STI FORUM
Science, Technology & Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

8ᵗʰ Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

3-4 May 2023

Trusteeship Council Chamber

United Nations Headquarters, New York

"Science, technology and innovation for building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels"

Draft Agenda
with annotations of sessions and special events

Tuesday, 2 May 2023

Science Technology and Innovation in Africa Day Event

Conference Room 2 (10:00 – 13:00; 15:00 – 18:00)
The STI in Africa Day will be held at the margins of the STI Forum in New York on 2 May, with a focus on STI for the SDGs: "Priority Areas, Levers and Actionable Steps for Africa". Over the past three decades, Africa has made significant progress in educating its youth, building its industrial base, and creating a large internal market that have collectively enabled Africa to withstand global crises. The first STI in Africa Day will explore how Africa can mobilize and leverage the youth, its diaspora, the African Continental Free Trade Area, and growing industrial base to drive STI to meet its development aspirations and meet all SDG targets. It will provide a platform for exchanging ideas and exploring ways to accelerate the development, application, and scaling up of technologies to fast-track progress on the SDGs and Agenda 2063. This associated special event will provide a global stage for conversations between the diaspora and home (global Africa), business levers in Africa vs. the diaspora and its capacity to strike partnerships to invest in overseas markets and Africa itself.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Wednesday, 3 May 2023

Meeting with Major Groups and other stakeholders – outcomes of STI conferences, initiatives and events

Trusteeship Council Chamber (8:00 – 9:45, hybrid)
This event will be an opportunity for a frank exchange between senior representatives of UN major groups and other key TFM stakeholders, the President of ECOSOC, and the Forum co-chairs. It will also ensure that key outcomes and findings of the groups' STI conferences, initiatives and events can systematically be considered and are brought to the STI Forum. The scientific and technological community and the children and youth group will lead the discussions, but other major groups and TFM stakeholders will also be engaged.

Welcome and Opening
(10:00 – 10:50)

Opening Remarks

- H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva, President of the Economic and Social Council
- H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations (tbc)
- H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly (tbc)

Other speakers

- 2 eminent keynote speakers
- Presentation of the Report of the 10-Member-Group of High-level Representatives of Scientific Community, Civil Society and Private Sector by a Co-chair of the Group

The 10-Member Group of High-level Representatives of Scientific Community, Civil Society, and Private Sector, appointed by the UN Secretary General, is tasked with supporting the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM), including the STI Forum, and it has a broad mandate on science, technology and innovation for the SDGs. Group members work closely with the Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs and guide the work of the TFM. In this presentation, one of the Co-chairs of the 10-Member Group will present the Group's final report, comprising a big picture view of how far we have come in terms of STI for the SDGs, a vision on where they would like to see STI in 2030, and a global STI4SDGs roadmap to get there with high-impacts actions. The presentation will provide an overall frame for the STI Forum sessions.

Ministerial session under the theme "Innovating to deliver the SDGs"
(10:50 – 12:00)
The 10-Member-Group will issue a brief guiding note on the theme of the Ministerial session for consideration by speakers. The list of Ministerial speakers will include the chair of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development who will report on the outcomes of the Commission's 26th session.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum
- Under-Secretary-General of Economic and Social Affairs

Session 1. Strengthening trust in science and technology

(12:00 – 13:00)
This session will address one of the key mandates of the STI Forum, namely the science-policy interface and demonstrate the value of robust scientific facts and understanding for policy-making and related actions. Evidence-based policy is crucial to solving the interconnected and complex challenges our societies are facing at all levels. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance and potential of science to address such challenges, including by having vaccines developed at record-speed. At the same time, the pandemic has also highlighted the need to foster trust in science and technology as an essential basis for swift and effective policy actions. This session will take stock of the overall global picture and critically explore specific recent cases to answer the question of how stakeholders can work together to jointly build trust in science and technology, to tackle misinformation, and to explore how the science-advisory systems across the UN system, governments, civil society and private sector could work together in a more effective way.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Lunch break
(13:15 – 14:45)

Opening Ceremony: Metaverse for SDGs lab and the innovation exhibit – young problem-solvers and inspiring innovations

(13:15 – 14:45)

This special event comprises a high-level opening ceremony for the Metaverse for SDGs lab (refer to the following paragraph) and exhibit, followed by a showcase of innovations for addressing sustainability issues in local communities and beyond. A particular focus will be on developing and scaling up innovations that address multiple SDGs (the in-focus SDGs 6, 7, 9 and 11) and/or that address the needs of vulnerable communities. This year's exhibit showcases some of the winners from various competitions and challenges throughout the UN System. Innovators will describe their cutting-edge initiatives and share insights from their experience implementing development solutions in areas including water, energy, innovation, and sustainable cities. They will discuss opportunities for these new technologies to accelerate sustainable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic towards a brighter future.

