

OpenAI boss 'heartened' by talks with world leaders over will to contain AI risks

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OpenAI's CEO Sam Altman gestures while speaking at University College London as part of his world tour of speaking engagements in London, on May 24, 2023. Altman said Monday, June 5, 2023 he was encouraged by a desire shown by world leaders to contain any risks posed by the artificial intelligence technology his company and others are developing. Credit: AP Photo/Alastair Grant, File

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said Monday he was encouraged by a desire shown by world leaders to contain any risks posed by the artificial intelligence technology his company and others are developing.

Altman visited Tel Aviv, a tech powerhouse, as part of a world tour that has so far taken him to several European capitals. Altman's tour is meant to promote his company, the maker of ChatGPT—the popular AI chatbot—which has unleashed a frenzy around the globe.

"I am very heartened as I've been doing this trip around the world, getting to meet world leaders," Altman said during a visit with Israel's ceremonial President Isaac Herzog. Altman said his discussions showed "the thoughtfulness" and "urgency" among world leaders over how to figure out how to "mitigate these very huge risks."

The world tour comes after hundreds of scientists and tech industry leaders, including high-level executives at Microsoft and Google, issued a warning about the perils that artificial intelligence poses to humankind. Altman was also a signatory.

Worries about artificial intelligence systems outsmarting humans and running wild have intensified with the rise of a new generation of highly capable AI chatbots. Countries around the world are scrambling to come up with regulations for the developing technology, with the [European Union blazing the trail](#) with its AI Act expected to be approved later this year.

In a talk at Tel Aviv University, Altman said "it would be a mistake to go put heavy regulation on the field right now or to try to slow down the incredible innovation."

But he said there is a risk of creating a "superintelligence that is not really well aligned" with society's needs in the coming decade. He

suggested the formation of a "global organization, that at the very highest end at the frontier of compute power and techniques, could have a framework to license models, to audit the safety of them, to propose tests that are required to be passed." He compared it to the IAEA, the international nuclear agency.

Israel has emerged in recent years as a tech leader, with the industry producing some noteworthy technology used across the globe.

"With the great opportunities of this incredible technology, there are also many risks to humanity and to the independence of human beings in the future," Herzog told Altman. "We have to make sure that this development is used for the wellness of humanity."

Among its more controversial exports has been Pegasus, a powerful and sophisticated spyware product by the Israeli company NSO, which critics say has been used by authoritarian countries to spy on activists and dissidents. The Israeli military also has begun using artificial intelligence for certain tasks, including crowd control procedures.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that he had held phone conversations with both Altman and Twitter owner Elon Musk in the past day.

Netanyahu said he planned to establish a team to discuss a "national artificial intelligence policy" for both civilian and military purposes. "Just as we turned Israel into a global cyber power, we will also do so in artificial intelligence," he said.

Altman has met with world leaders including British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Altman tweeted that he heads to Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, India, and South Korea this week.

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