

11th Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals¹

United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA, 6 to 7 May 2026

DRAFT Concept Note

Mandate

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development launched a Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM), which had been established by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2015, in order to support the SDGs. Member States agreed that it would “*be based on a multi-stakeholder collaboration between Member States, civil society, the private sector, the scientific community, United Nations entities and other stakeholders*”.

The collaborative *Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals* - informally referred to as “STI Forum” – is one of the mandated components of the TFM. It is convened annually by the President of ECOSOC and expected to “*discuss science, technology and innovation cooperation around thematic areas for the implementation of the sustainable development goals, congregating all relevant stakeholders to actively contribute in their area of expertise.*” It provides “*a venue for facilitating interaction, matchmaking and the establishment of networks between relevant stakeholders and multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to identify and examine technology needs and gaps, including with regard to scientific cooperation, innovation and capacity-building, and also in order to help facilitate development, transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for the sustainable development goals*”.²

Objectives

The STI Forum brings together a wide range of stakeholders from Member States, UN system, civil society, academia, private sector and various science and technology communities to help harness science, technology and innovation (STI) for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has become a venue for facilitating the establishment of networks, for strengthening the science-policy interface, and for promoting the development, transfer, and dissemination of technologies for the SDGs. *Inter alia*, the STI Forum provides formal inputs to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and its review of the SDGs. The STI Forum 2026 will be an opportunity to follow-up to the STI-related outcomes of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), the 3rd UN Ocean Conference, and the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025. Like previous Fora, it will also take action in implementation of STI elements of the SDG Summit 2023 and the Pact for the Future adopted at the UN Summit of the Future in 2024.

The STI Forum will be an opportunity to identify and showcase high-impact technologies and innovations for sustainable development, particularly those that could help address difficult trade-offs, or accelerate inclusion. This could include discussions of practical, innovative solutions, good practices

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/tfm/STIForum2026>

² Paragraph 70 of ‘Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, A/RES/70/1.

and case studies for support countries to develop and implement mission-oriented, country-led national innovation strategies, including STI for SDGs road maps and national road maps for digitalization; knowledge sharing on enabling environments for technology development, deployment and access; innovative financing of STI; and exploring ways of promoting the use of technologies and know-how that are freely available in the public domain. It will also offer a space for taking stock of the progress made in harnessing STI for the SDGs, while identifying and acting on STI needs, gaps and divides.

Theme

The STI Forum is mandated to provide important inputs and scientific-technological perspectives to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2026. As in previous years, the theme of the STI Forum will be closely aligned with that of the HLPF. Accordingly, the theme for the STI Forum 2026 is: **“Transformative, equitable and coordinated science, technology and innovation for the 2030 Agenda and a sustainable future for all”**. The STI Forum will support the HLPF annual review of SDG progress³ – this year’s focus will be on scientific and technological solutions for the following SDGs which will be under review at the HLPF:

- **SDG 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- **SDG 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- **SDG 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- **SDG 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- **SDG 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

To allow deep-dive discussions on recent scientific-technological breakthroughs and in line with past practice, the 10-Member-Group of High-level Representatives will prepare a substantive background note with further details on strategic and cross-cutting thematic areas of focus within the overall theme of the STI Forum.

Organization of work

Member States decided that the STI Forum 2026 will be held on 6 and 7 May 2026.⁴ Unless otherwise decided, the Forum will be held at UN headquarters in New York, USA. As per its mandate, the STI Forum 2026 will be convened by the President of ECOSOC, *H.E. Lok Bahadur Thapa*, who appointed two Co-chairs: H.E. Mr. Chola Milambo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zambia to the United Nations and H.E. Mr. Gregor W. Koessler, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations.

The Co-chairs of the Forum provide overall political ownership, mobilize high-level participation from Member States, rally support for the Forum, brief Member States and stakeholders on the preparations, and chair the Forums’ sessions, and approve a Co-chairs’ summary of the Forum.

³ The theme of the 2026 HLPF has been decided as “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for a sustainable future for all” and will review SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17.

