier to say than to do, so it’s worth reflecting on how we translate those values into our advantage.
- As a starting point, I would emphasize what RAI can do to enable our decision making at all levels.

- It gives us confidence in the data and analytics that drive our decision making in the boardroom. It builds the assurance that our service men and women need to have in the AI-enabled tools they employ on the battlefield.
- But as technology emerges, how we uphold those values becomes murky and complex.
 - We owe our defense community clear guidelines and guardrails and tools to translate those into reality.
 - As I like to say – better brakes make faster trains – and we need to build the brakes and then convince those driving the trains they really work!
 - I can think of no better group to think about how we might create pathways to adopting AI capabilities differently based on our shared commitment to accelerate the use of AI in line with our core ethical principles.

Second – we must grow our community – and we need to do that both across functions in our governments and connect to more like-minded nations.

- We need smarter buyers, and informed consumers – from our warfighters and leaders alike.
- We need to show – not just tell – that these are universal values by welcoming partners who want to learn and grow with us.
- I challenge you to help us educate our government leaders, service men and women, and publics about the value of AI adoption and why doing so responsibly requires doing so collaboratively.
- As leaders in AI, we all have a duty to grow the community of leaders and experts invested in these issues. You can help us make AI—and responsible AI—a higher priority in our capitals.
- Again – I can think of no better group to help ensure that when our Ministers of Defense meet, we can place AI on the agenda to generate momentum for collaborative problem solving around AI.

Let me close where I started – by thanking you all. You all are engaged in a valuable forum here that has delivered tangible results. Each of you is here with a clear purpose—to solve common problems and strengthen our shared security.

- The collective knowledge you possess is extraordinary. And to pull together such a talented group that is committed to making progress based on shared principles is what makes the Partnership for Defense so unique and such a productive venue.
- Those principles—based on international law and shaped by our democratic values—are why the Partnership for Defense has weathered the pandemic and dramatic changes in the global and technological landscape.

- Even more than before, today's threats require that we double down on our cooperation. And our interoperability with allies and partners can no longer be an afterthought. Data, analytics, and AI tools will be central to that effort.
- I know I don't need to convince a room full of experts and leaders in innovation about the promise of digital transformation. But that is not necessarily true of everyone in our capitals or even our Defense Ministries.
- So as you talk today and as you travel back home this week, I challenge you to grow the ambitions on what we can do together.
- To do this I'll leave you with a few questions to consider –
 - what does the next phase of the AI Partnership for Defense look like?
 - How do we use the remarkable work you have done to further elevate international cooperation on AI?
 - How do we expand the community gathered here today—both vertically and horizontally—such that that expertise in this room is shared, evolved, and built upon?
 - How do we engage our ministries and our broader political systems to enable, scale, and speed the adoption of AI?
- As we move through the excellent agenda ahead of you in the next few days, I hope to leave you with more ideas and questions and the energy to get the answers we need to drive transformation. We know those answers cannot come from the United States alone and we will only learn with our allies and partners.
- And so - I wish you all a successful event and an even more productive next year!