

# Session 2: Applying Strategic Foresight to STI Roadmaps for SIDS



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Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CENTER OF BIG DATA  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS  
可持续发展大数据国际研究中心



**SRIM**



September 1-8, 2025

Beijing, China

# Welcome and Introduction

9:00-9:05

Mr. Sai Navoti

Chief, SIDS Unit, Division for Sustainable Development  
Goals, UNDESA



# Agenda



Welcome and session overview

**Mr. Sai Navoti**, Chief, SIDS Unit, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UNDESA



Strategic Foresight: An Overview

**Ms. Azeema Adam**, Senior Inter-regional Advisor, Strategic Foresight and Systems Thinking, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), UN DESA



Using Geospatial Data to Inform Foresight and Technology Assessment for STI Roadmaps

**Mr. Wei Liu**, IATT Coordinator, Sustainable Development Officer/UN Inter-agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UNDESA



Technology Assessment as a Trust-Building Process for AI and Geospatial Technologies

**Mr. Xavier Estico**, Chief Executive Officer National Institute For Science, Technology & Innovation, Seychelles



Group Activity: Horizon Scanning and Scenario Development

Facilitated by **Ms. Azeema Adam**



Why foresight matters for STI policy and planning

**Prof. John Ouma-Mugabe**, Professor of Science and Innovation Policy, Graduate School of Technology Management, University of Pretoria



*Group Activity Plenary and Question & Answers*



Wrap up and closing remarks

**Ms. Azeema Adam**, Senior Inter-regional Advisor, Strategic Foresight and Systems Thinking, UN DESA

**Mr. Sai Navoti**, Chief, SIDS Unit, UNDESA



# Strategic Foresight – an Overview

9:05-9:30

**Ms. Azeema Adam**

**Senior Inter-regional Advisor, Strategic Foresight and  
Systems Thinking,**

**Division for Public Institutions and Digital  
Government, UN DESA**





*My name is ...*

---

I have a ..... mindset

# What is Strategic Foresight?

*From reactive to proactive*

*A structured approach to exploring **future possibilities**, navigating **uncertainty**, and shaping **resilient** strategies.*

*No single future, but **multiple futures***

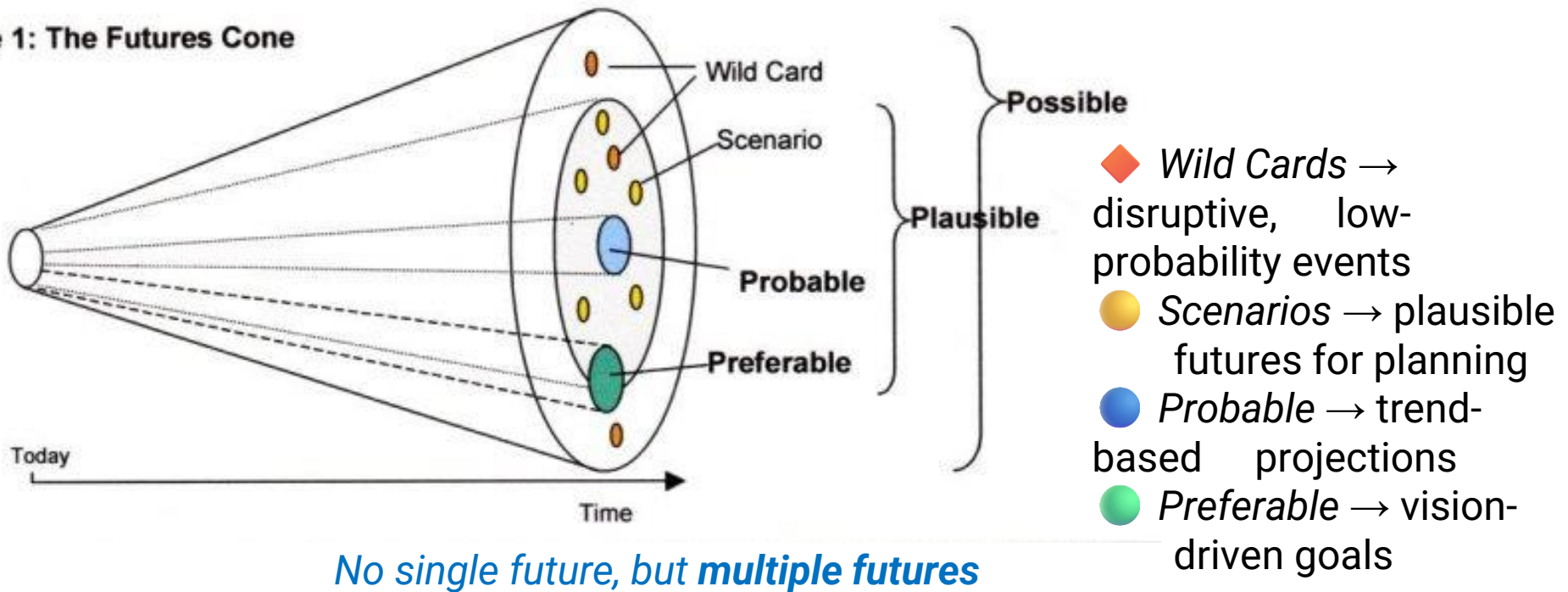


**In SIDS, foresight enables resilient choices across climate, economy, and society.**

# Multiple Futures?

The Futures Cone helps us explore uncertainty, clarify assumptions, and align actions with values

