United Nations Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology, and Innovation for SDGs (IATT)

33ʳᵈ Coordination meeting

Summary

Wednesday, 18 Dec. 2024, 9:30am to 11:00am NY time (EDT)

Items discussed:

- Updates on the 2025 STI Forum and CSTD.
- IATT member briefings and updates including some substantive and strategic areas that could be considered in the STI Forum.
- Introduction of new IATT members.
- Pact of the Future follow-up.
- The FfD4 preparatory process.
- Opportunities for exploring joint efforts under the joint SDG Fund.
- The next IATT meeting will be convened in late January 2025.

Astra Bonini (DESA)

- **STI Forum Updates**: The 2025 STI Forum will be held on 7-8 May in Conference Room 4. The theme of 2025 STI Forum is "Advancing sustainable, inclusive, and evidence-based science and technology solutions and innovations for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for leaving no one behind", which is aligned with the HLPF theme, addressing SDGs under review: SDG 3 (Health), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Economic Growth and Decent Work), SDG 14 (Oceans), and SDG 17 (Partnerships).

- **Forum Organization:** The 2025 STI Forum is convened by ECOSCO President Bob Rae (Canada) and co-chaired by H. E. Mr. Omar Hilale (Morocco) and H.E. Ms. Elena Kalkku (Finland). According to the meeting with co-chairs' team, Astra highlighted the co-chairs' immediate priorities are shaping the overall vision, identifying keynote speakers, and preparing a Member States briefing in late February or early March.

- **Key Co-chair Priorities for the Forum Preparation:**

- o **Inclusivity and broad stakeholder engagement:** The Forum aims to leverage its multi-stakeholder nature to involve diverse participants while addressing resource constraints. To enhance accessibility, the Forum is exploring hybrid participation options.

- o **Outcome orientation:** The co-chairs aim to feature tangible actions and practical solutions with discussions that highlight the critical role of STI in delivering concrete outcomes for the SDGs. Additionally, they have mentioned the importance of capacity building and addressing gaps in STI, building on the momentum generated by the recent Summit of the Future.

- **Forum Structure:** The Forum features opening and closing sessions, thematic sessions aligned with the SDGs under review, and a ministerial session with possible innovators presentations. Limited special events and side events to be organized, with details on room and time availability to be finalized later.

- **Next Steps:** Working groups will be formed with IATT members and scientists from the 10-member group after the zero draft of the program comes out, to draft guiding questions, and identify speakers.

Richard Roehrl (DESA)

- **Context:** The Secretary to the SG's 10-Member-Group briefed the interagency task team on the outcomes of an in-person meeting of the Group (Lausanne, 22-23 Oct 2024). As per its TOR, the Group focuses on STI for the SDGs, including frontier technologies. Far more than an advisory group it supports the STI Forum through substantive leadership in session development, expert inputs, and partnerships, and serves as a bridge, bringing the latest scientific and technological insights into global UN processes.

- **Key themes:** One of the outcomes of the Lausanne meeting was a list of suitable thematic areas for STI Forum sessions and special events, which would be guided by an overall narrative on "Scientific breakthroughs for a sustainable, safe and just future for all – to link human rights and basic needs to global sustainability solutions" (in line with the expanded scope of STI in the Pact):

  1) Opening: Narrative "A Just World on a Safe Planet": Highlights the urgency of systemic changes to protect Earth's natural systems and ensure equitable futures.

2) Women at work in STEM: Advocates for closing gender gaps in STEM fields to unlock talent, foster inclusive innovation, and drive sustainable growth.

3) Access to knowledge for Sustainable Built Environments: Addresses urban sustainability through equitable access to resources and resilient infrastructure, particularly in vulnerable regions like Africa.

4) R&D Funding for the SDGs from basic science to start ups: Stresses the need for targeted investments in STI infrastructure, research funding, and private-sector innovation to reduce inequalities and accelerate SDG progress.

5) Strategic STI Roadmaps to build Thriving Economies while leaving fossil fuels underground: Encourages coordinated STI strategies to guide economies toward renewable energy and inclusive growth, leaving fossil fuels behind.

6) AI for SDGs – health care and food: Explores the transformative potential of AI and biotech in addressing global challenges but underscores the need for ethical governance.

7) Leveraging STI and space tech for oceans health and communities' livelihoods: Advocates using space-based innovations to monitor and protect ocean ecosystems while supporting coastal livelihoods.

8) AI and democracy: Discusses the implications of AI on governance and public discourse, highlighting the need for robust governance to combat misinformation.

9) Science Diplomacy and International Cooperation: Emphasizes the importance of international collaboration to address transboundary challenges and scale technologies equitably.

10) Closing: Looking ahead & anticipating high-impact STI changes: Anticipates emerging innovations with the potential to shape transformative pathways for sustainable development.

