

United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

21st Annual Session, 14-18 May 2018

High-level Roundtable on the "*Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*"

Concept Note

The General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/72/242, requested the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to give due consideration to the impact of key rapid technological changes on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In response to this call, the Commission will hold on the afternoon of Monday, 14 May, a High-level Roundtable on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the SDGs.

Rapid technological change in recent years is having a broad, and sometimes disruptive, impact on the economy, society and the environment. The high-level roundtable will examine the opportunities and challenges brought about by new and emerging technologies in a number of fields such as artificial intelligence, big data, Internet of Things, synthetic biology, satellite and drone technologies. The application of some of these technologies represents an opportunity to address the SDGs, in particular goals related to health, agriculture, education, and financial inclusion. In the meantime, they bring up new challenges for policy makers and the society, as they can disrupt labour markets, exacerbate inequalities, and raise ethical questions.

The High-level Roundtable will include global leaders at the frontier of their fields to have a dialogue with policy makers, international organisations and other stakeholders on how to benefit from new and emerging technologies and mitigate risks. High-level policymakers will have the opportunity to identify effective policies and strategies in the area of science, technology and innovation (STI) to prepare societies for rapid technological change, to share experiences at the national level as well as identifying areas for international cooperation. The following are questions to guide the discussion:

- What are the key emerging technologies and their current and potential applications that could give an opportunity to solve great societal challenges and achieve the SDGs? What are the best practices/lessons learnt in applying these technologies in the context of the SDGs?
- What are the risks and challenges of rapid technological change for the society, and in particular employment and skills? What are the strategies, policies and immediate actions to take in order to address these challenges and mitigate risks?
- How can we ensure that rapid technological change does not perpetuate and exacerbate inequalities and digital divides between and within countries? How can we make sure that new and emerging technologies benefit all the society, including women, the youth and marginalized groups?
- Do these technologies offer developing countries opportunities for leapfrogging? What are the actions needed to reap the development opportunities provided by rapid technological change?
- What are effective STI policies and strategies to prepare societies for rapid technological change?

- What are the priority areas and mechanisms for successful international collaboration, including at the CSTD, to help to facilitate the development, transfer and dissemination of new and emerging technologies to achieve the SDGs?

Format of the High-level Roundtable:

Following a brief introduction by the moderator, members of the panel will make their initial interventions (5-8 minutes), broadly addressing the guiding questions. After this the moderator will initiate an interactive discussion among high-level policy makers and other participants, including those from the floor.