Figure 1: The Futures Cone



**Possible** (everything that could happen)

**Plausible** (what might happen based on current knowledge)

**Probable** (what's likely to happen)

**Preferable** (what we want to happen)



# SIDS in a TUNA World



**In a TUNA world,  
robust planning  
requires  
foresight—not  
just reaction**



**Turbulent** Climate shocks  
disrupting tourism & fisheries



**Uncertain** External markets  
and debt vulnerabilities



**Novel** New technologies  
reshape island opportunities



**Ambiguous** Conflicting signals  
on migration, aid, and  
sustainability



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# Why SIDS need Strategic Foresight

The future cannot be predicted, but foresight provides tools to:



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# Foresight vs Forecasting



## FORECASTING

Looks at past data to predict what's next



## FORESIGHT

Spots early signs of change before they show up in the usual reports

*“Our brains are wired to the past, but the past is not a guide to the future”*

Forecasts follow the past; foresight prepares for the unprecedented

**Geospatial data** adds the crucial “where” to decisions.

*where it might happen, for SIDS, that means pinpointing:*

- *Which coastlines are at risk of erosion*
- *Which reefs are bleaching fastest*
- *Which island cities face flooding*

# From Evidence to Action: Strategic Foresight for SIDS

*Strategic foresight combines evidence with imagination.*



**Use data —**  
Big Earth Data and  
geospatial tools show  
where risks emerge.



**Apply foresight —**  
scenarios and backcasting  
prepare for disruptions



**Shape futures —**  
adaptive policies build  
resilience for SIDS



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# Forces SIDS Must Navigate

*These forces challenge assumptions and shape the space of plausible futures we must navigate*



## Disruptions

Slow-onset change

Shocks

Tipping points

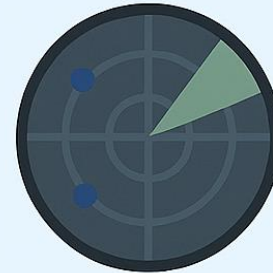


## Uncertainties

Unknowns

Emerging dynamics

Unpredictable interactions



## Weak Signals

Early signs of change

Often overlooked

May evolve into disruptions



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# Strategic Foresight Tools

## Explore the tools through three areas of application

### Make sense of change

These are the tools that help us make sense of what is happening: they help us to observe the world and to look out for signals of change—things that might be small today but could become big in the future, or vice-versa.

- **Horizon Scanning**
- **Three Horizons**
- **Futures**
- **Triangle Futures Wheel**

Source: UN Futures Lab (2023), UN Strategic Foresight Guide, pg12



### Imagine possible futures

These are the tools for identifying new possibilities for the future, building scenarios, and identifying what a desired future might look like.

- **Scenario Development**
- **Desired Future**
- **Matrix Policy Gaming**
- **Causal Layered Analysis**

### Take action

These are the tools that have to do with bringing the future back to the present. What transformations need to happen to bring about our desired future? What do we need to start doing now to move towards that future?

- **Back Casting**
- **Change Agenda**
- **Wind Tunnel Testing**

# How SIDS Can Apply Foresight

**SCAN**



## **Horizon scanning**

Track climate, tech, and market signals

**IMAGINE**



## **Scenario planning**

Explore alternative tourism, energy, and migration futures

**PLAN**



## **Backcasting**

Plan steps back from a resilient 2040 vision

# Shaping Resilient Futures

- *Foresight ensures the ocean remains a source of resilience, not vulnerability.*
- *With foresight and Big Earth Data, SIDS can safeguard sovereignty, sustainability, and survival.*



**The future should not catch us off guard**

**— it should find us ready**

# Thank you



# Using Geospatial Data to Inform Foresight and Technology Assessment for STI Roadmaps *A Practical Guide for SIDS and Beyond*

9:30-9:40

**Mr. Wei Liu**

**IATT Coordinator, Sustainable Development Officer/UN  
Inter-agency Task Team on Science, Technology and  
Innovation for the SDGs, Division for Sustainable  
Development Goals, UNDESA**



# The Core Challenge: Navigating Uncertainty



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals

**SIDS face unique vulnerabilities requiring long-term, evidence-based planning.**

- ***Foresight***: = navigating uncertainty (anticipating, not predicting)..
- ***The Data Gap***: STI Policy is data intensive. Traditional data tells us *what* and *why*, but often misses where.
- ***The Opportunity***: Geospatial data adds spatial context (coastal erosion, water stress)..