STI Forum 2023 Metaverse for SDGs lab

This special interactive and hands-on exhibition, entitled "metaverse for SDGs lab", will be organized by ITU with support from DESA. The exhibit will consist of a virtual reality experience created by teams of young people from 70 countries who are participating in a global competition – the Metaverse for SDGs Global Prize and Virtual Reality Competition. This year-long competition was launched in Kigali, Rwanda, at ITU's Generation Connect Global Youth Summit in June 2022. The event will give STI Forum attendees and the UN community in New York the opportunity to experience in a hands-on way how these new digital technologies can be used to support acceleration of the SDGs, through supporting empathy, awareness and education. The showcase will be staffed by young people including from underserved communities.

Note: *the lab will continue until the last day of STI Forum.*

Session 2. Integrated solutions to make progress across SDGs 6, 7, and 9

(15:00 – 16:30)

This session will look at integrated technological solutions to the energy, food, water, and climate crises. These crises are strongly interconnected, with important trade-offs and synergies between them. also It will also examine the current "polycrisis", long foretold by sustainability science, and the emerging scientific and engineering work focused on this "nexus" of issues. Against this background, the session will explore cases of the most effective technology solutions in energy, food, water and climate that minimize major trade-offs and optimize synergies across other areas. These seinclude solutions that may require sustainability gap financing because they may be less profitable in a narrow business sense but that have outsized, wider benefits across societies. The session will kick off with an overview presentation followed by specific case studies. Among others, the session will focus in-depth on SDGs 6, 7, and 9. A key output of the session may be the identification of high-impact and synergistic global actions to drive SDG progress.
- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Session 3. Think global, act local – people and community led innovation and tech infrastructures for "smarter" and inclusive cities

(16:30 – 18:00)

This session will explore people-led innovation and tech infrastructures in cities. The ongoing rapid urbanization has the potential of enhancing the lives of billions of people around the world, especially

when coupled with rapid technological advances. However, it is crucial to ensure that our cities do not only get "smarter" but also more inclusive and that technological innovations are used to enhance the lives of all, not just of a few. In this decade, the majority of innovation and tech infrastructure will be concentrated in cities and urban areas. It is in cities where most materials and resources will be used, where most pollution will be created and also where the largest inequalities exist. It is clear that the world's success in achieving SDGs will be largely decided in cities, by a myriad of local actions that need to add up at the global level. "Think global and act local" has long been a unifying call by sustainability practitioners and policy makers concerned with prioritizing the most effective local actions that equally contribute to the global goals and perspective. This session will showcase this principle by exploring people-led innovation systems and related high-impact tech infrastructures that serve local needs yet contribute effectively to the world SDG aspirations.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Thursday, 4 May 2023

A celebration of ideas: Policy perspectives of experts and stakeholders on emerging science, frontier technologies, future scenarios, and the SDGs

(8:00 – 10:00)

This special event will provide an opportunity to hear directly from the authors of the science-policy briefs submitted by scientists and engineers from academia, private sector, UN system representatives and governments, in response to the UN call for substantive inputs to the Forum in the six official UN languages. Innovative formats will be explored to allow a frank discussion between authors and policy makers. The event will explore the latest developments in science and technology and their current and potential future impacts on sustainable development and the SDGs. The session will explore technology convergence and the multiple technology divides and challenges associated with these trends related to clusters such as blockchain, biotechnology, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and quantum technologies. As in the previous years, a senior UN official will present the "TFM findings on the impacts of rapid technology change on the SDGs" as a brief synthesis and update of what science and technology communities have learned on the wider societal and developmental impacts of scientific and technological breakthroughs in the preceding year.

Presentation of the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023

(10:00 – 10:20)

This short presentation will provide an opportunity for the Independent Group of Scientists to engage with policymakers in a discussion on key findings of the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023. Mandated by Member States, the Global Sustainable Development Report is produced once every four years, serving as a scientific "assessment of assessments" to inform the quadrennial SDG Summit at the General Assembly. It is written by the Independent Group of Scientists, consisting of 15 experts, appointed by the UN Secretary-General, representing a variety of backgrounds, scientific disciplines, institutions, and geographic regions. This year's report will launch in September 2023, as the world approaches the half-way point of the 2030 Agenda and struggles to rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic and other interrelated crises. In this session, the scientists will engage in an informal discussion with policymakers about the practical, evidence-based solutions they recommend accelerating transformations for the SDGs.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Session 4: Breaking down barriers- closing the gender gap in science and technology

(10:20 – 11:45)