⁴ Resolution E/RES/2026/1 <https://docs.un.org/en/E/RES/2026/1> : working arrangements for the 2026 session of the Economic and Social Council

The mandated 10-Member-Group of High-level Representatives provides overall substantive ownership, serves as speakers in their areas of expertise and typically moderates the thematic sessions. The UN interagency task team on STI for the SDGs (IATT), currently led by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and comprising 50 UN entities, provides organizational and substantive expert support. Together, they are mandated to *organize* the STI Forum.

The STI Forum features an opening and a closing session, deep dive discussions in thematic sessions, as well as a Ministerial session, and potentially a limited number of special events depending on resource availability. The Forum aims to be interactive and explore the use of in-person and online channels of participation to engage scientific communities worldwide. Stakeholders will be invited to organize side events.

Meeting documentation, including substantive session notes will be prepared by the Secretariat. Among others and as in previous years, IATT will issue a call for inputs seeking science-policy briefs on the latest STI issues and developments, in support of the Forum discussions. Contributions which successfully pass the peer-review may be featured on the STI Forum website. They may also be presented as “an update on the reviews of science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals” providing an overall snapshot of scientific-technological progress and of policy actions recommended by scientists and engineers in line with the SDGs.

Speakers

Session speakers comprise a mix of high-level and eminent experts, practitioners and innovators from governments, academia, private sector, civil society, and international organizations. This includes Ministers, director generals, and high-level policy makers, representatives of international organizations with expertise in STI for SDGs, eminent academics, experts, innovators, practitioners from universities, tech companies, start-ups, and civil society. Speaker selection considers geographic and gender balance, as well as balance between developers/ creators and users of technologies.

As in previous years, the 10-Member-Group of high-level representatives are expected to serve as moderators or speakers, in line with their expertise and the session’s thematic focus. In particular, the co-chairs of the 10-Member Group typically play an important role in a “way forward” or “implementation” session, by providing reflections on the future direction of the TFM including the STI Forum.

Innovators identified through a call for innovation may also be invited to kick-off thematic sessions with short “innovation pitches” presenting their tangible innovations linked to specific SDG challenges.

Participation

Participation in the Forum is designed to be open, diverse and multi-stakeholder in nature. The Forum includes experts that are not often directly engaged with the UN, in line the ultimate objective to bring the UN closer to the pulse of scientific-technological progress which happens in tech companies, start-ups, universities, laboratories, and think tanks. Accordingly, participants will include Ministers and senior government officials, scientists and engineers, innovators and entrepreneurs, and representatives of organized science and technology communities, the United Nations system, and other international organizations.

All representatives of non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders who wish to attend the STI Forum and parallel events in person must register and apply, in line with criteria established in a participant guide to be issued by the Secretariat.

Side events and synergies with other STI events

A limited number of side-events can be organized by Member States, the UN system, international organizations, non-governmental stakeholders, as well as selected universities, laboratories, and scientific and engineering organizations, in both in-person and online formats, on 5, 6 or 7 May. A call for side event proposals will be issued by the Secretariat.

Since the STI Forum's inception, intersessional work by IATT and 10-Member-Group has played a very important role in contributing to the Forum preparations and its follow-up. This includes high-level STI events that are typically convened during the week of the STI Forum informally known as "STI Week" from 4 to 8 May 2026 and throughout the year, notably the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development, STI Forums of the UN Regional Commissions, and the FAO Science & Innovation Forum, and G-STIC.

As per its mandate, one important function of the STI Forum is to promote networking across multiple stakeholders and promote matchmaking of technology supply and demand. Therefore, as in previous years, the Secretariat is planning to organize an innovation competition, through a partnership with engineering organizations and under the guidance of the 10-Member Group. This year, the call focuses on proven and practical innovations addressing challenges created linked to the achievement of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17. Following a selection process, a small number from amongst those innovations submitted will be presented during the STI Forum.

Follow-up to the Forum

The formal output of the STI Forum is a Co-chairs' summary of the Forum, issued as a note by the Secretariat, which is a General Assembly-mandated input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The STI Forum 2026 is part of a continuum of annual events from 2016 to 2030, each building cumulatively upon the last to progressively develop a roadmap of policy, solutions and practical initiatives to harness STI for the SDGs.

The Forum also connects, on a reciprocal basis, to similar sector-specific or regional initiatives undertaken with similar objectives. This arrangement and the UN IATT workstreams enable a sustained follow-up that engages many organizations and individuals.