What

+

Why

+

Where

=

Wholistic Understanding



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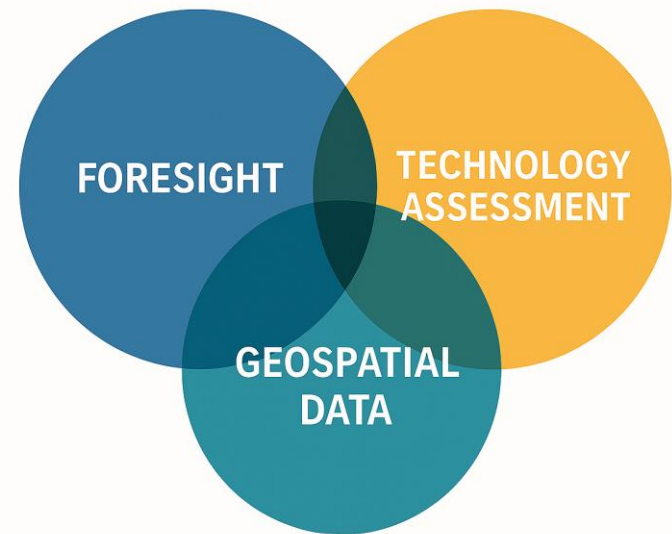
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# The Powerful Combo: Foresight + Geospatial Data



## A dual lens for smarter STI roadmaps

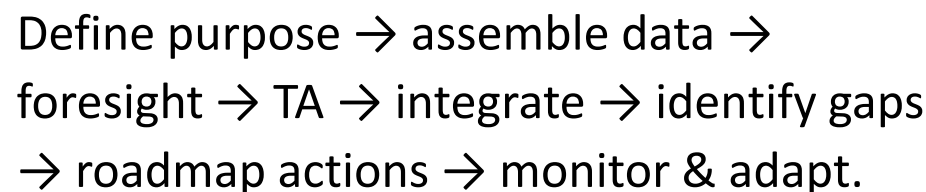
- **STI Foresight (What could be?)** → explores 10–20 year futures.
- **Technology Assessment (What is feasible?)** → evaluates present-day options.
- **Geospatial data = connector tissue** ensuring both visions and diagnostics are grounded in place.



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## A practical, iterative cycle.



## Flexibility in sequencing, scaling, or combining steps

Not linear, but cyclical, guided by continuous consultation.





## Example 1 – Food Security (SDG 2)



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Goals

### From data to foresight-driven action.

- **Data:** Cropping intensity shows low productivity.
- **Now:** Precision agri-tech (IoT sensors, drones).
- **Future:** Anticipate drought stress → R&D for drought-resistant crops.



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## Example 2: Matching Solutions to Readiness (A SIDS Perspective)



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Goals

### High-TRL Opportunity (Scale Now): Low-TRL Gap (Invest for Later):

- **Problem:** Saltwater Intrusion contaminating freshwater lenses (SDG 6).
- **Foresight:** Will worsen with sea-level rise and over-extraction.
- **Solution:** Deploy affordable sensor networks and AI-powered monitoring systems to manage extraction and map intrusion in real-time.
- **Problem:** Coral Reef Degradation (bleaching) from ocean warming (SDGs 13 & 14).
- **Foresight:** Critical for biodiversity, tourism, and coastal protection; threats are increasing.
- **Solution:** Fund R&D for next-generation coral restoration, such as selective breeding for heat-resistant “super coral” species.



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# Geospatial Insights for STI Investment



**Data reveals where to target innovation and investment.**

Examples from Table 2:

- **Coastal erosion (SDG 13/14):** Satellite shoreline data → mangroves + adaptive infra.
- **Groundwater depletion (SDG 6):** Remote sensing aquifers → solar-powered recharge tech.
- **Urban heat islands (SDG 11):** Thermal imagery → urban greening, cool roofs.



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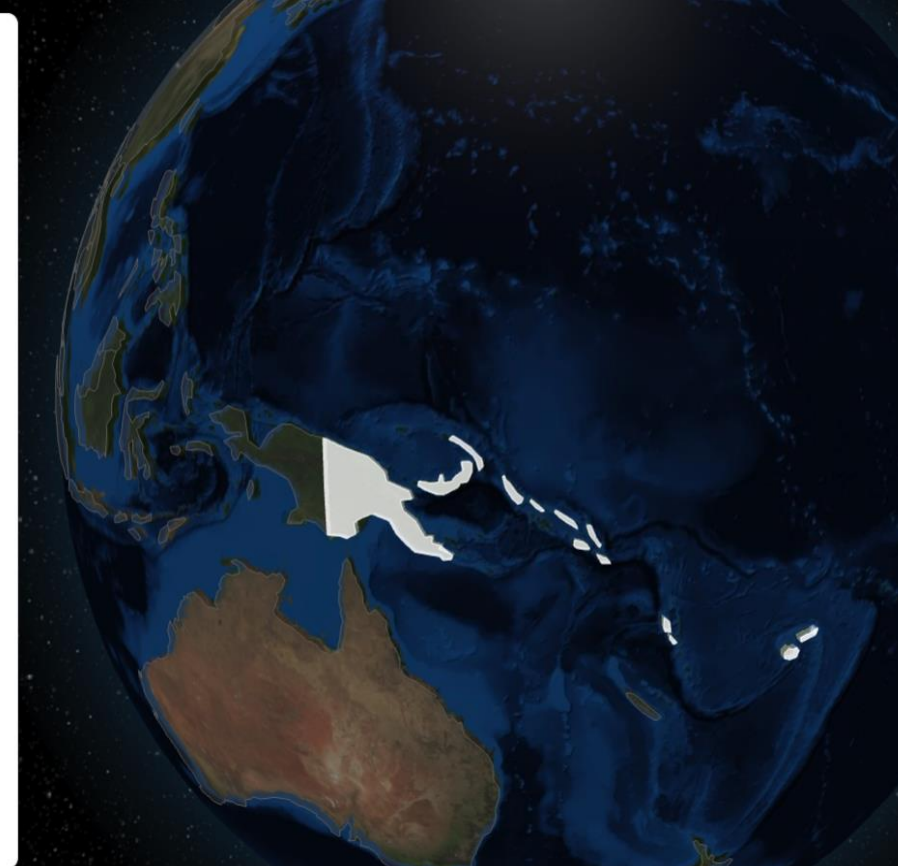
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# Enabling Implementation



