

**United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)
Twenty-second annual session**

**High-level Roundtable on
“The role of science, technology and innovation in empowering people
and in insuring inclusiveness and equality”**

**13 May 2019, 12.00-13.00
Room XVII, E-building, Palais des Nations**

Concept note

During the twenty-second annual session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), a high-level roundtable will be held on the morning of 13 May 2019, with the theme of “*The role of science, technology and innovation in empowering people and in insuring inclusiveness and equality.*” The Commission will contribute to the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) convened in July 2019 which will explore the aforementioned theme and conduct an in-depth review of the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), Goal 10 (reduced inequalities), Goal 13 (climate action), Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and Goal 17 (partnership for the goals).

Science, technology and innovation (STI) has a key role in empowering people and in insuring inclusiveness and equality. Citizen science, for example, can serve to empower communities that might otherwise be bypassed in more traditional knowledge generation methods. Access to information and communications technologies can also empower people, including the most vulnerable, in many ways: through education and gaining employment skills to connecting people and communities to each other as well as to different sources of information and knowledge. Digital tools can contribute to increase financial inclusion, while telemedicine can reach previously underserved communities. Inclusive innovation, targeting marginalized groups with low-cost products and services, can make a powerful contribution to inclusive and sustainable development. New technologies like big data, the Internet of Things, machine learning, artificial intelligence, or satellite and drone technologies have a great potential to bring equal benefits from transforming agriculture, health, public services or education to communities in both developed and developing countries. However, these technologies have raised fears of increasing inequalities between and within countries, especially between those who have and have not access to them.

Against this context, the session will examine how STI can contribute to empower people and ensure inclusiveness and equality. The session will also identify ways to prioritize STI as part of national development strategies to achieve the SDGs. In particular, it will provide an opportunity for high-level policymakers to exchange experiences, lessons learned and best practices in applying STI in achieving the sets of SDGs to be reviewed under this theme by ECOSOC.

The following are questions to guide the discussion:

- How can policy-makers leverage new scientific, technological and innovative applications (including technologies related to Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17) to empower people and insure inclusiveness and equality?
- How can we be more effective in mobilizing STI in national development strategies to achieve the SDGs (especially Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17)?
- What needs to change to ensure that STI policies deal with social inclusion and equality as strategic objectives? What are the benefits of applying a gender-sensitive lens to STI policy making and how are countries doing it?
- What are the actions that the international community, including the CSTD, can take to leverage STI for to empowering people and in insuring inclusiveness and equality?

Format of the high-level roundtable:

Following a brief introduction by the Chair, high-level participants will make their initial interventions (3-5 minutes), broadly addressing the guiding questions. After this the Chair will initiate an interactive discussion among the participants, including those from the floor.