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Statement submitted by

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<h1 style="text-align:center">Opening Remarks</h1>

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CSTD 2018-19 Inter-sessional Panel

15 January 2019

Vienna International Centre (VIC), Room C3, 7th Floor, C-Building

➢ First of all I would like to apologize for my absence with you today due to the cancelation of my flight this morning, but I am present with you from my office.

➢ I am very pleased to open this Inter-sessional panel of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).

➢ ***I want to thank Austria*** not only for serving as a host for the Inter-sessional panel but also for playing a historical role as the host country for the UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development, convened here in Vienna in nineteen seventy-nine (1979).

➢ The Commission is the institutional beneficiary of the UN's work on science and technology for development, which was established, in part, as a result of the Vienna Programme of Action approved at the Conference.

➢ What binds us all in this same place today - as at that Conference 40 years ago - is ***a deep commitment to harness Science & Technology as a critical enabler for sustainable development, in the spirit of multilateralism and international cooperation.***

➢ New technologies commonly associated with rapid technological change - such as artificial intelligence, big data, synthetic biology and

nanotechnology - are *potential tools – and I'd like to say needed tools, to deliver on the ambitious 2030 Agenda.*

➤ The opportunities offered by these technologies find examples in many areas. Let me give you a few of them:

- **New and emerging technologies allow us to monitor and target extreme poverty and food insecurity,** using - among other tools - satellite imagery, machine learning, blockchain and mobile data to identify poverty indicators, predict poverty and provide the necessary assistance in response.

  These tools are used by international agencies such as the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to assess food security and deliver aid.

  Very concretely: WFP used the blockchain as part of a pilot to carry out cash and food assistance in Jordanian and Syrian refugee camps, reducing overhead, improving security and speeding up aid.

- **Robots and drones provide new modalities for ensuring health and promoting agricultural productivity.**

  In Rwanda, for example, the government partnered with a robotics company to address maternal mortality by using drones to deliver blood to medical facilities **and,** in Mozambique, the Third Eye project used low-cost drones to help small-scale farmers improve crop production and reduce water use.

- **Remote sensing and mobile platforms can help us improve financial inclusion and resilience.**

  Indeed, more than half a billion people opened an account and gained access to financial services between 2014 and 2017: mobile

money accounts contributed to this growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 21% of adults now have a mobile money account.

+ **Mobile and blockchain solutions can help facilitate social inclusion,** such as India's digital identity programme, which has enrolled over 94% of the country's population and is the world's largest biometric ID system.
This program aims to reach the most excluded residents and will be essential to provide social welfare benefits.

Finally, mobile and drone solutions can help safeguard environmental and urban sustainability.
In the area of land use and land tenure, drones are being used to create an aerial map of Zanzibar to support urban planning, health promotion, seaweed mapping, sustainable tourism, and coastal monitoring.

➢ These examples demonstrate the immense possibilities new technologies offer to help achieve the SDGs.

➢ **However,** new and emerging technologies **also pose new challenges** for policy makers and society, as they can *disrupt economic development, exacerbate social divides, and raise ethical questions.*

+ **Automation could potentially impact employment, competition, and globalization,** leading to job losses, to the emergence of digital monopolies and to challenges for developing countries' inclusion in the Global value chains.

- **Synthetic biology and genome manipulation raise various safety and ethical issues**, including unintended effects of the technology on modified DNA and regulatory challenges.

- **Social networking platforms** connect us with our friends, family, and colleagues but they could also have unintended consequences, threatening our privacy and security as well as the stability and resilience of our social, cultural, and political institutions through for example, the rapid spreading of fake news or instrumentalization of group of people by extremists.

- **Big data and artificial intelligence**, if based on biased data and uninterpretable models, have the potential to reproduce existing prejudices and, therefore, discriminations affecting poor and marginalized communities, in many areas like criminal justice, access to financial services, and job recruiting.

- **Finally, in line with the reproduction of society's biases that I have just mentioned, rapid technological change could exacerbate gender divides**:

  Women are 12 per cent less likely than men to make use of the Internet, and 33 per cent less likely to do so in the least developed countries, widening the existing gender digital divide, which persists in women's access to ICTs and opportunities to shape new and emerging technologies.

  In this context, I am very pleased to see that you will convene a **Workshop on "Applying a Gender Lens to Science, Technology and Innovation"**.

Closing

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➢ The question of whether rapid technological change will advance or frustrate sustainable development actually depends on the policies designed, developed, and implemented by the Member States.
Let's make sure the debates of the CSTD guides them in the right direction.

➢ In an increasingly globalized economy and an increasingly digitalized world, where products, services, information and knowledge are moving ever faster - even faster than the decisions taken by our state institutions - *only fast responses (we do not have any more time to lose) but also coordinated responses, based on international cooperation and multilateralism, can provide solutions to these challenges.*

➢ At the last Internet Global Forum in November, President Macron raised **the necessity to establish an equivalent of the renowned IPCC** (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) in the digital area.
As I was in the room, I immediately thought: CSTD should be the 'digital IPCC'…
What better chamber than this one could play this role? What other multi-stakeholder assembly would be better qualified to do the job than CSTD?

➢ This Commission is key to advancing our collective understanding of how to navigate and shape new and emerging technologies *in ways that "leave no one behind"* and ensure that science, technology, and innovation can be *harnessed for and by the many instead of the few.*

- ➤ I am looking forward to the discussions of this session and am confident that it is going to provide important insights on the role of STI for sustainable development and building resilient communities to inform the CSTD's upcoming sessions.

- ➤ I wish you productive deliberations.