## Capacity, tools, partnerships.

- **Build capacity:** Train GIS/data analysts (UNOSAT model).
- **Leverage open data and tools** CBAS, NASA, UNOSAT; QGIS
- **Innovative platforms:** Conversational AI for non-experts.
- **Partnerships:** UN DESA, regional peers, and peer governments.



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# First Steps for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals

## Practical entry points.



**Assess:** Map current skills/data.



**Leverage:** Use open-data portals/tools.



**Partner:** Collaborate, don't build alone.



**Pilot:** Start small (e.g., coastal mapping).

## The ABAS and the SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## Capacity Building Workshop for Small Island Developing States: Leveraging Big Earth Data to Evaluate the SDGs Progress

Mon 01 Sep 2025, 9:00 am — Mon 08 Sep 2025, 4:30 pm

Beijing, China

UN DESA, International Research Center of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals (CBAS), United Nations Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre, China Association for Science and Technology (CAST)



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## Key Takeaways



### **Anchor STI in evidence + anticipation.**

- Don't just diagnose → anticipate.
- Balance today's feasibility with tomorrow's needs.
- Start small → think big, scale with partnerships.

**Integrated  
approach**

**=**

**Resilience and sustainability  
for SIDS and beyond**



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# Thank you!

**Questions? Follow up Webinar ...**

**Contact: Wei Liu, [liuw@un.org](mailto:liuw@un.org)**

<https://sdgs.un.org/events/capacity-building-workshop-small-island-developing-states-leveraging-big-earth-data-evaluate#background>

# Technology Assessment as a Trust-Building Process for AI and Geospatial Technologies

9:40-9:50

**Mr. Xavier Estico**

**10-UN Member Group Member STI for SDGs**

**&**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**National Institute For Science, Technology & Innovation, Seychelles**





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**International Society for  
Digital Earth**

**Capacity Building Workshop for Small Island**

**Developing States: Leveraging Big Earth Data to Evaluate the SDGs Progress**

**1-8 September 2025, Beijing, China**

# Technology Assessment as a Trust-Building Process for AI and Geospatial Technologies

Presented by:

Xavier Estico

10-UN Member Group Member STI for SDGs

September 2025

# Technology Assessment Definition

Technology Assessment (TA) is the comprehensive evaluation of a new technology's impacts, while trust building involves the strategic actions taken to establish and maintain confidence with stakeholders. The two concepts are deeply interconnected, as a rigorous, ethical assessment process directly informs the transparency, accountability, and reliability needed to build trust



## TA as a Trust-building Process in New Technologies

TA is a multi-faceted process for evaluating a technology's value and potential effects beyond its immediate function. A robust TA considers a broad spectrum of impacts, including:

- Economic: Cost-effectiveness and impact on employment.
- Social: Effects on user satisfaction, digital inclusion, and the potential to reinforce or create societal bias.
- Ethical: Adherence to principles such as fairness, accountability, and the responsible handling of user data.
- Environmental: Effects on resource consumption and end-of-life disposal.
- Technical: Performance, reliability, and security measures.

# Strategies to build trust in AI and Geospatial Technologies

## 1. Explain the value proposition:

- The first step to building trust is to communicate clearly and convincingly how your new technology can solve a problem, meet a need, or create an opportunity for your target audience;
- Articulate the benefits and advantages of your new technology, as well as how it differs from existing or competing solutions;
- Need to address any potential risks, challenges, or trade-offs that your new technology might entail, and how you plan to mitigate them; and
- By explaining the value proposition of your new technology, you can show that you understand your audience's pain points, goals, and preferences, and that you have a solution that can help them.

