

A statement to the sixth annual multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum) that will be held from 4-5 May 2021.

Session 6: Supporting national capacities through the TFM: 16:00 – 16:50 PM (EDT) May 5th 2021.

Thank you very much Co-Chair and Moderator

Co-chair: H.E. Mr. Andrejs Pildegovičs, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations

Moderator: Mr. Michiharu Nakamura, Senior Advisor (Former President), Japan Science and Technology Agency (TFM 10-Member Group)

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

I am Patrick Paul Walsh, a Professor of International Development Studies in University College Dublin in Ireland, a Senior Advisor to UN SDSN, and member of The Scientific and Technological Community Major Group at the United Nations.

We would like to congratulate you on the success of the STI Forum, convened annually by the President of ECOSOC, to discuss the science, technology and innovation cooperation that is so necessary across nations to achieve implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Mission of Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) is summarised well in SDG 9, particularly in her targets 9.a to c;

Target SDG 9.a Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States

Target SDG 9.b Support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities

Target SDG 9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

COVID-19 has highlighted how Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Nationalism and poor Intellectual Property (IP) arrangements between Governments and multi-national corporates have constrained our efforts to defeat the global pandemic. All the global challenges around the SDGs will need a STI intensive transition path to achieve inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development. STI co-operation across nations needs to be at the core of the project and makes the TFM initiative so important.

In this context, we would like to convey three main messages on the enhanced role that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) could play in TFM.

- I) The objective of creating transboundary open access STI for the implementation of SDGs across nations is not generally embedded in science and technology as a virtue or as a mandate from government. Yet the TFM can easily identify institutions with this mission. The UN Academic Impact global community, 1,400 institutions in more than 147 countries, is aligned to the mission of the United Nations. In addition, the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2021, which includes 1,117 universities from 94 countries, assess universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) has 1,426 individual members, 35 national networks and 12 regional networks that work towards the SDGs. At the global level, the International Science Council (ISC) works on the SDG Science Policy Interface with Organisations with consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, working within the UN Major group system. Finally the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) has 300 organizations that support the work of the UN system.

- II) In terms of cross-border infrastructures, the above institutions could be enabled to play a lead role in TFM partnerships that provide practical infrastructures for facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships that induce scientific cooperation, innovation and capacity-building, that transfer and disseminate relevant technologies for achieving the SDGs across nations. HEIs are already experienced in global operations around academic mobility, conference organisation, publications, education and innovation. The challenge is to orient operations towards the mission of TFM.

- III) To leverage the SDG oriented Scientific and Technological Community for TFM, the Science Policy Interface between Science and Governments within and across nations needs to be greatly enhanced as a two way process. COVID-19 highlights issues around the orientation of research and access to IP. More resources have to be invested into a SPI that has a focus on the SDGs at global, regional and sub-regional levels, particularly with regard to the use and sharing of IP across nations. A hardwired SPI with a TFM mission would create positive linkages for SDG STI, particularly amongst corporates and civil society that partner with governments and the academy.

Thank you very much.