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« Exchange to Better Understand »



PRESS RELEASE

The Attijariwafa bank Foundation demystifies artificial intelligence

Tuesday, April 16, 2019 – The Attijariwafa bank Foundation has organized, in its Actua art space in Casablanca, a new edition of its conference series «Exchange to Better Understand», under the theme: «Can we trust artificial intelligence?».

This 48th meeting placed artificial intelligence at the center of the debate, a scientific theme with multiple economic and social benefits. On this occasion, Attijariwafa bank Foundation called on to Mr. Rachid Guerraoui, one of the greatest researchers and specialists in the world in algorithmics, professor at the Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne and the Collège de France.

In front of an audience of more than 300 people from businesses, academic world and civil society, Mr. Mohamed El Kettani, CEO of the Attijariwafa bank group said: «Whatever our areas of expertise and activities, we are all aware of the need to change the way we work and understand problems, because, with the digital revolution, nothing will be as before. To meet this challenge, skills training and Research & Innovation are major challenges for Morocco and all African countries: «we will, without a doubt, come to join forces to meet these multiple challenges and allow this African youth to catch up with the digital revolution. This is one of the major paths to take to accelerate the pace of development of our countries, catch up with the technological gap, solve the problem of youth unemployment, and enter, with full confidence, into the digital era. This is a historic opportunity that we must seize, «concludes El Kettani.

Presented by Mrs. Meya Zeghari, Head of Digital Transformation and SmartUp of Attijariwafa bank, Mr. Rachid Guerraoui started his intervention by defining artificial intelligence, and explaining its genesis through a historical reminder. The researcher then demonstrated the importance of algorithms that allow us to constantly push back the limits of what is possible. «Artificial intelligence can be defined as the ability of an algorithm to solve a problem through a machine. It appeared in the 17th century with Pascaline. Blaise Pascal was the first to use a machine to run an algorithm. He has thus succeeded in integrating into this machine a process that involves additions of large numbers. Today, calculators are no longer considered as artificial intelligence since their use has become widespread and common.



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The question that still arises is: can we go further? For example, artificial intelligence is now able to reproduce paintings by artists like Rembrandt or to win against the best players in poker. This did not seem possible a few years ago.

Before an attentive audience, Mr. Guerraoui then explained the power of algorithms and artificial intelligence as well as the expected advances in the coming years, in several fields such as health or finance. «The most powerful companies in the world of the internet, GAFA (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple), exist today through algorithms. Artificial intelligence is constantly evolving and will present several opportunities, starting with the creation of new jobs that will involve developing and training the right skills. By 2050, 50% of current jobs will disappear, but new jobs will emerge.

The Moroccan researcher also alerted about the fragility of the algorithms and the need not to trust them completely. These algorithms are becoming more and more effective, but they also carry risks. «Can we trust algorithms? Not entirely. Several recent examples prove it: the explosion of Ariane 5, the crash of the Boeing 737 Max or the stock market crash of 2008. To trust the algorithms, we must know and master computer systems”.

Finally, before giving the floor to the audience, Mr. Guerraoui insisted on the need for Morocco and Africa to invest in youth to form skills capable of following the progress of artificial intelligence and actively participate in it. «Unlike the industrial revolution, artificial intelligence requires investments in terms of neurons, not raw materials. Hence the need to train youth. Moreover, it is not a disaster if these young people leave Morocco at a given moment. Abroad, they will continue their training and may one day give something back. But, in the immediate future, Morocco must train its young people and diversify the training courses it offers them.

Through this fascinating conference-debate, the Attijariwafa bank Foundation renews its commitment to promote a constructive debate on economic, cultural and social issues that engage the future of Morocco.

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