

**Operationalizing Partnerships for the STI Forum 4 March 2026,
Conference room 2**

Speaker: Representative of the Business and Industry Major Group (BIMG)
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Excellencies, ladies & gentlemen,

Thank you. I speak today on behalf of the Business and Industry Major Group, co-chaired by IOE and USCIB. As we look toward the 2026 STI Forum, we see a historic opportunity to move from the "what" to the "delivery and scaling of our joint efforts." We aren't just here to discuss technology; we are here to **operationalize it**.

The private sector is a **key partner** in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Our focus is now on the **last mile of innovation**, ensuring that science and technology are fully embedded in the real economy.

When we talk about the private sector, we are talking about a massive, grounded reality. Through the IOE network, we represent **50 million companies in over 150 countries**. Crucially, the vast majority of these are **SMEs**. These millions of businesses are where the green and digital transitions must be realized.

We need **operational partnerships** that connect global technology providers directly to our local networks to ensure that AI and digital tools truly reach the **small factory floors and rural entrepreneurs**.

We also need to address the financial structure. There is an enormous **\$5.7 trillion finance gap** for MSMEs. These businesses aren't failing because they lack ideas; they're failing because they often don't have the traditional collateral needed by older lending models.

The STI Forum can operationalize a solution by championing **Data-Driven Lending partnerships**. By bringing together fintech, traditional banks, and

governments to treat an SME's digital footprint as a bankable asset, we can finally unlock the capital needed for industrial modernization.

As we move forward, we must also be mindful of the transition for SMEs as they navigate new global digital standards for sustainability and ESG reporting. For many of our members, the challenge isn't a lack of commitment, but the administrative capacity to manage complex data requirements.

We see a great opportunity for **capacity-building partnerships** here. By co-designing "user-friendly" and "data-light" digital tools, we can ensure that technology acts as an open door to global trade—empowering SMEs to participate in global value chains without being overwhelmed by complexity.

Excellencies, innovation doesn't happen in isolation. It requires an **action**—where government, industry, and academia are **co-designing and co-investing in the outcome**.

Therefore, in the planning of the STI Forum we suggest :

-The private sector should be represented by all...while multinationals are critical, also MSMES must be included -companies of all sizes, geographies, and industries. Online participation essential.

-Let us not wait for the forum – let us already identify the wealth of existing information on how to- on data, technology, good inclusive governance. Let us not reinvent the wheel and let us link all events Partnership Forum, FIN4Dev to be build synergies.

-Business is ready to move beyond the "how" and start the "doing." Let's make the 2026 Forum the place where global partnerships finally become operational.

Thank you.
