

## Statement delivered by Tom Wakeford, ETC Group

### For Session 7: Delivering in Decade of Action for achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs: Next steps for the TFM and its partners

“Among the contributory factors in the Covid-19 pandemic was a failure among some governments to heed the clear warnings that many of us scanning future horizons had given years before. Intensive industrialised food systems and zoonotic diseases, of which Covid-19 became an example in 2020, had been linked to each other in numerous horizon-scanning processes, yet policy-makers failed to act.

To deliver the UN’s Agenda for 2030, TFM should support processes of horizon-scanning, not just to spot new agricultural technologies that have potentially dangerous consequences, but to evaluate all emerging technologies. The TFM should provide guidance such that processes of horizon-scanning and technology assessment can take place, as envisioned in the “Future We Want” outcome document of Rio+20.

If potential future technologies are not subject to systematic scrutiny, there is a danger that big science projects will continue to create a path-dependence, leading to decision-makers becoming locked-in to the deployment and commercialization of these projects when they are not necessarily the best option. Before we know it, drones, so-called artificial intelligence, gene editing, gene drive organisms and geoengineering could become a future from which we will struggle to escape, rather than being questioned as part of a process of gaining free, prior and informed consent to their development.

With participatory and deliberative approaches to the assessment of new technologies now well established, the TFM should now use them to improve the governance of new technologies. In particular it should ensure the quality of such processes by including knowledge-holders drawn from among Indigenous peoples and local communities, based on their lived experiences. Working with our partners, ETC has now launched a new online resource **assess.technology** to support a global push to democratise the control of science and technology, and hence our future.”