



Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs

New York, 15-16 May 2017

Concept note for

Lunchtime event on scaling up STI through impact investing

Conference Room 4, UN Headquarters New York, 16 May 2017, 13:15 - 14:30 am

1. Background

The first meeting of the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (“STI Forum”) in 2016 highlighted an existing gap between innovations that have the potential to serve the poor and contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the support needed to ensure their adoption at scale. To close that gap, the Forum suggested expanding participation to include the financial sector, especially providers of early-stage finance, who could be matched with participating innovators, as well as to include discussions around policy measures to support such scaling up.

Therefore, on the second day of the STI Forum 2017, UN partners (UN DESA, WIPO, UNCTAD, UNIDO) together with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the Global Solutions Summit/the Global Cleantech Cluster Association (GCCA), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), and Impact 2030 are coming together for a special lunchtime event around the topic of “scaling up STI through impact investing”.

“Impact investments” are investments made into companies, organizations, and funds with the intention to generate social and environmental impact alongside a financial return. This allows investors to use their funds in goodwill to address global challenges to sustainable development, while also receiving a return on investment. Estimates based on industry survey suggest that over US\$ 77.4 billion of impact investment assets were managed in 2015. Demand for impact investment continued to grow – from US\$ 15.2 billion in new investment commitments in 2015 to USD 17.7 billion in 2016.¹⁴

The SDGs elaborate aspirational goals that were agreed by all UN Member States. They highlight areas of investment that might have transformative impact. Channelling investments into scaling up the commercial deployment of technology for SDGs might prove one of the most effective and efficient ways to make progress towards the SDGs.

2. Objectives

The main objective of the session is to discuss how to foster and scale up commercial deployment of technologies and innovations for the SDGs using new types of financial instruments, investment funds and funding platforms. Consideration will be given to ways to develop and pilot technological solutions for the SDGs, and to support the enabling policies that may be needed for taking these to scale, particularly through impact investing.

The session will bring together innovators and entrepreneurs, those interested in financing solutions with positive impact for sustainable development, and those who develop policies to foster the scale up of STI for SDGs. Representatives from the finance industry, foundations, institutional and individual investors, investment professionals, development finance institutions, policy makers and civil society will be invited to attend.

¹⁴ Mudaliar, A., Schiff, H., and Bass, R. (2016). Annual Impact Investor Survey 2016. The Global Impact Investing Network.

3. Format

The session will be organized in the form of a panel discussion. The moderator will introduce the topic and the panellists who will give brief (max. 5 minutes) remarks, followed by moderated discussion and remarks from the floor.

4. Questions for discussion

The discussion will be guided by the following questions:

- What are the main obstacles to scaling-up the commercial deployment of technologies for SDGs?
- How to make technology solutions “ready” for impact financing?
- What kind of financial instruments, investment funds and funding platforms are needed to stimulate institutional and other investors to finance commercial deployment of technologies for SDGs?
- What are the effective UN frameworks and mechanisms for engaging with such private sector initiatives? How can the UN add value to such efforts?
- What are your top three recommendations for action by the United Nations system, governments, businesses, scientists, civil society, and others?

As with the other sessions of the Forum, key messages emerging from the event will feed into the Co-Chair’s Summary of the Forum.

5. Supporting documents or publications

Outcomes of the Global Solutions Summit 2016¹⁵ and the Financial Time’s Innovative Finance as a Force for Global Change Event.¹⁶

¹⁵ <http://www.globalsolutionssummit.com/>

¹⁶ <https://live.ft.com/Events/2016/FT-Investing-for-Good-2016>