United Nations Inter-agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

First Meeting of the 10-Member Group to Support the TFM with the UN Inter-agency Task Team on STI for the SDGs (IATT)

3-4 March 2016
UN Headquarters, New York

Summary

I.   *Organisational*

The 10-Member Group to Support the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (10-MG) amended the terms of reference and elected Ms. Heide Hackmann and Mr. William Colglazier as Co-Chairs of the group for the coming year. Both the 10-MG and the IATT indicated the importance of having clarity on the role of the 10-MG and IATT vis-à-vis other UN and international bodies and mechanisms working on STI issues and ensuring a synergistic and complementary approach (CSTD, WSIS, major UNESCO Conferences, etc.).

II.   *Multi-stakeholder Forum on STI*

Key messages/decisions:
- **Need to envision the STI Forums as a series of events, and devise ways to ensure continuity and build-up from one Forum to another;**
- **The first Forum needs to set the tone for its successors, so that they become "must attend" events for the STI community and its key stakeholders in years to come;**
- **It was recommended not to overload the first forum with too many objectives;**
- **Participants identified potential objectives for the first STI Forum, such as agreeing a narrative on the need for STI in achieving the SDGs, identifying current gaps and needs, mobilising and agreeing on actions and partnerships, and building a community of committed actors;**
- **10-MG and IATT agreed on 4 guiding questions for the STI Forum that will also guide the online discussions;**
- **Many participants agreed that the theme for the forum could align with the HLPF theme "leaving no one behind";**
- **Ensure focused discussions at STI Forum to provide useful, concise and focused input to HLPF (Co-Chairs' Summary), potentially also outlining recommendations in addition to key messages;**
- **Need to mobilise the right audiences: decision-makers, practitioners and experts, users / appliers, while balancing focus of discussions accordingly; the whole range of communities along the science, technology and innovation continuum should participate; the forum also needs to consider various sources of knowledge, including indigenous knowledge;**
- **Ensure as much interaction as possible through innovative session formats and pursue mixed seating arrangement that connects stakeholders and Member States; and invite leading experts to speak at the Forum.**

A large part of the meeting was devoted to the preparation of the first Multi-stakeholder Forum on STI (STI Forum). The 10-MG and the IATT discussed many facets of the Forum, including objectives,

theme, guiding questions, format, outreach and audience. The main elements of the discussion are summarized below.

Long term vision
It was suggested that, while other technology fora in the UN existed, the STI Forum needed to have its own focus, and the natural focus is how science-, technology and innovation will help in achieving the SDGs. Given the recurring nature of the STI Forum, participants called for envisioning the STI Forums as a series of events, and devising ways to ensure continuity and build-up from one Forum to another. The first Forum needs to set the tone for its successors, so that over time the Forum becomes a "must attend" event for the STI community. At the same time, it was advised not to overload the first forum with too many objectives.

Objectives of the STI Forum
The 10-MG and IATT identified the following objectives for the first forum:

a) While the narrative on the importance of science, technology and innovation for the SDGs has been firmly established in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda, it will be important to craft a powerful and intuitive narrative outlining the role of the STI Forum and its contribution in this regard, including how it can contribute to a robust discussion on STI for the SDGs in the context of follow-up and review at the HLPF. The narrative could be used at the Forum and also for outreach purposes;
b) Discussing what it means for Member States to promote STI for SDGs and potentially identifying gaps and needs;
c) Mobilising actions and partnerships, involving STI networks and organisations, innovators, and governments;
d) Offering a platform for multi-stakeholder exchange on the importance and practical application of STI for the SDGs in the UN context, identifying and showcasing concrete examples of innovative STI contributions to development;
e) Use the STI Forum to further develop ideas for the online platform, based on co-design with the Forum community.

Theme of the Forum
Many participants agreed that the theme of the STI Forum could be aligned with the theme of the HLPF 2016, "Ensuring that no one is left behind". This would imply special attention to solutions/innovations geared to vulnerable and marginalised groups in all countries, as well as taking into account that a universal agenda should not leave any country behind. The guiding questions as they were validated by the group address many elements that would speak to such a theme, although a particular focus might need to be ensured by the moderators of the various sessions.