# Strategies to build trust in AI and Geospatial Technologies (cont.....)

## 2. Demonstrate the reliability and quality:

- The second step to building trust is to provide evidence and proof that your new technology works as intended, and that it meets or exceeds the standards and expectations of your audience;
- Showcasing the features and functionalities of your new technology, as well as the results and outcomes that it can deliver;
- Sharing of testimonials, reviews, or case studies from satisfied customers, users, or partners who have used your new technology and achieved positive results; and
- By demonstrating the reliability and quality of your new technology, you can show that you have a track record of success, and that you can deliver on your promises.

# Strategies to build trust in AI and Geospatial Technologies (cont.....)

## 3. Engage in dialogue and feedback:

- The third step to building trust is to invite and encourage dialogue and feedback from your audience, and to respond to their questions, comments, or concerns;
- Creating opportunities and channels for interaction, such as surveys, polls, forums, social media, or live events;
- provide support and guidance for your audience, such as tutorials, FAQs, or customer service; and
- By engaging in dialogue and feedback, you can show that you value your audience's opinions, insights, and experiences, and that you are open to learning from them and improving your new technology.

# Strategies to build trust in AI and Geospatial Technologies (cont.....)

## 4. Align with the values and norms:

- The fourth step to building trust is to align your new technology with the values and norms of your audience, and to respect their culture, beliefs, and preferences;
- Conducting research and analysis on your audience's demographics, psychographics, and behaviours, and by adapting your new technology accordingly;
- Involve your audience in the design, development, or testing of your new technology, and by co-creating solutions that suit their needs and wants; and
- By aligning with the values and norms of your audience, you can show that you care about their well-being, dignity, and rights, and that you are not imposing or exploiting your new technology.



# Strategies to build trust in AI for Geospatial Technologies (cont.....)

## 5. Embrace transparency and accountability:

- The fifth step to building trust is to embrace transparency and accountability for your new technology, and to disclose and explain how it works, what it does, and why it does it;
- providing clear and accessible information and documentation on your new technology, such as its purpose, function, logic, data, and impact;
- Adhering to the relevant laws, regulations, and ethical principles that govern your new technology, and by complying with the best practices and standards of your industry or sector; and
- By embracing transparency and accountability, you can show that you have nothing to hide, and that you are responsible and trustworthy for your new technology.

## Strategies to build trust in AI and Geospatial Technologies

(cont...)

### 6. Foster a sense of community and collaboration:

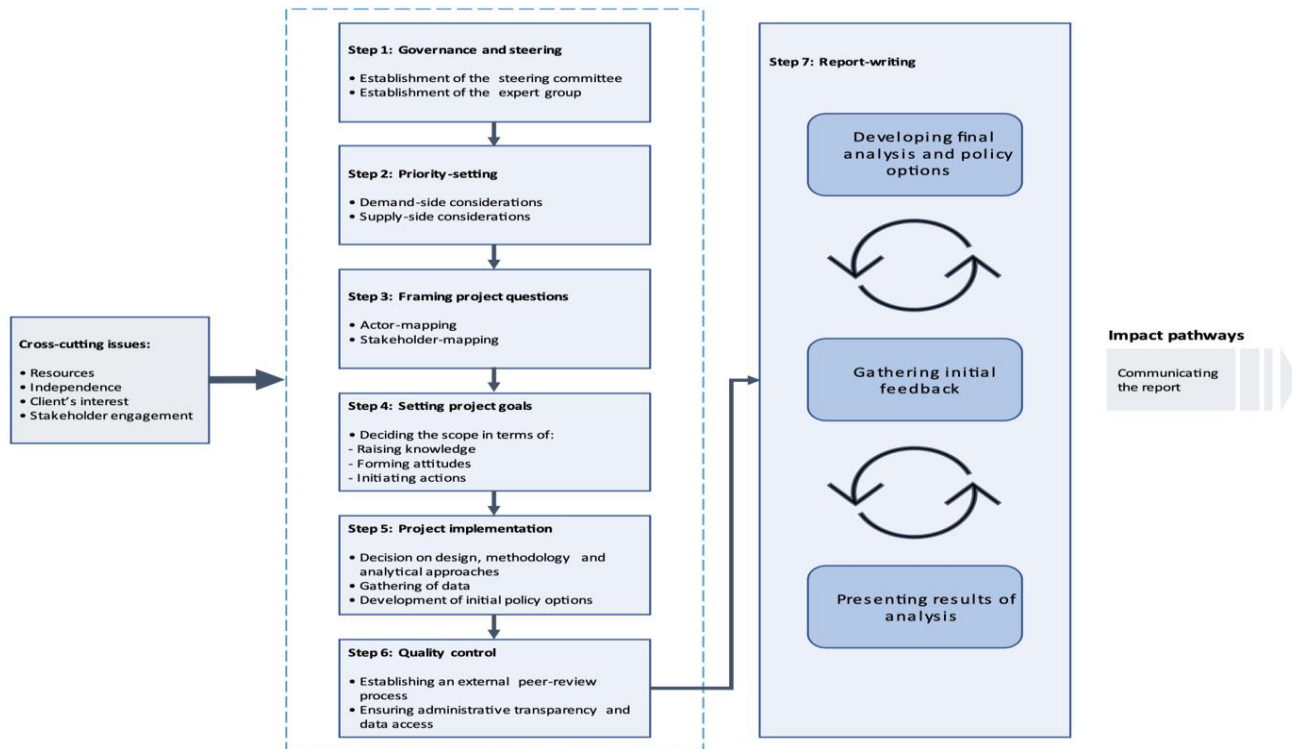
- The sixth step to building trust is to foster a sense of community and collaboration around your new technology, and to connect and network with your audience and other stakeholders;
- Creating and joining platforms, groups, or events that bring together people who share a common interest, goal, or vision related to your new technology;
- Partnering or cooperating with other organizations, institutions, or experts who can support, endorse, or enhance your new technology; and
- By fostering a sense of community and collaboration, you can show that you are not alone, and that you are part of a larger ecosystem that values and benefits from your new technology.