This session will highlight examples and lessons learned from gender and STI initiatives that are helping to move the needle towards making innovation ecosystems more inclusive and representative and explore what is needed to scale up and accelerate further progress. With the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its SDGs, countries committed to sustainable development that leaves no one behind. This will require significant global transformation in which science, technology and innovation will be the key transformers and enablers. Women and girls make up half the population and without their full participation, we are losing half of the potential creators, innovators and scientists, and their essential contribution to solving the world's major problems. Closing the gender gap in this area throughout the cycle of education, employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership will be essential. It is also an imperative for women's economic empowerment, enabling girls and women to make their own choices and participate fully in society. Against such background, this session will follow-up to the recent recommendations of the UN Commission on the Status of Women by exploring specific solutions, critically assessing cases and identifying best practices and practical measures on how to shift priorities, investments, and perceptions on women's and girls' place in science, technology and innovation.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Session 5: Global research cooperation and funding- sharing knowledge through new partnerships

(11:45 – 13:00)

This session will explore the status of global research cooperation and funding - especially in the Global South – for the achievement of the SDGs. It will bring together key public and private funders of research and development (R&D) and other key R&D actors. Following a global status overview, specific cases of R&D cooperation and funding will be discussed, including cases of global and regional cooperation across borders and academic disciplines. These cases will illustrate just how important international arrangements have become for global R&D and how indispensable they are for an effective response to the "polycrisis" and for achieving the SDGs. A conversation among key R&D funders and key R&D actors from public and private sectors will explore best practices and new ideas on how to better share knowledge, improve the current funding systems, and to strengthen collaboration and build new partnerships. The session is expected to identify high-impact actions based on lessons learnt.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Lunch break
(13:15 – 14:45)

Implementing national STI4SDG roadmaps – capacity building and Partnership in Action

(13:15 – 14:45)

This special event will explore means and ways to support the implementation of national STI4SDGs roadmaps and highlight national pilot projects. It will build synergies with ongoing STI roadmap collaborations with other strategic partners and will use substantive inputs from the 10 Member Group, and other key stakeholders. It will help participants to use the STI roadmaps as complementary tools for policy making, building capacity and scaling up adoption of countries' STI for SDGs Roadmaps. It will also discuss the path forward for the Partnership in Action and assess the relevance of STI4SDG roadmaps and related capacity building for accelerating progress towards the SDGs.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Session 6. Forging an equitable, digital future for all

(15:00 – 16:30)

This session will explore a way forward for forging an equitable, digital future for all. Rapid digitalization is enhancing the way we live and work in a myriad of ways. It has the potential to open-up opportunities that we may not even have imagined yet. However, gaps in connectivity and access to digital infrastructure within and across countries remain a serious concern. In fact, even as digital gaps in terms of basic infrastructure and skills are being closed, the concern is that rapid emergence of higher-level digital tech infrastructures - such as artificial intelligence (AI) - that build on the basic infrastructures, might further exacerbating inequalities within and between countries, since the benefits of digital transformation are increasingly accruing in a highly unequal way to few, leaving billions behind. Against this background, this session will identify obstacles and assess high-impact actions for ensuring an equitable digital future for all. It will assess what is needed for new digital technologies to help rather than hinder our pathway towards achieving the SDGs. AI in particular promises new opportunities in all kinds of areas, from personalized medicine, to tackling illicit financial transactions, to making energy systems and traffic smart, but it is also associated with cyberattacks, job displacements, and ethical dilemmas. The session will provide a pathway towards ensuring that digitalization and its most advanced technologies can become a force for good and explores the role of the UN and other international organizations in this regard.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum

Session 7: Messages for the SDG Summit and the Futures Summit – taking stock of STI for SDGs and closing remarks

(16:30 – 18:00)

This concluding session will be led by the co-chairs of the Forum and of the 10-Member-Group. It will bring together the messages of the 2023 STI Forum towards the SDG Summit in September 2023 and the Summit of the Future in 2024. It aims to distil the key issues that have permeated throughout the discussions and to present actionable recommendations for upcoming events. The session will also be an opportunity to take stock of what the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) has achieved at the mid-term point towards the SDGs. The session will be kicked off by a brief progress report by the Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (IATT) in which 48 UN entities coordinate their work on STI since 2015. TFM partners will also present a number of initiatives from across the world that support the science-based, solution-oriented, multi-stakeholder and collaborative approach of the TFM, including discussions on broadening their impacts and closer connection to the TFM. The session will conclude with next steps and priorities for the intersessional work.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum
- H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva, President of the Economic and Social Council

Global Solutions Summit (GSS 2023)

In partnership with the World Federation of Engineering Organizations and its Affiliate Member, the American Society of Civil Engineers, will organize the Global Solutions Summit 2023 (GSS 2023) at the margins of the STI Forum on 5 May. The guiding theme of the Summit is the call to the private sector, and future leaders to accelerate the demand for and deployment of existing and emerging technologies for green, inclusive, and sustainable development. GSS 2023 will assemble a roster of thoughtful, high-profile doers - women and men who are actively working in the field to overcome these deployment challenges – to explain what they did, how they did it, what went right and what went wrong, where gaps or broken circuits exist in the deployment ecosystem, and what needs to be done to create a more effective and efficient ecosystem that can meet the demand for and support the deployment of these needed innovations on the scale required to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

- Co-Chairs of the Forum