Eight Annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

Concept Note for Ministerial Session

on "Innovating to deliver on the SDGs"

3 May 2023

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a roadmap for a sustainable future for all. Science, technology, and innovation (STI) can play a critical role in achieving these goals. As the mid-point of 2030 approaches, the global community faces multiple crises and deteriorating inequality. With only seven years left to make the SDGs a reality, making good use of existing scientific knowledge, technology, and innovation is essential.[1] This includes ensuring that research and knowledge are transferred beyond the walls of research institutions and labs and deployed on a large scale; and ensuring that all countries, including the least developed countries (LDCs), have access and ability to tap into necessary investments, scientific research, open-source technologies, publications and data.

The 2023 Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (2023 STI Forum) will feature a Ministerial Session on 3 May under the theme of "Innovating to deliver the SDGs". The following guidance note is suggested for the Ministerial Session to address how policymakers, the private sector, the science community and public institutions should work together to turbocharge STI for SDGs over the next seven years.

Theme

The theme of the Ministerial Session is closely related to the overall theme of the STI Forum, namely "Science, technology and innovation for accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels" which mirrors that of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July. The Ministerial session will examine potential opportunities for accelerating

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[1] STI can provide novel answers to complex challenges, offer cost-effective solutions to maximize resources and achieve more with limited funding; foster collaboration and partnership among different stakeholders bringing expertise of governments, academia, private sector, civil society; foster inclusivity by providing solutions that are accessible and affordable to all; and support sustainable development by promoting environmentally friendly solutions that minimize the impact on natural resources and ecosystems.

progress towards the SDGs[2] that are under review by the HLPF in July, as well as ways to support COVID-19 recovery through STI. In addition, as a contribution to the SDG Summit to be held in September this year, the session will also focus on the contribution of STI to the overall achievement of the SDGs.

Objectives

STI can drive sustainable development and accelerate progress towards the SDGs. However, realising this potential will require strong political leadership, effective policies and increased investment in STI. The Ministerial Session will provide an opportunity to discuss how to further strengthen international cooperation and collaboration in this regard and to mobilise resources and expertise to support sustainable and inclusive development for all.

The objectives of the Ministerial Session are to:

- Strengthen political will and leadership to enhance the contribution of STI to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at all levels.
- Highlight the importance of STI for achieving the SDGs and identify critical challenges and opportunities.
- Share national experiences and good practices on STI policies and initiatives that contribute to making the SDGs a reality.
- Rally for increased investment in SDGs-focused STI development and adoption.

Guiding Questions

The interventions at the Ministerial Session should be limited to 3 minute each. To guide the discussion, it is proposed that the speakers address the following guiding questions:

1. Strengthening political will to enhance STI for inclusion and social equity: Strong political will is essential to enhance STI capacity and contributions to SDGs and will require raising awareness amongst policy makers of the challenges and opportunities of a fast-advancing STI. What policies and strategies have been developed in your countries and/or communities to ensure a conducive policy environment, coherence across sectors and international collaboration? What type of policies and investments are needed in STI to drive sustainable development and accelerate progress towards the SDGs in your country? Are there examples/good practices of policy initiatives, measures and impactful programmes adopted in support of STI to tackle inequalities, particularly affecting vulnerable groups, for example, to equalise access to good quality healthcare, education, clean water and sanitation and affordable and clean energy?

2. STI4SDGs Roadmaps for a better ecosystem: Proactive STI policy measures are needed to stimulate research efforts, focus investments, promote innovation, and foster coordination and multi-stakeholders' participation in STI. How can SDG-oriented STI be prioritised in investment

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[2] Sustainable Development Goals 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

decisions? How can national STI roadmaps or action plans be aligned regionally -and globally- to help develop more mission-oriented and SDGs-focused STI and their adoption? How can STI roadmaps and policies contribute to mitigating global risks and anticipate and prevent future crises by strengthening countries' resilience? What policy initiatives can be implemented to foster investment in education, training, and research and development, promote technology transfer, and build research infrastructure? How can the global community better support innovation systems to facilitate entrepreneurship and promote challenge-led initiatives? How can the UN and international partners contribute to strengthening more responsive and resilient STI4SDG ecosystems nationally?

3. STI for resilience building: What are some of the most promising innovations and technologies for resilience building and reversing the trends of rising inequalities? [3] How can these technologies be scaled up quickly to make them accessible to the most vulnerable groups and countries? How can national STI systems become more resilient, making their positive impacts sustainable while mitigating the risks of changing patterns of globalisation and accelerated technological change? What is the role of STI policies in making societies more resilient?

4. STI for youth and innovation: What type of policy incentives and financial support are required to attract and support the engagement of young people in STI, especially in developing countries? Has there been enough innovation to enhance STI, including in policy and institutional development – for green and digital transformations?

5. STI toward green and digital transition: The recent global polycrises have contributed to pushing forward investments in green and digital sectors. What are some of the most promising ways that STI can contribute to a permanent shift toward building inclusive green economies within the next 1, 5 and 10 years? What technology solutions can increase incomes and employment and change people's livelihood? What are the most important opportunities and risks to the STI system?

6. Lessons learned towards SDGs 6, 7, 9, and 11: How have STI contributed to meeting the targets related to SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals)? What are the main challenges, and how could potential barriers be overcome? How can the UN system strengthen its support for STI, including developing guidelines and best practices and providing technical assistance to countries, to accelerate progress towards all the SDGs?

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[3] For example, the technology solutions have been used in the areas of renewable energy, water conservation and management technologies, smart cities, community-based precision agriculture, biotechnology, green infrastructure, healthcare, circular economy, and digital financial services.