# Strategies to build trust in AI and Geospatial Technologies (cont.....)

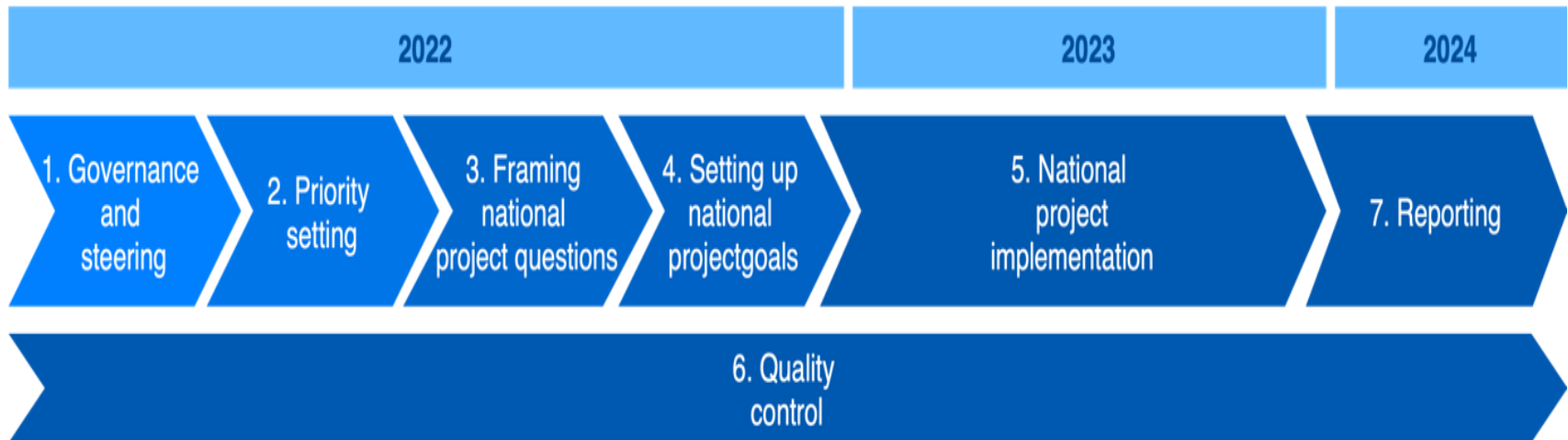
## 7. Other considerations:

- This is a space to share examples, stories, or insights that don't fit into any of the previous sections.