Audience and format
Participants stressed the need to mobilise the right audience. This includes decision-makers, practitioners and experts, users / appliers of technologies. Many participants stressed the importance of mobilizing the private sector. To ensure the multi-stakeholder nature of the forum will be crucial and therefore the participation of experts, technology users, different stakeholder groups as well as change agents will be essential. It was pointed out that it would be important to secure participation from the whole range of communities along the science, technology and innovation continuum. Regarding Government experts, it will be important to work closely with Member States to secure the participation of high-level STI experts from capitals. It was also suggested that delegations could be encouraged to include young scientists and innovators. All participants were asked to submit as soon as possible names and contact details of potential speakers or session moderators for the Forum.

Participants emphasised the need to make the forum and its sessions as interactive as possible, by exploring innovative seating arrangements, exploring the utilisation of different media (videos, visualizations, and exhibitions) and considering breakout sessions or workshop-like arrangements on specific topics. While logistic constraints may limit creativity in this regards, there are precedents in intergovernmental meetings (the Youth Forum was mentioned as an interesting example). The IATT Secretariat will explore available options with relevant departments in the UN.

It was agreed to limit the amount of traditional panels, as well as the number of speakers, and alternate didactic and interactive set-ups. It was suggested that the first session set the tone for the Forum and discusses the narrative, while the last session may discuss recommendations and key messages for the summary as well as what could be achieved by the Forum in future years.

Content and guiding questions
Participants emphasized the importance of the indivisibility of the SDGs and the need to consider synergies and trade-offs in discussions of technology, as solutions that make sense when looking at specific SDG areas in isolation may be problematic when the whole set of goals is considered.

After considering different options in terms of content of the forum, participants suggested that in general, discussions relating to STI should always consider two different levels: the STI policy level (what needs to be put in place for STI to develop at the national level), and the "access" level (how can appropriate technology solutions that advance the SDGs be made accessible to everyone).

Participants agreed on the need to focus the discussions at the forum, in order to ensure that concise and targeted key messages and recommendations are produced and delivered to the HLPF through the summary of the co-chairs. Participants highlighted the need to make discussions concrete, not only by drawing on experiences voiced in the online discussions, but also by continuously utilising concrete examples and/or national case studies throughout the forum. It was stressed that the forum needs to consider various sources of knowledge, including indigenous knowledge.

For that purpose, the 10-MG and IATT agreed that the forum should be structured around four guiding questions. The four questions, the wording of which will be finalized in coming days by the group, are the following:

1) Why are science, technology and innovation essential for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals? Please provide one or more concrete examples that, in your experience, best exemplifies this.
2) What are the main opportunities and challenges - at policy, organisational and individual levels - for maximizing the contribution of science, technology and innovation to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals?
3) What are key elements that countries and international organisations may need to take into account in formulating action plans and/or roadmaps for science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals?
4) How can we deploy existing knowledge and new, innovative solutions and technologies and make them more readily available to those who need them?

It was suggested to add an additional question for the online discussion:
5) What would be success criteria for the STI Forum in the coming years? What questions should the STI Forum focus on?

III. Side events

Key messages/decisions:
- **An open call for side events around the Forum will be posted soon;**
- **Complementarity with the content of the STI Forum will be important;**
- **The group will decide on criteria for selecting side events.**
- **Limited availability of space on UN premises is a limiting factor to the number of side events.**

The 10-MG and IATT agreed on the importance of organising side events during the STI Forum. Participants emphasised the merit in having side events complement the main sessions of the forum, in order to increase substantive scope, outreach to different stakeholder groups and increase opportunities for interactive engagement of forum participants. However, the organisation of side events will likely face logistical constraints, mainly relating to limited room availability.

It was agreed that the IATT will conduct an open call for side events open to all stakeholders, indicating the criteria that will be applied for the selection of side events. Among the suggested criteria was addressing the guiding questions of the forum as well as complementing the main sessions of the Forum. Both the IATT and 10-MG will reach out to their constituencies to disseminate the call. It was emphasised that organizers should contemplate working with Member States and potentially considering hosting side events in UN missions close to UN Headquarters.

Participants emphasised that side events should try to use interactive formats, in order to allow for as much networking and exchange as possible. Small breakfast meetings potentially sponsored by missions, "speed talk" arrangements or brainstorming discussions were also suggested.

