STI Forum Side event

Roundtable with 10 MG on Technology and Innovation Report 2021 Catching technological waves: Innovation with equity

Taking recommendations forward

3 May at 14:00-15:00 CEST

Concept note

Objective

The event will briefly present UNCTAD's Technology and Innovation Report 2021 which will be followed by a roundtable discussion by 10 MG representatives centered around implementation of the recommendations from the report and ways of moving forward with the policy options for countries to strategically position themselves to take advantage of new waves of technological change for inclusive and sustainable development. The event will raise awareness of policy options for countries to harness these frontier technologies and leave no one behind.

Background

We live in a time of growing prosperity alongside growing inequalities. People on average are living longer and healthier lives, getting more years of education and having better access to clean water, sanitation and electricity. A global middle class has emerged, fueled by rapid growth in emerging economies. At the same time, poverty is stubbornly persistent in some pockets with more than half of the world's extreme poor living in sub-Saharan Africa.

Crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic lays bare these and other gaps. The elderly and people with pre-existing health conditions are more vulnerable. The working poor, people in the informal sector, those in small and middle-sized enterprises, and a large share of the workers in all countries have no savings to weather the crisis.

Against this backdrop, technology is ambiguously seen both as a friend and a foe. Innovation drives prosperity, and frontier technologies (e.g. AI, robotics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology) could be transformative in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But rapid advances can have serious downsides if they outpace the ability of societies to adapt. There are fears, for example, that jobs are disappearing as more economic activity is automated, and that social media are exacerbating divisions, anxiety and doubt.

The implications could be serious for developing countries – if poor communities and countries are either overwhelmed or simply left behind. The great divides between countries that we see today

started with the onset of the first industrial revolution. Since then, every spurt of progress was associated with sharper inequality between countries.

What is the impact of frontier technologies on inequalities? How can governments minimize risks and maximize opportunities? And how can international cooperation help? The answer to these questions is critical for the achievement of the SDGs.

Technology and Innovation Report 2021

UNCTAD's *Technology and Innovation Report 2021* critically examines the possibility of frontier technologies widening existing inequalities and creating new ones. The Report focuses on low and middle-income developing countries and least developed countries, as well as on the most vulnerable segments of societies while providing discussion on the effects on high-income countries as parts of the broader context and major drivers of frontier technologies.

The Report argues that frontier technologies are essential for sustainable development, but they also could accentuate existing inequalities. It is up to policies to reduce this risk and make frontier technologies contribute to increasing equality. Low- and middle-income developing countries and the least developing countries cannot afford to miss the new wave of rapid technological change. Success in the twenty-first century will require a balanced approach – building a robust industrial base and promoting frontier technologies that can help deliver the 2030 Agenda and its global vision of people-centred, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

10-Member Group

The 10-Member Group appointed by the Secretary-General is mandated to work with the IATT to prepare the annual STI Forum and to support the development and operationalization of the online platform (2030 Connect). In practice, several of them are actively involved in the various IATT work streams. Its members bring diverse expertise and experience across disciplines on science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship for the SDGs. They are internationally recognized in their respective areas of work. As representatives of various stakeholder groups, they, among others, provide a link to the academies, universities, NGOs, and the private sector.

The 10-Member Group is an important pillar of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) (more information https://sdgs.un.org/tfm/ten-member-group)

Format

The event will be comprised of a brief introduction of the report followed by a roundtable discussion by 10 MG representatives of report's recommendations and ways to move forward. After discussion, the floor will be opened to the questions and contribution from the audience.

<div align="center">Programme</div>

Moderator:

- Mr. Angel Gonzalez Sanz, Science, Technology and ICT Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD

Opening remarks

- Ms. Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director of the Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD

Presentation of the TIR 2021

- Mr. Clovis Freire, Economist, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD, Team Leader of the Technology and Innovation Report 2021

Roundtable with 10 MG

- Dr. Paulo Gadelha, Coordinator of the FIOCRUZ Strategy for the 2030 Agenda, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ) (Brazil)
- Dr. José Ramón López-Portillo Romano, Chairman, Q Element Ltd. (Mexico)
- Dr. Anne-Christine Ritschkoff, Senior Advisor VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd. (Finland)
- Dr. Špela Stres, Director of Innovation and Technology Transfer Center for Jožef Stefan Institute (Slovenia)
- Prof. Huadong Guo, Chairman of Academic Committee, Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) (China)