# UNCTAD Proposed Technology Assessment (TA) Methodology

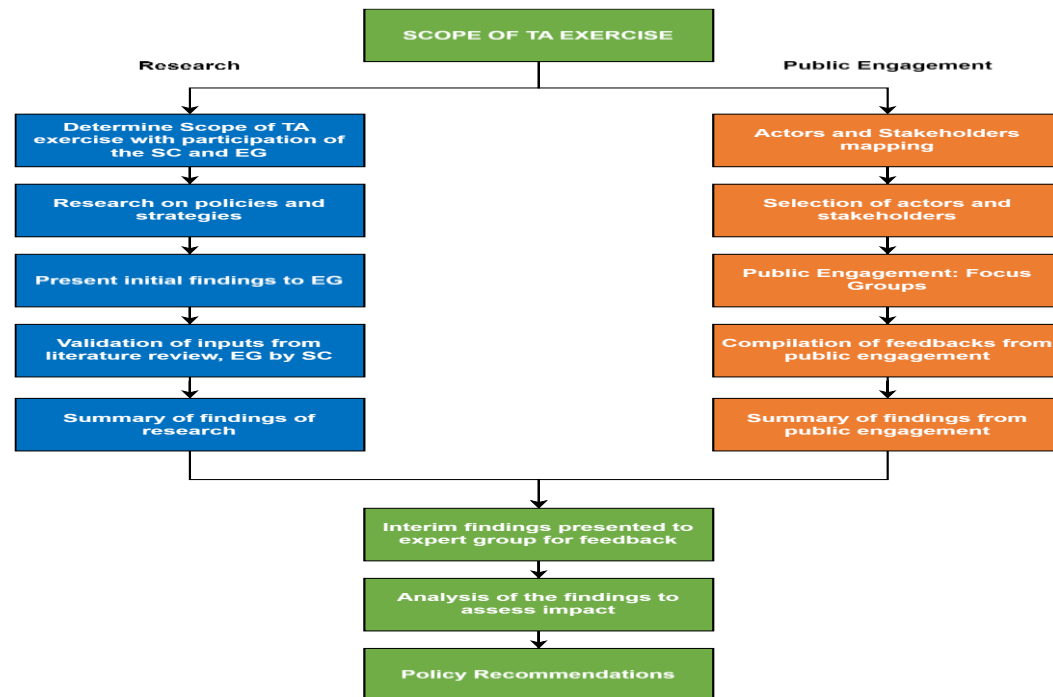


## Timeline of the TA proposed at the first stakeholders' workshop (Seychelles' TA Process)





# Substantive activities undertaken during the TA (Seychelles' context)



# Conclusions

TA is an effective process that can help in building trust when adopting new technologies, including AI as;

- I. It provides perspective on the the value proposition;
- II. It helps to demonstrate the reliability and quality about the technology;
- III. It engages in dialogue and feedback;
- IV. It aligns with cultural values and norms;
- V. It embraces transparency and accountability;
- VI. It helps in fostering a sense of community and collaboration; and
- VII. It provides a space to share examples, stories, or insights

# Recommendations

In order to build trust in the adoption of new technologies, including AI and Geospatial technologies, among SIDS, it is important that TA becomes a central part of the decision-making and STI policy formulation process.

спасибо  
danke 謝謝  
ngiyabonga  
teşekkür ederim  
dank je  
gracias  
tapadh leat  
hvala  
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kop khun krap  
go raibh maith agat  
arigato  
dakujem  
merci  
obrigado  
bedankt  
moichhakkeram  
sazodas  
lonima kasiti  
고맙습니다  
grazie  
kuyapote

# Group Activity: Horizon Scanning

9:50 – 10:30

Facilitator: Ms. Azeema Adam

Senior Inter-regional Advisor



# What Horizon Scanning Is & How It's Applied

Identify emerging changes that could have a big impact on a country or a specific sector to make sense of a disruption or new changes in society

## What are these?

- Drivers → “forces shaping change”
- Trends → “directions of change”
- Signals → “early signs of new risks or opportunities”
- Wildcards → “low-probability, high-impact shocks”

## Ways to Apply Horizon Scanning

- Multiple approaches → lean or in-depth.
- Sources of insight → expert panels, surveys, social listening, desk research, community voices.
- Framing tools → use PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental).

Horizon scanning is the practice of spotting **early signals of change** to prepare for **emerging risks** and **opportunities**



# How Horizon Scanning Works

Key steps:

- Gather diverse perspectives.
- Identify early signals, drivers, uncertainties.
- Clarify and elaborate → who's affected, what are the implications?
- Prioritize high-impact, high-certainty (to prepare) and high-impact, high-uncertainty (to explore).

Iterative practice → regular, not one-off.

## Where does data fit in?

- Signals can be **qualitative** or **quantitative**.
- Data & forecasts support **drivers** and **trends** once identified.
- Monitor **leading indicators** for early warning.
- Scoring probability/impact can help prioritization

# Discussion at Tables

**Objective:** *Identify drivers, trends, signals, and wild cards for key SIDS challenges.*

## Instructions:

- Each group will take **one topic** from the list.
- For your topic, identify:
  - **Drivers** → underlying forces shaping this issue
  - **Trends** → observable directions of change
  - **Signals** → early signs of emerging risks or opportunities
  - **Wild Cards** → low-probability, high-impact events that could disrupt everything

## Topics:

1. **Groundwater depletion** – threatens freshwater access and food security
2. **Coral reef degradation** – impacts biodiversity, tourism, and coastal protection
3. **Urban heat islands** – affects health, energy demand, and urban planning
4. **Coastal erosion** – undermines infrastructure and displaces communities
5. **Declining land productivity** – reduces arable land and food production

Please appoint a **chair** who will lead the discussion and a group **rapporteur** who report in plenary.

Where possible, think about how **geospatial or Big Earth Data** could inform your analysis

# Horizon Scanning – an example: Marine Plastic Pollution

## Drivers

- Global plastic production and trade
- Weak waste management systems in SIDS
- Ocean currents transporting debris across regions

## Trends

- Rising plastic accumulation in coastal zones
- Increasing regional and global attention on plastic bans and circular economy
- Growth of plastic alternatives

## Signals

- Local pilot projects on plastic recycling and alternatives
- Community beach clean-ups with geotagged reporting apps
- Early research showing microplastics in SIDS fisheries and water supplies

## Wild Cards

- A breakthrough global plastics treaty with strict enforcement
- Sudden collapse of fisheries due to microplastic contamination
- A technological breakthrough rapidly reduces marine plastics

## How Geospatial / Big Earth Data Can Help

- **Mapping hotspots** → satellite imagery & ocean current models show accumulation zones
- **Monitoring over time** → remote sensing tracks seasonal/annual changes in plastic flows