IV. Online discussions preceding the STI Forum

Key messages/decisions:
- **10-MG and IATT agreed to conduct online discussions prior to the STI Forum, which will play a crucial role to ensure inclusiveness, transparency and multi-stakeholder engagement;**
- **The online discussions will be synthesised and inform the discussions at the STI Forum;**
- **The online discussions will address the 4 guiding questions of the Forum plus another question aiming to elicit expectations from the Forum;**
- **Moderation will be conducted by the 10-MG and the IATT.**

The IATT Secretariat briefed the 10-MG on the plan to conduct online discussions in the lead-up to the STI Forum. Participants stressed the crucial role of such an outreach instrument to ensure increased inclusiveness, transparency and multi-stakeholder engagement of the STI Forum. It was suggested to conduct the discussions for 5-6 weeks and start as soon as feasible, so that the discussions can be synthesized and their result fed into the various sessions of the Forum. The roll-out of the discussions would be accompanied by a social media and communication outreach through the IATT and the 10-MG, in order to inform and mobilise stakeholder groups and expert constituencies. Participants emphasised the need to frame participation in the online discussions positively and create incentives for participation by highlighting that this will inform the STI Forum.

In practice, there would be 5 threads of discussion, moderated by two 10-MG members as well as two IATT members. Participants were asked to volunteer to moderate a discussion. It was suggested to provide moderators with guidelines and context information on the individual questions, in order to concretise, guide and focus discussions.

While the discussions would be led in English language, it was suggested that discussants need to be allowed to post in their native language, if they so wish. In addition, some participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that all stakeholder groups were equally heard during the discussions and to potentially organise stakeholder-specific discussion threads and/or summaries. In practice, these options will have to be weighed against the limited resources that are currently available in the IATT to support this process.

V. STI networking forum

The 10-MG and the IATT discussed the organization of a "STI Networking Forum" in the lead-up to the STI Forum, which will launch a call for action to deliver technology-based innovations and solutions for SDGs. The Networking Forum would also facilitate sharing, exchange and pollination of ideas on STI for the SDGs, and create networks and communities of practice involving those who are developing technological innovations, those who can support or scale up such innovations, and those who need such innovations in order to implement the SDGs.

The Networking Forum would be realized through collaboration with the Global Innovation Exchange (GIE), which has developed an existing networking exchange that currently features some 3000 innovations and US$280 million of committed funding. GIE have offered to develop a micro-site for the call to action for the STI Networking Forum on a pro bono and non-proprietary basis for the UN. By linking the innovations submitted to this STI Networking Forum to the existing GIE database, this facility would help to fulfil an objective of the STI Forum as negotiated by the member States: to "provide a venue for facilitation 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".

Participants highlighted the need for the STI Networking Forum to solicit grass-root solutions for SDGs to cater to the networking mandate of the TFM and the forum in particular.

Further details of development and outreach for the call to action for the STI Networking Forum would be shared with the IATTT and 10-MG in due course.

VI. Tentative timeline and next steps

The 10-MG and the IATT discussed potential next steps and agreed on a tentative timeline for the preparation of the STI Forum. The timeline will be refined after the meeting, and is subject to changes due to uncertainty in particular regarding the date at which the Forum co-chairs will be known. The Secretariat of the IATT will follow-up with the IATT and the 10-MG on the various deliverables. Some important milestones are listed below.

14 March	finalise guiding questions, call for side events, list of potential speakers
18 March	revised concept note of STI forum for transmission to Co-Chairs; save the date for potential speakers
tbd	when co-chairs are known, virtual meeting of 10-MG with Co-Chairs
21 March	Set-up of online discussions website; guidelines for moderators First draft of STI Forum narrative
28 March	Start of online discussions Start of Call to Action for STI networking Forum
5 April	finalization of the narrative
end April	End of Call to Action for STI networking Forum

5 May	Selection of showcase innovations from the networking Forum
6 May	Finalisation of list of speakers at the Forum close of online discussions
20 May	Synthesis of online discussions and preparation of material for moderators
6-7 June	STI Forum

VII. Online platform on STI initiatives

Key messages/decisions:
- **10-MG and IATT agreed to follow a cautious approach with respect to developing an online platform, acknowledging the mandate to conduct an independent assessment as a first step;**
- **the 10-MG agreed to explore practical modalities for conducting the assessment and identify appropriate organisations that could lead it**
- **Further discussion will be needed in coming months on the functional requirements for the platform and how the work on the platform should be sequenced;**
- **10-MG and IATT identified the mapping component as a realistic deliverable in the short term that would be essential to inform next steps.**

The IATT and 10-MG discussed the online platform, which is an essential element of the technology facilitation mechanism.

