AI developing too fast for regulators to keep up, says Oliver Dowden

Artificial intelligence is developing too fast for regulators to keep up, the UK's deputy prime minister is to announce as he aims to galvanise other countries to take the threat seriously in advance of the UK's AI safety summit in November. Oliver Dowden will use a speech at the UN general assembly on Friday to sound the alarm over the lack of regulation of AI, which he says is developing faster than many policymakers thought possible. Dowden will urge other countries to come together to create an international regulatory system, something the UK is keen to promote when it hosts the summit at Bletchley Park. According to comments released before the speech, Dowden will say: "The starting gun has been fired on a globally competitive race in which individual companies as well as countries will strive to push the boundaries as far and fast as possible. "In the past, leaders have responded to scientific and technological developments with retrospective regulation. But in this instance the necessary guardrails, regulation and governance must be developed in a parallel process with the technological progress. Yet, at the moment, global regulation is falling behind current advances." Dowden's comments reflect growing concern at the top of the British government over the possibility that cutting-edge technology could be used for harm. Experts say AI can be used to generate fake images, videos, sounds and text that are indistinguishable from reality, making them a powerful disinformation tool. The point was underlined when an AI-generated image of the pope in a white puffer jacket went viral on Twitter, with many people believing it to be real. Some also worry that the use of existing AI tools such as facial recognition software could lead to discriminatory outcomes if the data they have been trained on shows evidence of bias. Dowden, however, will focus attention on national security concerns, which he says the technology poses. Some working in the AI industry have said it could even pose a threat to humanity if left to develop unchecked. Dowden will say: "Tech companies must not mark their own homework, just as governments and citizens must have confidence that risks are properly mitigated. "Indeed, a large part of this work should be about ensuring faith in the system, and only nation states can provide reassurance that the most significant national security concerns have been allayed." The deputy prime minister, who was sent to New York in place of Rishi Sunak, has spent the last few days locked in meetings with fellow ministers from around the world as the UK hopes to take a leading role in developing international AI regulation. The Cabinet Office said he had hosted an AI safety meeting attended by digital ministers from countries including Japan, the US, Pakistan and Canada, as well as speaking at the Global Emerging Technology Summit in Washington on Thursday. The Guardian revealed last week that many heads of state had agreed to attend November's summit, including Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, Justin Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister, and Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Council. Joe

Biden, the US president, will not attend but will be represented by the vice-president, Kamala Harris. Meanwhile, officials are still debating which bits of the summit China should attend amid concern about Beijing's interference in western democracies. It recently emerged that a British parliamentary researcher had been arrested on suspicion of spying for China, though UK officials insist this is not the reason for only inviting Chinese officials to some of the summit meetings.