

Statement by ETC Group, Silvia Ribeiro, Latin America Director
4th Technology Dialogue

Thank you Co-chair,

ETC group is a small international organization that monitors technology development and its impacts. We would like to share 3 points.

1) We are concerned that there is still a discussion IF it will be a TFM, as it's clear from the Rio+20 declaration, paragraph 273, that governments "request [...] to identify options for a technology mechanism..." Not IF, but HOW. And we share this concern with a large number of organizations in several Major Groups.

I would also like to address the statement heard today that TFM seems to be a more "top-down" option that other different voluntary or thematic technology networks that exists. More than 75% of IPR and technologies are in the hands of private sectors and OECD countries, which take decisions according to their own interests. TFM would therefore, be the opposite to a top-down approach, as it would mean a democratization of the needs and opportunities related to technology for all countries, identified as an important factor to realize the SDGs and many of the crises we face in the planet.

If business as usual would be enough, we wouldn't be speaking about this. But we need to, because technology is crucial for the realization of the SDG.

2) Multi-stakeholder partnerships and PPPs are in need of urgent disinterested evaluation, as they represent problems in many aspects. For example the PPP GAVI, the Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization, seems to be a good purpose, but it has also meant very high transaction costs, countries had to make too quick decisions on vaccine selection, it has raised questions about sustainability and continuation of vaccination programs, as well as implementation problems in developing countries, including disposal of wastes, These and other problems indicate that the pressure from private sector may have gone over the choices of countries for their public good. Any partnerships should be developed only with a transparency and accountability framework, and be sure they are only happening if the countries needs it, and that there is a clear evaluation of costs and alternatives.

The role of private sector in innovation is also an overstatement. Some of the most relevant technologies developed in the last decades, were developed in the public sector. Smartphones would not exist without the military technologies that also built the Internet, GPS and voice-activated assistants. The US government bankrolled the so-called entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley, while public universities constructed the touchscreen and HTML.

We need the public sector to continue leading the process and therefore an intergovernmental public process for technology is the most adequate.

3) Finally, I would like to say that although technology is mentioned in 13 SDG goals and in many more targets, there is not a clear mention of the crucial need for technology assessment. Not only “technology needs” assessment, but assessment of technology in itself, as referred to by Iran and Palau in this session. This should be a multilateral independent capacity. Otherwise, countries with weaker economies will be left to assess technologies for their potential impacts on health, environment, economies and societies, to the terms of those who want to sell the technologies.

The need for technology assessment should be a clear point in the discussion about TFM, about tech transfer and their role in implementing SDGs.

Thank you.