**Coffee/Tea Break**

**10:30-10:45**





# Group Activity: Scenario Development

10:45-11:20

**Facilitator: Ms. Azeema Adam**

**Senior Inter-regional Advisor**



# Scenario Development

An approach to broaden our understanding of how the future may evolve

- A **strategy to identify risks and opportunities**, especially those that emerge when different drivers of change interact.
- Scenarios help us **plan for risks and issues** by telling a **tangible story of the future**: how change unfolded and what actions were taken.
- Scenarios are **structured around different time horizons**:
  - Understand how the **present evolved** into this future.
  - Explore how **drivers of change and their interlinkages** combined to shape different futures.
- Scenarios present **alternative futures**. No single scenario is “preferred.” Each has both **positive and negative elements**.



Normally, scenario development is a **multi-step, time-intensive** process involving **mapping drivers, exploring uncertainties, and iterating** across **multiple time horizons**.



# Why Interlinkages Matter

- **Drivers don't act alone** → they interact with each other.
- These interactions can **amplify risks** or **create new opportunities**.
- Understanding interlinkages helps us **see cascading effects** rather than isolated issues.
- Scenarios become richer when we ask:

*How do different forces combine to shape the future?*

## Example:

- Rising sea levels (environmental) + weak coastal infrastructure (social/technical) → **coastal displacement crisis**.
- Digital innovation (technological) + strong youth networks (social) → **new blue economy jobs**.

**Driver 1: Rising sea levels**  
(Environmental)



**Driver 2: Weak coastal infrastructure**  
(Social/Technical)



**Interlink → Coastal displacement crisis**  
(Risk)

**Driver 1: Digital innovation**  
(Technological)



**Driver 2: Strong youth networks**  
(Social)



**Interlink → New blue economy jobs**  
(Opportunity)

# Change progression method

*We will be exploring two scenarios (baseline and radical) per major force of change (interlinkage), using the drivers of change that you identified in the horizon scanning exercise.*

👉 *These are the same drivers you worked on earlier—now we'll explore how they could shape very different futures.*



## Baseline Scenario

No-change path, indicating that the weight of the past has stopped any change, referring to a response that reflects a status quo state



## Marginal Change

Path with minor changes, which is a response to change that is largely reactionary



## Adaptive Change

Path of agility, indicating a move beyond old patterns and behavior that is reformist and progressive



## Radical Change

Major structural transformation, indicating revolutionary responses

# Step 1: Inputs for Scenarios

Please appoint a **chair** who will lead the discussion and a group **rapporteur** who will take notes.

## Instructions:

- Start with your **horizon scanning outputs**.
- Select **2–3 critical drivers of change**.
- Choose **1 wildcard** that could disrupt the future.

## Definition:

👉 *Critical drivers of change are the key forces — certain or uncertain — that will most influence how your topic evolves.*

## Example: Marine Plastic Pollution

Critical drivers: Global plastic production (certainty), weak waste management in SIDS (uncertain)

## Wildcard: Sudden international plastics treaty

## What we're not doing (today's shortcut):

- Mapping all interlinkages between drivers.
- Using quantitative models or Ai models

**10 Minutes**

## Step 2: Waves of Change

**First wave** → Initial effects of your chosen drivers and wildcard.

**Second wave** → Consequences and stakeholder responses.

**Third wave** → Cascading ripple effects across society, economy, and governance.

**Example:** *Marine Plastic Pollution*

**Drivers:** Global plastic production (certainty), weak waste management in SIDS (uncertain).

**Wildcard:** Sudden plastics treaty.

**First wave:** Plastic accumulates on coasts; fisheries contaminated.

**Second wave:** Tourism declines, governments face new waste costs, local entrepreneurs test alternatives.

**Third wave:** Regional alliances form, SIDS gain global leverage, new green jobs emerge.

**10 Minutes**

## Step 3: Develop 2 scenarios

- Use your selected **drivers + wildcard + waves of change**.
- Develop **two contrasting futures for 2040 and beyond**:
  - Baseline Scenario** – if today's trends continue with little major change.
  - Radical Scenario** – if a big disruption or transformation reshapes the future.
- For each scenario, describe in 3–5 bullets:
  - What the future looks like in 2040
  - Main **risks** and **opportunities**
  - A short, creative **title**

**10 Minutes**

*If time allows, write your scenarios as a short narrative.*

*Each group will share their baseline and radical scenario in plenary (max 3 minutes).*



# Why foresight matters for STI policy and planning

11:20 - 11:30

**Prof. John Ouma-Mugabe**

Professor of Science and Innovation Policy, Graduate  
School of Technology Management, University of Pretoria





# Group Activity: Plenary

11:30-11:45

**Facilitator: Ms. Azeema Adam**

**Senior Inter-regional Advisor**



# Reporting back in plenary



# Question and Answers

11:45 - 11:55





# Wrap-up and Closing

11:55 - 12:00

**Ms. Azeema Adam**

Senior Inter-regional Advisor

**Mr. Sai Navoti**

Chief, SIDS Unit