Participants agreed that the ultimate goal would be to create a platform that would be viable and useful in the long-term. During the discussion, participants identified various potential success criteria for a platform, such as accuracy and quality of information provided (which is linked to questions of due diligence); accessibility, usability and appeal of information presentation to users; and context information on innovation adaptation and related barriers. Some highlighted the importance of an open-source design for the platform. The importance of incorporating the intended platform users in its creation and design was stressed.

Participants also suggested a wide range of functionalities that the platform could eventually develop. Opinions differed as to which functionalities should be developed first. It was mentioned that many platforms already existed, and that it is key to focus initially on the functional requirements for the platform, as indicated in the mandate for the TFM. A consensus seemed to emerge that work on the platform should start with basic steps such as linking to existing platforms (one example was the climate tech wiki). Progress on mapping initiatives within and outside the UN system would be an important element in this regard.

Several participants raised the question of the actual ownership, management and resourcing of the online platform – a question that would depend on the findings of the independent assessment and on developing a "business case" for the platform to mobilize resources.

Several participants indicated that the background paper on "options for the online platform" prepared by the IATT in 2015 already contains information and considerations that can serve as a good basis for the independent assessment to build on, while further elaboration is needed of the functional requirements, target audience and should be sought through the independent assessment mandated for the platform.

Other questions related to the relationship between the online platform and the technology bank for the LDCs; the need for curators for information posted on the platform and more generally for criteria to validate content; and to potential linkages with the national level. Some participants

suggested linking the platform with existing national communities of practice, existing centres of technology evaluation or open access scientific publications.

The IATT Secretariat asked for the support of the 10-MG in identifying potential institutions that could undertake the independent assessment. One member of the 10-MG offered concrete suggestions in this regard, and it was agreed that a subgroup of the 10-MG would explore concrete options in more depth.

VIII.   *Informal dialogue with UN Member States*

On the second day of the meeting, an open dialogue session was organized with UN Member States. The co-chairs of the 10-MG gave a short briefing on the proceedings of the meeting, after which Member States asked questions to the group. Member States expressed their high expectations for the TFM and for the STI Forum in particular. Many delegates encouraged the group to make the forum really innovative, including in terms of format. Member States asked for regular and timely flows of information from the 10-Member Group, especially on the STI Forum, in particular to be able to mobilize the "right" participants from Government and identify other national participants for the forum. Questions were also asked on the status of the independent assessment for the online platform.

List of participants

Name	Organization
Ambassador Oh Joon	President of ECOSOC
Wu Hongbo	USG, DESA
Elliot Harris	ASG, UNEP
William Colglazier	10-MG
Elenita Dano	10-MG
Xiaolan Fu	10-MG
Myrna Cunningham	10-MG
Paulo Gadelha Vieira	10-MG
Heide Hackmann	10-MG
Romain Murenzi	10-MG
Nebojsa Nakicenovic	10-MG
Hayat Sindi	10-MG
Juwang Zhu	DESA DSD Director
David le Blanc	DESA
Wei Liu	DESA
Jamil Ahmad	UNEP
Tobias Cabani	UNEP
Andrew Billo	OCHA
Ana Persic	UNESCO
Lucinda Longcroft	WIPO
Elena Ponte	WIPO
Gary Fowlie	ITU
Kadiatou Sall-Beye	ITU
Paul Maselli	UNIDO
Jennifer Breslin	UNWomen
Robert Oberwetter	OICT
Michael Stewart	UNOSSC
Puvan Selvanathan	ITC
Lucas Tavares	FAO
Paul Egerton	WMO
Niklas Hedman	UNOOSA
Naoto Kanehira	World Bank
Chantal Line Carpentier	UNCTAD