

**INTERSESSIONAL PANEL OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION
ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

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Opening Session: CSTD 2020-2021 Inter-Sessional Panel Meeting

Introductory remarks by

Peter Major
Chair of the CSTD

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**Introductory remarks by
Mr. Peter Major, Chair**

2020-2021 Inter-sessional Panel Virtual Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 18-22 January 2021

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you, and to open the 2020-2021 Inter-sessional Panel meeting of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). I am glad to see high-level of participation from various parts of the world.

Over the next few days, the panel will address some pressing science, technology, and innovation-related issues. We will consider two priority themes:

- *Using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on Sustainable Development Goal 3, on good health and well-being, and,*
- *Harnessing blockchain for sustainable development: prospects and challenges.*

In addition, the meeting will also review the progress made in the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes. These themes are particularly timely and pertinent, given the challenges posed by the way digitalization is changing our societies and the

continuous shocks we have been subject to, including the current health crisis, natural disasters, conflicts between nations, and, the effects of human induced climate change that is impacting our communities around the world.

To facilitate our discussions, the secretariat has prepared draft issues papers on our two priority themes. Our work here is critical to prepare relevant and action-oriented messages and recommendations for the Ministers attending the twenty-fourth session of the CSTD, which will take place from 17-21 May 2021.

At the twenty-third session, the CSTD discussed how to harness science, technology and innovation to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and to address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

- The Commission recognized the instrumental role of science, technology and innovation in combatting COVID-19 and shared their experiences. Measures included the utilization of data science and digital tools for tracking and tracing the virus and the local production of sanitizers and medical equipment such as ventilators.
- Ministers and other high-level speakers expressed solidarity and reaffirmed the importance of supporting research and development and innovation activities as well as skills development. They also recognized the need to enhance international cooperation and multilateralism and to ensure coordinated policy responses in the area of science, technology and innovation, not only in the context of the fight against the ongoing pandemic but also in the context of coping with similar crises in the future.

The Commission adopted two draft resolutions under silence procedure, one entitled “Science, technology and innovation for development”, and the other “Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to

the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.” I am pleased to report that ECOSOC has adopted both of these resolutions (E/RES/2020/12 and E/RES/2020/13) in the July session of ECOSOC. They are important for our deliberations as we prepare for the upcoming twenty-fourth session of the CSTD.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to brief you on further ECOSOC and General Assembly (GA) activities where the CSTD reported to, since our annual session in June 2020.

- Firstly, on 10th July the CSTD was represented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and we reported on the outcomes of our very first virtual annual session.
- On 21st July, the Chair of the twenty third session of the commission, introduced the outcomes of the annual session to the ECOSOC Management Segment.
- On 9th September, the CSTD participated in the WSIS forum event on WSIS +15, in collaboration with the regional commissions.
- On 9th October, the Head of the CSTD secretariat presented the Reports of the Secretary General to the second committee of the General Assembly.

Ladies and gentlemen, this inter-sessional panel provides an excellent opportunity not only to deliberate on these important outcomes but also to make significant contributions to the work of the CSTD in key areas for STI action in support of the achievement of SDGs, and in particular to the challenges we face today with the health crisis.

- I am proud to say that, because of the cooperation established at the CSTD, three capacity building activities are currently underway or are

expected to be launched this year. These aim to strengthen the technological capabilities of developing countries, which is paramount for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1) The first, through a partnership with the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO) and the Aerospace Information Research Institute at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (AIR/CAS). Our common purpose is to implement a project to strengthen developing countries' capacity for crop monitoring and management, by providing access to and training for the CropWatch Earth observation. The first call for candidates has been circulated and the selection process of participating countries is under way.

2) The second, through a partnership with Okayama University of Japan, to foster and nurture young scientific talent in developing countries. The initiative will offer research and training courses to young female scientists from developing countries and opportunities for doctoral studies to young scientists from those countries. The first participants in the female scientist program will start their activity as soon as travel is practicable.

3) Thirdly, UNCTAD and SENAI Innovation Institute – Florianopolis have planned an immersion training programme on the theme of “Fostering Industrial Innovation: Creation of Technology Centres and Ecosystems”. The programme offers the opportunity for member states of the CSTD to share experiences and learn from the successful industrial and technological innovation initiative and practices in Brazil.

- In-person activity for each cooperation programme has been postponed until international travel is broadly permitted.

- I would like to wholeheartedly thank the Governments of China, Japan, and Brazil, for their support to enable such collaborative outcomes through the CSTD.
- And I invite other member states to come forward with proposals for further collaborative activities in support of developing countries efforts to deploy STI for sustainable development.

The Commission continues to serve its member states through thick and thin, as we have seen over the past year during the pandemic. I thank all member states for their participation in providing inputs on the priority themes and in their helpful interventions during discussions. This Commission indeed serves an excellent mechanism for sharing experiences and lessons learned, to enable STI policies to be advanced for sustainable development.

I invite all of you to actively engage in discussions and produce concrete proposals for consideration by the Commission in May. I wish you a fruitful and productive meeting.

Thank you.