- **Conceptualization:** All sessions would discuss how breakthroughs could be harnessed. The themes are complemented by partnership initiatives pursued by the Group, e.g., the 'Women in STEM' initiative, sustainable built environment, Africa case studies, and an AI and biotech book. They would reinforce the thematic discussions and support practical follow-up implementations through open

partnerships. The themes outline elements of the 10-Member-Group's vision for sustainable, inclusive, and science-based solutions for the SDGs.

- **FFD4:** A related output of the Lausanne meeting were specific contributions to the STI debate in the preparatory process for FFD4 - a narrative on harnessing impactful STI changes and a summary of the conclusions of all STI Forums since 2016.

- **Engagement:** Going forward IATT experts are encouraged to engage with the Group's suggestions and prepare impactful STI Forum sessions documentation. In particular, they are encouraged to prepare science-policy briefs (in English or French) in response to the call for inputs on the Forum website.

Wei Liu (DESA)

- **Continuation of Young Innovators Initiative:** STI Forum is offering an exciting opportunity to showcase groundbreaking innovations that address critical sustainable development challenges in low-resource settings. This year, the Call for innovations is organized in collaboration with Engineering for Change (E4C). Building on past success, selected young innovators will again present their solutions during the two-day Forum to policymakers and stakeholders.

- **Partnership with Engineering for Change (E4C):** E4C will support the search for innovators as in previous years, offering their expertise and resources.

- **Call for Innovations:** The call for innovations will be launched through E4C's platform and featured on the STI Forum website. The announcement of the launch on the Forum's website is expected before the holidays, with reminders sent to IATT members after the New Year. Submissions will close by the end of January to allow sufficient time for selection, review, and administrative preparations.

- **Outreach Support:** IATT members are encouraged to help circulate the call within their networks, including engineering and science communities, universities, and other stakeholders. E4C will lead outreach efforts, leveraging its expertise from prior years.

- **Key Challenge:** Efforts are ongoing to mobilize funding to support travel for selected innovators, particularly those from developing countries. Updates on funding will be shared as the situation evolves.

Liping Zhang (UNCTAD)

- **CSTD 28th Annual Session:** Liping briefed the structure of the CSTD 28th Annual Session from April 7-11, 2025, which includes a ministerial roundtable intended to contribute to the 2025 HLPF theme with a focus on STI's role in advancing the SDGs; substantive discussions on two themes: one being diversifying economies in a world of accelerating digitalization and the other being technology foresight and technology assessment for sustainable development; and informal negotiations on a STI resolution and a WSIS resolution. She mentioned that 1 full day, i.e. 9 April, will be dedicated to the WSIS+20 Review, in preparation for the GA's review in 2025. The CSTD secretariat will present a comprehensive report based on inputs from stakeholders, regional consultations, and Member States, including the role of WSIS in the GDC implementation. Some side events related to quantum technology and other topics under discussion will also be held. The UNCTAD Technology and Innovation Report 2025 will be launched as a side event. The CSTD's Working Group on Data Governance as mandated by the GDC is being formed and will not be a substantive item of this annual session's agenda, though hopefully the group will have something to share with the participants. IATT members are welcome to participate in this annual session.

- **Key Linkages and Collaborations:** Co-Chairs of the STI Forum will be invited to participate in CSTD roundtable discussions. CSTD invites Member States, stakeholders, and participants from the STI Forum to join discussions and contribute to topics of shared interest, such as digitalization, STI for development, and the WSIS+20 Review.

- **Data Governance Working Group:** CSTD is establishing a working group on digital governance as mandated by the GDC. The composition is still under discussion, with plans to hold its first meeting before the April session.

Filippo Pierozzi (ODET[1]) and Riefqah Jappie [ITU]

- **Key Updates:** The Secretary-General has convened a Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of the Pact for the Future. The working group on digital technology, led by ITU and ODET, focuses on implementing Chap 3 of the Pact and the GDC and directly reports to SG's Steering Committee. The working

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[1] As of 1 January 2025, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology will transition to a new UN Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies (ODET) https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/press-release-new-un-office-digital-and-emerging-technologies

group is open to participation by all relevant UN entities, with the initial tasks of developing the implementation map for the GDC and promoting coherence and accountability across the UN system for GDC-related activities.

- It is anticipated that DESA will lead the subgroup on the implementation of Chapter 3 of the Pact.

- **Subgroups for GDC Implementation:** To facilitate progress on the GDC's objectives, subgroups will focus on specific themes, led by relevant UN agencies:

    o **Closing Digital Divides:** ITU & UNDP

    o **Inclusive Digital Economy:** UNCTAD & UNIDO

    o **Open, Safe, and Secure Digital Space:** OHCHR & UNESCO

    o **Data Governance:** CSTD

    o **Artificiel Intelligent:** ITU, UNESCO & ODET

- **ToR and Work Plan:** The ToR and Workplan are under preparation. The members of the Group will provide feedback before Dec 23rd 2024. Updates will continue.

Hoi Wai Jackie Cheng (DESA)

- **Process Updates:** The preparatory process for FfD4 includes up to five Prep Com sessions. The 1st Prep Com (July 2024, Addis Ababa) focused on assessing the progress made in advancing the FfD agenda since FfD3 in 2015, while the 2nd Prep Com (December 2024) focused on discussing the Elements Paper which was published by the co-facilitators of the FfD4 outcome document with significant stakeholder inputs. The 3rd Prep Com (February 2025) will begin negotiations on the Zero Draft of the outcome document, set to be released on January 17, 2025. Fourth Prep Com is expected to be held in April, with a possible fifth Prep Com to be held before FfD4, scheduled for 30 June - 3 July 2025 in Spain.

- **Opportunities for Stakeholders:** Stakeholders are welcome to organize side events during Prep Coms and the main conference. There is a tentative plan of creating a space at the conference for stakeholders to announce FfD-related initiatives, independent of the outcome document.

- **Substance Updates - Element Paper:** The STI chapter in the Elements Paper focuses on three key areas: **(a) Closing the Digital Divide** through investments in digital public infrastructure and digital public goods; **(b) Leveraging STI for SDGs**

with emphasis on technology transfer, capacity building, STI roadmaps, competition policies, AI, financing (e.g., strengthening the TFM and Tech Bank for LDCs), and proposals to enhance UN TFM collaboration, address barriers to technology diffusion (especially green technologies), promote digital infrastructure knowledge sharing, and establish a Global Sustainability Science Center for demonstration projects; and **(c) Fintech**, highlighting the need for regulation and enabling environments to harness its benefits for financial inclusion while addressing unintended consequences.

Marta Cali (Joint SDG Fund/DCO)

- **Briefing:** Marta introduced that Joint SDG Fund was established as a core component of the 2017 UN Development System reform and fully operational in 2019. It is a multi-partner trust fund aiming at accelerating the 2030 Agenda by promoting integrated policy support, innovative investment strategies, and SDG financing solutions at the country level. It currently benefits from funding from 17 Member State donors, and is overseen by a Strategic Advisory Group (chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General) and an Operational Steering Committee (OSC) chaired by the Director of the Development Coordination Office (DCO). The OSC manages day-to-day operations, supported by the Fund's Secretariat and a technical-level OSC.

- **2023-2026 Strategy:** It focused on accelerating SDG transitions in areas such as digital transformation, energy transition, food systems, social protection & jobs, as well as climate action. Key Pillars for the transformation are integration, scale, speed, context specificity, and sustainability.

- **Key Achievements and Impact:** Marta presented highlights of programmatic achievements in the area of Digital Transformation, Food System Transformation, Social Protection & Decent Jobs, and SDG Localization, with country-level examples.

- **Future Directions:** Strengthen collaboration among UN entities and a wide array of stakeholders to advance policy innovation and scale impactful programs for greater SDG acceleration.

- One-hour dedicated IATT virtual seminar is proposed to be held at the margin of the FfD4 Third PrepCom Session (10 - 14 February 2025) for joint discussion, bringing the RCs, DCOs and other partners.

Monica Nogara (Capacity Development Programme Management Office/DESA)

- **Capacity Development Program:** Monica complemented that DESA Capacity Development Programme focuses on translating global policy frameworks adopted by major UN conferences and summits into actionable and impactful implementation at the country level. She briefed about the type of support that DESA Programme, building on the Department's global expertise and analyses to produce methodologies, models, and toolkits in collaboration with a broad range of partners to assist member states translate the outcomes of international discussions into national strategies and plans.

- **Future Steps:** A new capacity development project focused on implementing STI4SDG Roadmaps will be launched by DESA next year (2025) in select countries in collaboration with the RC system, DCO, and the SDG Joint Fund. This initiative is an example of how DESA Capacity Development Programme can help strengthen the role of the STI Forum and the IATT in advancing new tools and methodologies to help countries to implement the outcomes of global discussions on STI for the SDGs (e.g., from the STI Forum) into actions on the ground.

Annex I: Agenda

1) **Secretariat's updates**

   a) 2025 STI Forum

   b) CSTD

2) **Briefing and Updates by IATT members**

   a) Pact of the Future – follow-ups (ITU and ODET)

   b) FfD4 (FSDO/DESA)

   c) Joint SDG Fund and RCs work on STI (SDG Fund)

   d) Others

3) **Other matters and looking ahead**

   a) Next meeting date (Thursday Jan. 30 2025 – tbc)

Annex II: Participants

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